



## LEWES PHOENIX RISING

www.lewesphoenixrising.com | team@lewesphoenixrising.com  
Old Foundry Workshops, 32 North Street, Lewes BN7 2PH

### RESPONSE TO THE SANTON/LEWES DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR NORTH STREET, LEWES, REF SDNP/15/01146/FUL CONCLUSIONS

1. This is the most important planning application to come forward in the town of Lewes for many years and will set a precedent for all future development in the town.
2. Lewes Phoenix Rising Ltd is a community development company that has risen to the challenge created by the Localism Act to participate in the development of our own community, working alongside local authorities and developers and working with local people.
3. We have carefully considered the proposals put forward by Santon and Lewes District Council (LDC) and in our view, based on our extensive community consultation, they fail to respond to the town's vision for its future.
4. Our initial appraisal of the viability of their proposals leads us to conclude that they are not deliverable using conventional development finance methods.
5. We have also found that, in spite of our best efforts, our Council and their development partner have failed to respond to our requests to work together to make a better plan for the site.
6. We already know that our Town Council has objected to the Santon/LDC proposal on the grounds that it does not meet the objectively assessed needs for housing in Lewes and it is likely to result in the loss of an economic hub in Lewes which is a critical part of the cultural heritage of our town.
7. We therefore conclude that the existing proposals require further work to make them acceptable to the citizens of Lewes and to the South Downs National Park.
8. **We respectfully request that the South Downs National Park Planning Committee asks Santon and Lewes District Council to consider carefully our objections to their existing proposals before their planning application is determined.**
9. We are very clear that the site needs investment, and we welcome the fact that our Council and its development partner wish to make this investment for the benefit of our town. However, unless the flaws in the current plans are resolved, we do not believe that this is a scheme that could be delivered and therefore should not be approved as it stands.
10. **The solution to this situation is for LDC and Santon to work with local people and organisations, including Lewes Phoenix Rising, to create a plan that we can all support with the community benefits that we require secured by a robust section 106 agreement. We believe that this is entirely possible, and that through our suggested approach we can create a plan for the Phoenix Estate that we can all be proud of.**



# LEWES PHOENIX RISING

www.lewesphoenixrising.com | team@lewesphoenixrising.com  
 Old Foundry Workshops, 32 North Street, Lewes BN7 2PH

## SUMMARY

Santon/LDC	Lewes Phoenix Rising
<p>Their plans fail to <b>“foster the economic and social well-being of the community within” the National Park</b>, a key duty of the National Park (Environment Act 1995) by destroying a cluster of locally grown economic and social activity and by failing to provide homes that local people in housing need can afford.</p>	<p>Our plans <b>build on the existing community in the Phoenix Estate</b>, supporting economic activity and promoting social well-being through the provision of an environment that fosters a sustainable community, including the cluster of small manufacturers and service industries that have grown up on the estate and the provision of socially rented housing that the people in housing need in Lewes can afford.</p>
<p>Their plans fail to <b>“conserve and enhance...cultural heritage”</b> as required by the National Parks Act 1949, by demolishing many buildings of “local significance” (English Heritage, 2015) with the consequent damage to the rich cultural life that has grown on the estate over many years.</p>	<p>Our plans preserve the best of the historic Iron Foundry, thus <b>building on the unique cultural heritage of Lewes</b> to support the evolution of an even more diverse and vibrant future for our town.</p>
<p>They have failed to <b>allow “the communities of the Park to take an active part in decisions about their future”</b> (Defra Circular 2010) by only working with a small number of organisations in the town and by failing to respond to some of the key concerns raised in the wider public consultation exercise.</p>	<p><b>Our plans have been developed hand in hand with the existing community on the Phoenix Estate</b>, and with local people through extensive consultation exercises throughout the town, gaining the active support of over 1,300 residents for our proposals.</p>
<p>They have <b>failed to “work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community</b> (National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 66). Santon/LDC have not consulted the vast majority of the businesses on the site about their future requirements and so have failed to take account of their views.</p>	<p><b>Our plans are based on a detailed survey of the existing activities</b>, working with the businesses on the site to design space that will support their enterprises whilst being part of a wider sustainable development of the site.</p>
<p>Their plans <b>do not “proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, businesses and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs”</b> (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 17). Instead, their plans undermine a thriving local place, replacing it with an economically unsustainable development with homes that local people cannot afford. The opportunities to provide sustainable transport and energy infrastructure are lost.</p>	<p><b>Our plans are based on the objectively assessed needs in the town</b>, for affordable housing (based on the LDC Affordable Housing Needs Assessment January 2014) and on our own research about the need for affordable workspace in the town. We will promote genuinely sustainable energy solutions for the development, and reduce car journeys by promoting alternatives based on modern transport and travel planning.</p>



