

Throw out college site plans says top architect

A TOP architect says plans to redevelop the old college site are inadmissible and has slammed the council's planning department for the two-year delay.

Stephen Gray warned this week that Gladedale's proposals for the development in Archery Road, St Leonards, contravened Government heritage guidelines and said the Hastings Borough Council (HBC) planning committee should not even consider them.

HBC is now consulting on the plans to create 163 homes on the site in the heart of Burton's St Leonards and they are expected to come before the planning committee in August, some two years after they were first submitted.

Mr Gray told a packed public meeting called by the Save The Archery Ground (STAG) group on Monday that the indecision of HBC planning officers would not be acceptable anywhere else in the country, suggesting that officers felt some schemes were 'too big to fail.'

He said: "It is appalling that this sword of Damocles has been hanging over electors for such a long time.

"It's not fair on applicants and it's not fair on the community."

And turning to the application itself, he said that the HBC/Gladedale report analysing the historical significance of the listed buildings - a key part of the Government's heritage guidelines - was 'absolute poppycock'.

"This application completely disregards the heritage assets of the site and the council should not even be considering it," he said.

He also dismissed many of the design features, and to hearty applause he said: "We expect better and so should the borough council."

■ by **Robert Alderson**

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This theme was taken up by Iain Exley, another architect working with STAG. He said the designs were 'rotten' and admitted to being 'shocked and stunned' by them. "It took a little boy in the Emperor's New Clothes to point out that the emperor was naked - I am afraid I have to be that little boy and point out that this has been flawed from the word go."

Mark Heuclin, of John Bray estate agents said he was not convinced Gladedale would find buyers for all the new flats and weighed in with his own damning assessment of their proposals.

He said: "This site demands inspiration which I do not think Gladedale possesses."

He added the company had a 'terrible track record for being very, very slow for no identifiable reason'.

Several of the 150-strong audience raised concerns from the floor, with sewage works, parking, public transport, the effect on wildlife and the size and quality of the new houses all provoking concern.

Council spokesman Kevin Boorman could not comment on the specifics of the application but denied the authority had been unduly slow in dealing with it.

He said: "The council has not sat on the application for two years.

"We have sought amendments to the scheme submitted in order to respond to specific concerns and issues which include ecological, landscape and design matters.

"Each application is treated the same in terms of process and applicants are advised on changes the council consider are necessary."