



Well, it looks as though they've finally finished crunching the place down.

Not that there's an enormous amount left to crunch down!

Whilst reading a recent report about the redevelopment of the site, it became apparent that enough of the original buildings to encompass "16x Three bedroom dwellings", would mean a remarkably small amount of the original buildings being left, which is very sad indeed.

Whilst I can understand that it is cheaper to start from scratch and produce a dwelling using modern materials, there are the additional factors of character and also the fact that there must be a very good reason why the structure it replaces has survived for almost 100 years relatively unscathed.

It looks as though the destructive phase of the redevelopment has ended, as the ends of any remaining structures have been neatened up and straightened, as can be seen in the banner image at the top of this page. As far as I can see from what few plans I've been able to find of the redevelopment, the road layout is going to follow the symmetry of the original arrowhead layout very closely. The gap in the frontage shown above is where a road will come through from the rear of the site, with the main road coming onto the site through the spot where the Water Tower once stood, more or less.

I am convinced that this is pretty much as bad as things are going to get, but then again I am naturally pessimistic. I will feel happier if nothing else has disappeared in next month's visit and a few new buildings start to pop up in the centre of this once majestic site.

The lovely weather and portion of chips in nearby Hailsham High Street lifted our moods very slightly after the shock of seeing our beloved Hellingly in such a bad way....

Mission Operatives: Ghost & Skyframe.



ABOVE: We look south and we can suddenly see trees. This was never the way before. Not good.



ABOVE & BELOW: This is the central nucleus of the site as it once was, looking from The Nurses' Accommodation Block. The Water Tower would have stood just where the excavator is, with the jib stretched out. The Main Hall would have been just to the left of this photo and the kitchens and laundry area would have been dead centre of the photo. A lot of the brickwork heaped up here is the remains of The Hall. It is hard to believe that the same view (from a couple of feet to the left) is seen in happier times, BELOW.



BELOW: Some brave residents battle on, despite the chaos of the demolition surrounding them.





ABOVE & BELOW: The vast majority of Hellingly's enormous network of service tunnels was filled in between May and July 2010, but it's nice to see a few little bits of them still remaining defiantly. It was ever so tempting to get down into them and have a look, but would I have got out again?



BELOW: This block just to the right of the Nurse's Accomodation block is clearly coming down and does not show any signs that any of it will be kept.

It is something of a contentious issue that a lot more of the site would have been useable for conversion if the developers hadn't of removed the rooves. This has the effect of causing massive water damage internally, which makes woodwork rot and concrete expand and split, especially over winter months, which is exactly when the rooves were removed for the most part.

Some people would assert that the majority of the wards were structurally sound before this happened and the only reason for it would be so that the developers would be able to submit new plans in which a lot less of the original buildings have been kept, which is exactly what appears to have happened - the earliest plans we could find of the redevelopment bear a pretty good resemblance to the majority of the site as it would have appeared intact. Oddly enough, some plans of the site released earlier last year bear very little resemblance to the way Hellingly appeared when built.

Funny that...



BELOW: The Nurses' Accomodation Block (centre) appears to be relatively untouched apart from the removal of the windows from the apertures. We are unsure at the present time as to whether these buildings will be kept. We hope to be able to bring you good news next visit....



BELOW: It is now extremely difficult to say where certain key features of the site originally stood. It's also very hard to stomach that out of almost 63 acres of buildings, only 3 or 4 of them will be kept.



BELOW: It was quite distressing to be able to look across a gap that used to contain one of the most exciting parts of the entire Hellingly site. The graffiti on the far wall (we don't know the title of the piece, but we have christened it "Chip in her Shoulder") used to be visible through a doorway at the far end of the Blue Room, which was absolutely dead centre of the centre point of the site's symmetry. It was a fantastic location with some truly awesome graffiti in the space of just a few square metres. The original view can be seen in the first 2 photos BELOW, when the location was intact.



BELOW: This point is the dead centre of the frontage of the site. It is easy to forget that Hellingly was laid out almost symmetrically. A road will come through the gap in the frontage and the two blocks will create a kind of gateway into the site. The main road into the redeveloped site will come through roughly where the Water Tower originally stood and a network of roads will almost follow the original layout of the buildings. It is good that the ends of the rooves and buildings have been squared off to the nearest gable support, as this indicates that the open ends of the buildings will be patched up and closed in due course.



BELOW: The dreaded Cruncher. 100 years of history turn to dust here.



BELOW: This piano has travelled a considerable distance from the point where we first found it, just over 18 months ago. It was in a room on the 2nd floor of the Nurses' Accomodation Block, and is now just behind where the Chief medical Superintendent's Lodge was.



ABOVE & BELOW: The Watchers.... still survives for the moment. Seen in better days ABOVE on 23rd April 2009 and BELOW in May 2011.



ABOVE: Love to, but I think they've all been driven out.

RIGHT: I'm not sure this fireplace will be a feature in any conversion into a new home - something of an acquired taste....!

BELOW: Agent Skyframe reminisces on happier times for the site.









ABOVE: This corridor would have lead from the reception area of the Admissions building, right into the heart of the Hellingly site.

The Admissions block was gutted by fire in the early 2000's and would need extensive work to bring it back into use. However, it is the only part of the site that is listed, so maybe it will be kept.

The entire ground floor corridor area was covered up to about a metre up the wall with these fantastic glazed tiles. A fair number of them have been smashed in the fire or demolition process, but I'd wager a good bet that a lot of them have (thankfully) have been taken home and lovingly cleaned and restored by a good number of concerned explorers and Architecturalists.