

THE LEWES HOUSE SITE

Lewes deserves better than this

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Dear Councillor

We are writing to you and your fellow Councillors to report on a public meeting we called to discuss the proposed development by Southern Housing Group [SHG] on the Walwers Lane section of the Lewes House Site, a planning application for which is held at the Planning Department at Southover House.

Over one hundred members of the general public as well as some District and Town Councillors attended the meeting on the evening of 21st January at the All Saints Centre. Plans and photos of the site obtained from the application held at the Planning Office were on display along with a letter from Norman Baker MP. At the start of the meeting we projected the proposed plans and screened a video so everyone attending could see the proposed plans and the site on which it was to be built.

Following these presentations there was a discussion, where twenty to thirty members of the public aired their views. We thought that you should be interested in those views.

1] There was unanimous agreement that the walls in Church Twitten should not be breached. This was because everyone felt they were a unique feature of the town and the County. With the possibilities of access from the north/south and across the Baxter's site from St Nicholas Lane both walls of the twitten should remain in tact.

2] The meeting felt that the flint wall in Walwers Lane should not be destroyed. It should remain intact and become a feature of any future development. During the proposed development the opportunity should be taken to maintain the walls of this flint wall and those that make up Church Twitten.

3] They also found that the proposed two blocks were totally out of keeping. Their three stories and pitched roof overshadowed and overlooked many homes in St Nicholas Lane, Friars Walk and Lansdown Place. The side of the blocks would

form an unacceptable “wall of building” on Walwers Lane and for the homes on Lansdown Place that back directly on to the site. The meeting also felt that these two blocks would destroy the townscape and the views of the Downs that are an important and unique feature of Lewes.

4] It was also agreed that the architectural designs were of no merit and if built these two blocks would do nothing for townscape of Lewes. They bore no relation to those originally proposed by Ash Mill which showed much more care and attention to form and materials to be used. In fact if these proposed blocks were to be built they would bring discredit to the town and have a detrimental effect on tourism in the area.

5] The meeting also expressed concern about the changes that that had happened since Lewes District Council announced that Ash Mill were to be the developers for the Lewes House site. Why did we now have a new developer for the Walwers Lane site? Why did we not to have a public display of these designs, as is promised for the other site? Are the financial constraints affecting the affordable part of the development that are referred to by Lindsay Frost in a letter send to some interested parties a more important issue than the quality and form of the whole Lewes House development? Everyone at the meeting felt that the whole site should be assessed as a whole and not as two different developments.

6] Anger was expressed that two ‘ghettos’ would now be created with the affordable housing on one site for the ‘have nots’ and a gated site with gardens for the ‘haves’. Many felt that the quality of life of the proposed residents on the Walwers Lane site was unviable because of the number of proposed dwellings crammed on to the site, leaving very little usable space around the blocks. What about families with children? Where is the safe parking for motor bikes, scooters and cycles? Surely such a plan is against Government guidelines that state that affordable homes should be integrated throughout a development?

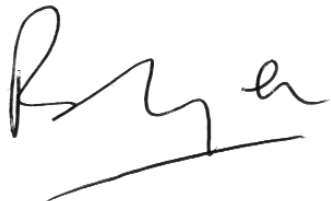
7] The problems of parking were raised by many at the meeting. The feeling was that the District Council should be looking for extra off street parking in the area for residents. The idea of a second level being built above the existing parking at the railway station was raised. Such a development would have little effect on the townscape and the entrance and exit could be in Southover Road among the trees.

There were also many concerns expressed about the lack of transparency in the planning process. The fact that another developer has been appointed without public consultation or notice was raised. Questions about the current ownership of the land were asked. Is it still in public ownership?

There was a strong feeling at the meeting that both these developers had not followed the original brief. So there was a call on the District Council to reject these plans forthwith. Also with the Baxter's site now available for development perhaps the District Council should urgently draw up a new design brief for that site and the whole Lewes House site?

I hope you will find this letter informative and that you will welcome and consider the views expressed at this public meeting. Lewes Town and Lewes District deserves better than this proposed development. A new much more imaginative scheme could bring nothing but credit and leave the town with an architectural inheritance that we can all be proud of for years to come.

Yours sincerely



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Copies: All Lewes District Councillors, LDC Planning Department and www.leweshousesite.co.uk

DEVELOPMENT



LANDSDOWN PLACE

CHURCH TWITTEN ALL SAINTS CENTRE

FRIARS WALK



CROUDACE



BERKELEY



ASH MILL



ANGEL



LEFT: 4 ORIGINAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

BELOW: PLAN OF WALWERS LANE SITE
AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT BY
SOUTHERN HOUSING GROUP [SHG]

