



27th April 2008

Mr Michael Cavanagh
Media Relations Manager for London & South East
Network Rail
40 Melton Street
London NW1 2EE

Dear Mr Cavanagh

Former Ritz Building / Cinema Site – Royal Tunbridge Wells Kent
Refurbishment of Tunbridge Wells mainline railway station

You will be aware that Network Rail owns a tunnel which runs underneath Royal Tunbridge Wells in Kent. This tunnel runs below the former Ritz Cinema site which has now been a ‘grot spot’ and health hazard for many years, in fact the town’s residents have been waiting for some good news for 8 years on the derelict former cinema site lying opposite the Town Hall. It ranks as the top ‘grot spot’ of the town.

We welcomed the decision of the Council to facilitate a competition by RIBA architects to come up with sustainable solutions. We found the winner’s submissions adequate and some relief was felt that a silver line is showing on the horizon.

However when one of our members made recently some research on why the ugly and hazardous building could not be demolished right away, despite having a planning consent, we were informed that the setback was being caused by Network Rail. It was claimed that Network Rail is in their right to delay demolition and construction, as they would want to have assurance that at no time the railway tunnel comes under threat to collapse or become vulnerable.

We share your concern about the safety of passengers and are worried that the possible impact of the development over the tunnel had obviously been omitted, or had not the attention it deserved during the Planning phase. However, we do find this concern a concern in itself as the tunnel should have been maintained so as not to collapse at the first sign of some building activity above. Are we being told the truth and the whole truth?

As it is the man on the street’s interpretation that the progress on the dilapidated development site opposite the Town Hall is held at ransom by Network Rail I would like some clarification. Could you please let us know the position of your company with regard to the site and what your real concerns are? We have asked the Council for a simple clarification, but to no avail. Perhaps you could provide us with some information.

Put simply, why can the cinema site not be demolished right now with development being undertaken in the shortest of times thereafter? If it cannot be then why can it not be and what will Network Rail be doing to assist the developer in every way possible, as it seems rather perverse to dig a tunnel under a major town and then expect no building above without a great deal of negotiation. What papers do you hold that dictates no developer may develop above a tunnel or is it a simple implied standard?

Perhaps you may like to address the Town Forum at some point in future to remove this intrigue.

Refurbishment of Tunbridge Wells mainline railway station

The Railway Station in Royal Tunbridge Wells has itself been featured as a site in need of improvement some years ago, even by our former M.P., Archie Norman. Regularly this station comes up on the 'grot spot' register even though it is Grade 2 listed.

Recently a press release was made to the local press informing us that this station would be subject of a revamp in the near future. Would it be possible for you to update me when the works are targeted to take place?

It would be of particular benefit to know what works are happening, as the town will celebrate in 2009 its 100th anniversary of the Royal prefix and its long association with the Royal family. It is most probable that a member of the Royal family maybe asked to attend an event during that year and it would therefore be beneficial if we could meet to explain what simple repairs could be made so as to make the station look, at the very least, respectable.

Please accept my thanks in advance for any information you can provide in the above matters. Please be assured that you are more than welcome to address a future Town Forum meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you soon and ask that you reply to myself at the following address:

- Christopher Thomas, Chairman, Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum
c/o Mrs Samantha Timms, Senior Committee Administrator, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council,
Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells Kent TN1 1RS

Yours sincerely

Christopher Thomas
Chairman
Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

www.townforum.org.uk