

Friends of Lewes response to the consultation on the planned redevelopment of the former Lewes Bus Station, August 2021

SDNP/21/03284/PRE: Demolition of existing buildings and construction of mixed-use gateway redevelopment scheme (including office/retail use and 50 residential units) together with landscaping, parking and cycle parking. Bus Station Eastgate Street.

Friends of Lewes do not object to the principle of redevelopment of the redundant bus station buildings but would strongly object to any application for development that removes the bus station without a planning obligation that guarantees the provision of a replacement, either on site or elsewhere. A central bus interchange provision is crucial if the Government's call for increased reliance on increased use of public transport is to be met.

The Society considers the development proposed to be completely out of scale for this site. The buildings would dominate the whole of this central area of Lewes while not providing any benefit. The proposed residential element is badly planned and would generate excessive additional traffic in a very sensitive part of the conservation area.

If the bus station is removed, Eastgate Street should be looked at in a much more constructive way. The new development should be built right up to the pavement line and take the opportunity to fill in the gap and visually link East Street and Eastgate Street. Friends of Lewes would strongly object to any proposals for a 'gateway building', which are unnecessary. A simple terrace of buildings is required, three stories high maximum, possibly with pitched roofs. Retail should be provided at street level for vitality with residential above and amenity space at the back. Appropriate materials, meticulous detailing and careful construction are essential. A design that embraces the SDNPA Draft Design Guide could deliver a development of which we can all be proud and which makes a positive contribution to the historic Lewes town landscape and the wider National Park. The redevelopment plans have generated a lot of local interest in the town and the Society would encourage the developer to engage in a public consultation over their plans.

This application has highlighted the lack of a coherent traffic plan for Lewes and the need for a public transport hub for the town, which links to the railway station. Friends of Lewes looks to the SDNPA to progress such a plan, which would guide developers and enable Lewes residents and visitors to reduce car journeys and maximise their take up of public transport.

Friends of Lewes, September 2021