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Subject: CJAG comments

New building?

Shop Stop is an adequate building and - for a building of the mid 1980s - has continued to perform reasonably well. But it's hopelessly outdated, and does not make nearly enough of its location. Surface car parks, in particular, are a serious waste of space (and there's no reason that the car parking at the site couldn't be underground - as it is, cars travel up a ramp to get to the car park). Clapham Junction is the centre of the area, at the focus of the main roads, and also the focus of much of the retail traffic - and I think a landmark (albeit not a ludicrously out of scale one) is actually a sensible move. The current building 'blends in' in a rather 1980s sort of way, and has really become a bit of a non-event.

That said, the north exit of the station is in desperate need of improvement - I used to live on that side, and it's mucky, dark, run-down, completely bereft of facilities, and frankly dangerous after dusk. Plus, it doesn't connect with the newly-lift-equipped overhead walkway, as no-one bothered to put in an exit at the Northern end. If funds are scarce, even though it doesn't benefit me personally, I think we should accept that that end of the station is the one that most needs support and improvement.

Tall buildings?

I don't object to tall buildings, provided they are of good quality. Probably best illustrated by a Battersea-based example: Montevetro off Battersea square, for example is an example of a high quality landmark that actually acts as a feature, and is surrounded by high quality public space - and works well with the far older St Mary's church next door. It's a far better building than the rather bland lower-rise blocks that line the riverside west of Battersea Heliport, and for the most part contribute nothing other than a complete lack of character. The buildings to the north of the station on the Winstanley Estate are a good point of reference (circa 20 storeys); allowing for parallax I'd have thought up to about 15 storeys would be perfectly acceptable, above that would be pushing it.

Improving access

I can't see any realistic prospect of new subways - they cost a fortune. I think improving the existing one (and the bridge) - and significantly improving the layout of the gates at each end (moving the barrier line into the centre / the open space, so that there can be more barriers) is likely to be the most cost effective approach. The existing plans to reopen the Brighton Yard entrance are also a good development, though it's a shame the direct exit on St John's hill is not being used. A serious de-cluttering of the pavement is needed (which I believe is planned under the Exemplar scheme, though apart from lamp post locations being painted on the pavements in the last week, I've not seen much action there).

The subway needs attention - not hugely expensive attention. There's scope for more retail within the subway (when you see the side doors open, for example to the right of the ticket barriers as you enter the subway, there is a huge amount of largely unused space under some of the platforms). Obviously this would have to be designed rather carefully to avoid making the congestion worse - but when there are shops, there's usually more of an incentive to look after the place - and this could make it feel a little more well kept. The floor needs repaving with something that cleans better - the current paving is inadequate for an internal building and is permanently rather mucky. The ceiling needs further attention to reduce the leaks (there's already been some work, which was an improvement but didn't solve the problem).

And let's not forget the Falcon Road bridge, which is used by those living on the north side when they're not keen on the rather dodgy vicinity of the Northern exit in the evening: the Falcon Road route at least is busy and well lit, compared to the area under the arches of Platform 1, so is perceived as safer. The Council have put in a sustained effort here in lighting it better, cleaning the walls, getting rid of what used to be wildly overgrown vegetation at each end, and even putting in a bit of colour on the girders - and (recently) repaving the pavements - all of which is a good development and which should be welcomed. But it still needs some proper pigeon proofing!