

The saga of The Old Post Office, Station Road – Leader Update 5

Since Royal Mail vacated their old and outdated post office in Station Road nearly 20 years ago, the building they left behind has had a rather chequered history.

In 2008, a planning application was received by Mid Sussex District Council to construct 14 flats plus commercial units across the whole site, which included the old sorting office building at the rear and the parking area next to it. The application was approved but no progress was made and permission lapsed in 2011.

Meanwhile, it became possible for Signposts (Mid Sussex) Ltd, a registered charity that caters for persons with learning difficulties, to take on a lease of the main building. They took up residence in November 2009, re-named it 'The Old Post Office Resource Centre' and were joined by number of other service providers, including Summerhaven Mental Health and Asperger's Voice.

All was quiet until late 2017, when estate agents, Clifford Dann, were instructed to place the entire site on the market with potential 'for residential development'. It remained thus for almost three years until, in November 2020, the site was finally acquired by a property developer for £1.5 million. All the occupants of the building, having been pre-warned of the impending sale, were required to move out and find other accommodation. Nothing was heard about the plans for the site until August 2023, by which time it had become a derelict eyesore.



A planning application from the developers, Plot 102 Ltd, was received by Mid Sussex District Council on 1st August 2023. This is a proposal to construct a 5-storey block of 41 apartments and 4 Class E Commercial units, based on the concept of sustainability. It includes the provision of 48 cycle places, 2 car parking spaces and 2 spaces for disabled vehicles with very limited vehicle access.

Burgess Hill Town Council has wanted the Old Post Office site to be redeveloped for some years but when this application came before our Planning Committee on 20th October 2023, it very quickly became apparent that the proposed building was wildly out-of-keeping with the rest of Station Road, not only in its sheer size but by the fact that there was such restricted vehicular access to the building.



Image sources: Matt Architecture and Mid Sussex District Council

The Committee consequently recommended refusal, as the proposal contravened a number of District Plan and Design Guide categories (DP26, DP31, DG21, 32, 39 and 40) and a decision was made to 'call in' the application i.e refer it back to Mid Sussex District Council's Planning Department for further consideration. At this moment in time, September 2024, Mid Sussex District Council has entered a second consultation period but no revised plans have yet been received.

Rest assured, Burgess Hill Town Council is very keen to see these issues resolved and to welcome a new phase in the life of the Old Post Office site. If you want to see more of the plans, please use planning reference DM/23/2008 at the Mid Sussex Planning Portal: pa.midsussex.gov.uk/online-applications/