



Sussex Heritage Trust Recognises Hove Developer for their Sensitive Conversion of an Historic Pub



Creative Developments sympathetic transformation of an old pub with a colourful past has led to the company winning Sussex Heritage Trust's Small Scale Residential Award 2009.

It's great news for owners Lewis Watts and Julie Turner who used their combined expertise in the fields of estate agency and interior design to renovate the dilapidated Star of Brunswick in Hove, East Sussex.

Not only is it a fine example of Creative Developments fundamental ethos of ensuring all their projects successfully blend new and old it has also transformed the pub into a building the local community can once more be proud of.

Lewis said: "The Star of Brunswick is an important building which needed sympathetic handling in its conversion. Most locals have drunk in there at some point and whilst there were many who were glad to see it go there were equally as many who mourned its loss so it was vital we got it right.

"We had great support from local residents including the late Liverpoolian artist Yan Kel Feather who lived next door but we also had some opposition from CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) who are always reluctant to see pubs close although we were able to reassure the planners a number of new pubs and bars had recently opened.

"We are delighted to have received the award which recognises our sensitive handling of the development, turning something which had become very run down into a building which adds value to the local district." The Star of Brunswick was designed by ambitious architect Charles Augustin Busby, the man responsible for much of Brighton's distinctive Regency architecture, in the early 1800s. Busby's greatest achievement is widely regarded as being the Brunswick area of Brighton and Hove where he planned not just housing but a whole new Regency town which provided the necessary infrastructure and for all the social groups which lived there.

Brunswick Square was the focal point with luxury houses whilst Brunswick Streets East and West provided the working class accommodation. The Star of Brunswick formed part of that vision and became a popular pub with the working class.

By the Thirties the pub had become a well-known meeting place for the gay and lesbian community. However by the 21st Century the pub had become increasingly run down, becoming a focus for violent behaviour and drugs, until it was closed and sold.

Julie said: "We took a gamble as we bought it without planning permission which put a lot of other buyers off. But the gamble paid off and it was lovely to restore an old building which had become so dilapidated into units which are light, airy and fabulous places to live in.

"We produced contemporary interiors but left as many original features as we could despite it being much harder to do this than rip everything out. It is great that this work has been recognized by the Sussex Heritage Trust."



Before and after views



Julie's husband Jon Turner, an architect, drew the designs for the building, turning it into two apartments, one duplex and one townhouse. Julie described it as one of the most difficult conversions he had undertaken because it was a purpose-built pub.

"Often there is a bit more cost involved and certainly much more design input is required to produce a good result. Spaces are trickier to achieve light and flow and in this instance we put glass floors in two units to borrow light from above," said Julie.

"We kept the loading bay for the beer barrels and I turned it into an internal courtyard feature and the tunnel under the street is now an open larder in the maisonette."

The judges described the development as "a good example of planning for maximum use of space for a modern lifestyle. A well orchestrated change of use respecting the existing building while introducing a clever use of space".

Lewis and Julie have also recently finished a contemporary block of eight townhouses in Poets Corner, Hove.

All eight properties were successfully sold by the time they were completed and they have purchased a property in Brighton's North Laine which they will shortly begin renovating.

They are continuing to look for new projects to carry on the success they have already achieved.

For more information about Creative Developments visit www.creativedevelopmentsuk.com or call 01273 844644/203230.