## LEWES PHOENIX RISING

www.lewesphoenixrising.com | team@lewesphoenixrising.com  
Old Foundry Workshops, 32 North Street, Lewes BN7 2PH

### INTRODUCTION

11. Lewes Phoenix Rising Ltd (LPR) is a community developer, based in Lewes. It is a company limited by guarantee, funded by local people, with over 1300 active supporters and a management team made up of local professionals and business people.
12. LPR fully accepts the principle of the development of the North Street site, but as a community developer our development model is based on building what we need now without compromising the needs of future generations.
13. Successful development is achieved when the aspirations of the local community are met. To do this we place equal emphasis on local knowledge and need, value for land, profit, community benefit, innovation and sustainability.
14. By balancing these competing forces we enable different interest groups to work together towards mutually beneficial results. In this way, development becomes an exciting and empowering process, creating places where people can live, work and have fun.
15. Since the formation of the company, we have sought to work with Santon and Lewes District Council (LDC) to develop our ideas together, but at this stage Santon and LDC have not taken up our invitation to work together. We remain committed to working with Santon and LDC as the plans for the Phoenix Estate progress.
16. In this context LPR has prepared a masterplan for the North Street area of Lewes, which responds to the concerns of people in the town, based on the research and extensive public consultation that we have carried out in the last 12 months.
17. We believe in the importance of the links between places, their cultural heritage and peoples' lives. Over the years, members of our team have worked on innovative, important schemes which have revitalised urban neighbourhoods that had lost their connection to their past and their way to the future.
18. We are also committed to local democracy as the essential guardian of change and growth in neighbourhoods. We share the Council of Europe's Faro Convention's intention to link cultural heritage with fundamental freedoms. By the destruction of our heritage, we also destroy our culture. Our work and processes therefore seek to build on our heritage to point the way to well-being, prosperity and diverse, harmonious communities. This approach is also enshrined in the purposes of National Parks in England.



## LEWES PHOENIX RISING

www.lewesphoenixrising.com | team@lewesphoenixrising.com  
Old Foundry Workshops, 32 North Street, Lewes BN7 2PH

### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

19. This development is the largest proposal to come forward in any National Park in recent years. It will have a profound impact on the town for future generations.
20. Lewes Phoenix Rising wishes to see this development used as a vital opportunity to build on the historic strengths of our town to ensure that it has a future which is economically sustainable, providing opportunities for the town to prosper in a way that is affordable to all its citizens, encouraging local people to contribute to the economy of the town, and protecting the town from the economic threats of rising land prices, commodity prices and global economic instability which characterise our age.
21. We have considered the Santon/Lewes District Council's plans, and we are particularly concerned about three specific areas which will prevent the town from achieving these possibilities;
  - The failure to provide genuinely affordable homes to meet the current and future needs of the town;
  - The damage to the local economy that will result from the destruction of the existing interdependent cluster of economic activity that has developed on the Phoenix Estate in the past ten years;
  - The destruction of the training and development activities for our young people that have evolved on the site.
22. We have developed an alternative approach to these aspects of the proposed development that we would like to see introduced through the formal consultation process before the application is finally considered by the South Downs National Park Planning Committee.
23. In addition to the 390+ homes required by policy to be built on the site, our proposals would:
  - Create additional genuinely affordable homes, through use of modern sustainable construction methods and through the generation of cross-subsidy from the market housing on the site;
  - Support and develop the town's distinctive economy, by providing sustainable workspaces on the site that build on the already successful manufacturing and arts-crafts cluster that currently exists;
  - Build on the hub of activities and training opportunities for our young people which ensures that the town is able to respond to tomorrow's challenges.
24. *Appendix One* describes our approach in more detail.
25. Our proposals are consistent with the aim of **“fostering the economic and social well-being of the community within” the National Park**, a key duty of the National Park (Environment Act 1995).