EXISTING



PLANNED

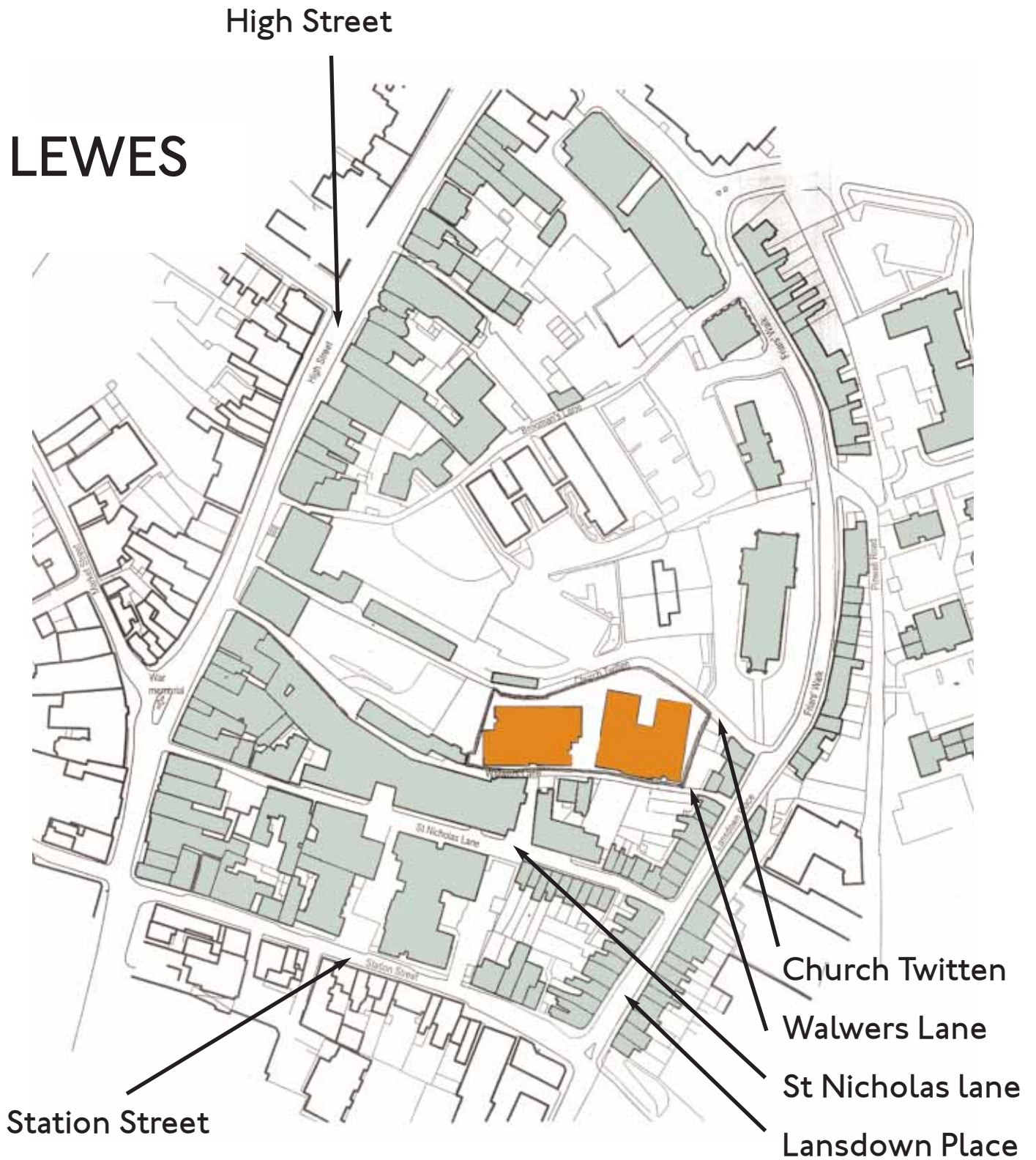
LEFT:
ASH MILL
[LDC PREFERRED
DEVELOPER]
BUILDING LAYOUT
2001.



RIGHT:
SHG PROPOSED
BUILDING LAYOUT
2004



PLAN OF WALWERS LANE SITE IN RELATION TO THE CENTRE OF LEWES
WITH PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT BY SOUTHERN HOUSING GROUP [SHG] SHOWN



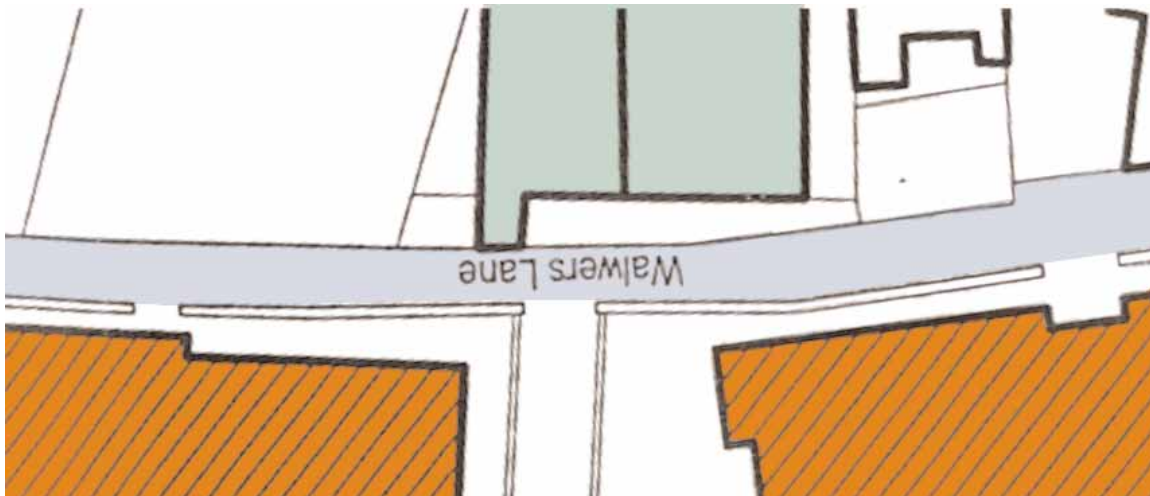
EFFECT OF DEVELOPMENT ON 5 AND 6 WALWERS LANE



PHOTO TAKEN 11.1.2004

BELOW: SHG PLAN DETAIL

PHOTO WITH ADDITION OF ELEVATION OF PROPOSED BLOCKS



EFFECT OF DEVELOPMENT ON ST NICHOLAS LANE WITH
6 WALWERS LANE ON THE LEFT AND CLIFFE IN THE DISTANCE

