

CJ station comments DR comments

From : Tim Glass

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The comments that I have read on your website to date seem to be from local people who obviously know the station well and are, equally obviously, aware of its shortcomings! It does strike me, however, that a fundamental decision has to be made concerning the objectives and, in particular, the scope of any redevelopment which you wish to support and I welcome the way that CJAG is turning its attention towards playing a positive role in collecting and coordinating views from local people.

On the one hand, one could lobby for more modest (but maybe more deliverable) piecemeal improvements (which is clearly all that some contributors want) or the objective could be to play a positive part in shaping a comprehensive scheme to provide a new town centre redevelopment, which could deliver an excellent modern station and provide further facilities such as shops, entertainment and possibly a residential element too.

The latter, far more ambitious alternative, will obviously be more expensive and disruptive but the station facilities are very poor at present (with a lot of wasted or under used space) and, especially taking into account the proposed expansion of the rail network, I don't think that "tinkering" with the existing station can adequately meet the demands that will be placed upon it when the network is expanded, quite apart from its adequacy at present.

Surely there is a need for a decent modern station which would provide much more circulation space, as well as proper facilities (decent ticketing hall, toilets, cafes, restaurants, shops, good linkage between and access to platforms, disabled provision etc). Good design is obviously important and any redevelopment should include and restore the old station building as well as compliment the important older buildings and other elements which are fundamental to the general character of Clapham Junction although it should be recognised that not all parts of the existing town centre and Conservation area make positive contributions at present.

It does strike me that a comprehensive redevelopment of the station should also provide a valuable opportunity to improve the bus services and associated facilities. Ideally, provision should be made which will allow some of the buses to pull off St. Johns Hill, and make better use of Grant Road, which will improve traffic flow (and I don't mean faster), to provide safer and more pleasant queuing for at least some of the stops (if queuing is ever pleasant!). The current taxi arrangements are also very poor.

These are just a few general aspirations, but it's obvious that to deliver a major scheme such as this will cost a lot of money and if this is to be provided substantially, if not wholly, by the private sector (which it will) it's got to be

viable and the major landowners/developer(s) will have to be prepared and indeed encouraged to take it on. Viability will inevitably lead to pressure for taller buildings and I know this is where we stray into more controversial territory but, unless the public sector and network rail make major contributions (very unlikely in the current economic circumstances) I can't see that a comprehensive redevelopment scheme will ever happen if it's limited to, say 8 storeys (although it may not have to be 42!).

Whilst CJAG has provided an effective voice for local residents to express their views (which are important, of course) I do believe that these should be co-ordinated and balanced with the interests of other users of Clapham Junction, as well as local businesses, the Clapham Junction Town Centre Partnership and other interested parties, including inwards investors.

A fundamental problem in the past has been, in my opinion, a lack of cohesion between all the different parties, and consequently a lack of clarity of a shared vision of the future, which has encouraged the Council to play a reactive rather than proactive role and developers to pursue stated policies which subsequently prove to be undeliverable (e.g. tall buildings). Such lack of clarity has led to delays, wasted costs and missed opportunities. If such a shared vision, which takes full account of realistic funding and private sector viability, can be worked out with the Council, by the time that developers feel it is safe to put their heads above the parapet again, the chances of success for a future initiative to deliver a scheme- which most (it'll never be all) want, will be greatly enhanced.

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