## LEWES PHOENIX RISING

www.lewesphoenixrising.com | team@lewesphoenixrising.com  
Old Foundry Workshops, 32 North Street, Lewes BN7 2PH

### CONSERVE AND ENHANCE CULTURAL HERITAGE

26. Lewes is acknowledged to be one of the most distinctive and creative towns in England. It has a long, rich and vibrant cultural heritage, with many aspects of the modern town reflecting these deep roots; bonfire, printing, manufacturing and the creative arts.
27. LPR has considered the cultural heritage of the Phoenix Estate and how any development should build carefully on the best of the past, whilst responding to today's needs without compromising the needs of future generations.
28. We have looked at this from two perspectives:
- The buildings themselves; and
  - The activities that the site has supported for many years.
29. We have surveyed the former Foundry buildings and the sheds added to them for Every's expansion into steelwork (early C20th) – the area which we have identified as Phoenix Place, 30% of the North St site (see *Appendix Two*). Our survey shows that the buildings are structurally sound and capable of being renovated at relatively low cost for light industrial use. Many of these buildings are twentieth century iron and steel framed buildings designed and made by Every's at the Phoenix to be clad in whatever suited their customer's needs and so readily suitable for recladding. In their report on these buildings, English Heritage, whilst unsurprisingly finding that they do not merit listing, did note that: *"The buildings do, however, have clear local interest as the survival of a major element of the industrial history of the town of Lewes."* (English Heritage Decision Notice, April 2015, attached as *Appendix Three*).
30. By refurbishing these buildings, our proposals both conserve these locally significant buildings and create affordable light industrial units that allow the continuation of the type of industrial activities that have taken place on the site for many years.
31. On the other hand, the Santon/LDC proposal is not only to demolish a Victorian foundry building which the heritage statement accompanying the application itself notes as regionally significant, (Jessop Consultancy, 'Heritage Significance') but also to replace these flexible structures with pastiche 'industrial' brick buildings, such as the 'Chimney Building' shown in the illustrations of the proposed development, which actually confuses the understanding of their history. (See *Appendix Four The Real History of the Phoenix Iron Works*).
32. We conclude that our plans are consistent with the National Park's duty to **"conserve and enhance...cultural heritage"** as required by the National Parks Act 1949



## LEWES PHOENIX RISING

www.lewesphoenixrising.com | team@lewesphoenixrising.com  
Old Foundry Workshops, 32 North Street, Lewes BN7 2PH

### COMMUNITIES TO TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE

33. LPR believes that development is as much about community benefit as it is about developer profit.
34. This is even more the case when the developer is an elected local authority.
35. In this particular case, whilst the local authority owns 26% of the land, it has conspicuously not taken part in the public consultation process, delegating all the activity to Santon and its consultants.
36. At LPR we have worked hard to engage with our elected District Councillors with respect to our concerns about the emerging plans, with only limited success. Of our recent mailouts to councillors, we have received few responses, none of which addressed the concerns that we raised.
37. On the other hand, Lewes Town Councillors, our MP and prospective parliamentary candidates from Labour and the Green Party have all backed our approach publicly, urging Santon and the District Council to work with us to achieve a solution that meets the needs of the town as well as those of the developer and landowners.
38. With respect to the public consultation exercises that have been organised by Santon, each of the reports published after the three consultation workshops showed, amongst other things, strong support for the provision of space to accommodate the creative community on the North Street site. The final plan does not respond to this requirement; instead there is insufficient space of the appropriate type on the site, and the alternatives that are proposed are not actually available (see *Appendix Five* for the analysis).
39. It was following the March 2014 consultation exercise (the last consultation exercise held by Santon in the town) that Lewes Phoenix Rising Ltd was established to seek to influence Santon and Lewes District Council to listen seriously to these concerns. It was however very clear from their responses over a series of meetings that their plans were already more or less formed, and that they did not intend to listen further to the opinions of the town on this matter.
40. The Defra National Park Circular of 2010 requires National Parks to ensure that **“communities of the Park [should] take an active part in decisions about their future”**. So far, in our view, this has not been the case with this proposal, and we would ask that the National Park requires Santon and LDC to engage further with the people of the town of Lewes and take account of their very clearly held views before this application is determined.



## LEWES PHOENIX RISING

www.lewesphoenixrising.com | team@lewesphoenixrising.com  
Old Foundry Workshops, 32 North Street, Lewes BN7 2PH

### WORKING CLOSELY WITH THOSE AFFECTED BY PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

41. Lewes Phoenix Rising believes that developers and landowners have a duty to consider the impact that any development will have on those most directly affected by it, and to seek to mitigate any detrimental impact by taking appropriate measures.
42. In this case, through our survey in July 2014, we identified more than 450 people working in 50 small businesses on the site ranging from car valeting to a dance academy. Our survey results are contained in *Appendix Six*. At this stage 75% of those businesses had not been contacted by Santon regarding the impact of the development on their business.
43. We carried out a more detailed survey of the likely impact of the development in the autumn of 2014. The results of this survey are summarised in *Appendix Seven*.
44. 55 of the 59 respondents said that it would be problematic or very problematic to their business if they had to move off the Phoenix Estate. 48 respondents said that low rent was one of the three most important factors in their choosing to locate on the Phoenix Estate.
45. Even Santon's own report, *Managing Creative Flexible Workspace* (planning application document 10, March 2015) notes in the recommendations that:  
*"Comparing rent across the Phoenix Industrial Estate as well as comparing rents across the wider Lewes area has highlighted that there is a wide gap in cost. It would be difficult for Santon to try and replicate prices due to the large percentage of disparity across different businesses."* (Make Good, 2015)
46. Nowhere in the planning application is there any indication as to how Santon proposes to work with the existing businesses to support them through the transition process.
47. On the other hand, Lewes Phoenix Rising has worked on a detailed interconnections survey that shows how the existing businesses relate to each other and to their supply chains and customers in Lewes.
48. This shows that there is a very good opportunity to capitalise on this rich, existing network of economic activity, as long as it is not damaged or destroyed during the development process.
49. For this reason, we would work with businesses to prepare a detailed decanting and reprovision strategy to ensure that there is minimal disruption during the development phase. In brief, all businesses that wish to remain on the Phoenix Estate, would be brought together in the buildings of the Phoenix Ironworks, which would be refurbished one-by-one.
50. This approach responds to the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 66 which says that **"applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the view of the community"**.



## LEWES PHOENIX RISING

www.lewesphoenixrising.com | team@lewesphoenixrising.com  
Old Foundry Workshops, 32 North Street, Lewes BN7 2PH

### SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

51. This development provides a once in a generation opportunity to respond to the needs of Lewes, to deliver the homes, jobs and infrastructure that the town needs.
52. In the view of LPR this development provides a wonderful opportunity to:
- Provide new homes to meet the town’s objectively assessed need;
  - Make a stronger link between home and workplace to cut down on unnecessary car journeys, commuting and the need for excessive car parking space;
  - Tackle the pressures already being felt on the town’s transport networks;
  - Generate green energy for the development and potentially for other parts of town.
53. Our strategy is therefore to:
- Target housing at small families and young people who are on low incomes and already in housing need in the town (LDC Affordable Housing Needs Assessment, January 2014);
  - Link some of the new homes to jobs on the Phoenix Estate, thus creating a walkable community, where people no longer need cars;
  - Reduce parking to the minimum necessary to ensure the viability of the development, with investment in green travel planning to generate significant modal shift away from car journeys towards car sharing, walking, cycling and public transport;
  - Commit to a Zero Carbon target for the development, using tried and tested new technologies that have been shown to work in other schemes.
54. By contrast, our analysis of the Santon/LDC plans demonstrates that they fail to take advantage of the opportunities that this development offers for social, economic and environmental sustainability. In particular, the Santon/LDC scheme:
- Fails to respond to the objectively assessed need for housing for people in the town of Lewes by providing homes that even LDC recognise will be unaffordable to those on low incomes;
  - Fails to tie some of the homes on the site to jobs on the site, thus promoting a commuter culture which is energy intensive;
  - Increases parking to an unsustainable level, thus promoting car journeys rather than providing sustainable shared vehicle and public transport solutions (see *Appendix Eight*);
  - Fails to provide a Zero Carbon option for energy reduction and generation which is viable and sustainable (see *Appendix Nine*).
55. This means that Santon/LDC have failed to meet the challenge to **“proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, businesses and industrial units infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs”** (NPPF, paragraph 17).