

CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

COMMENTS ON CHESTER RACECOURSE OUTLINE REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS (APPLICATION 19/02298/OUT)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This proposal is far more limited than those previously submitted (18/02677/OUT, 18/02678/FUL and 18/02679/FUL) and is confined to an events building behind the existing hotel with basement parking, service parking, grandstand, and lawn on the site of the present Leverhulme stand.
- 1.2 This response deliberately confines itself to the impact of the proposal on Chester's heritage and does not consider traffic, noise or other important matters of amenity and safety. The Society has summarised the archaeological and townscape importance of the site in its response to the earlier proposals and this information is not repeated.

2.0 Archaeology

- 2.1 In the absence of information on foundation design, the impact of the proposal on buried archaeology cannot be gauged accurately, and such information will be required before a definitive response can be given. If, as the Development Control Archaeologist assumes, they are of pile and slab construction, along with any other groundworks they should be confined to recent deposits as far as possible and intrusion into earlier deposits minimised. As the Development Control Archaeologist has recommended, a strip and record exercise would be required, especially on the site of the proposed basement car park, to record the remains of eighteenth-century buildings, with more detailed excavation of any earlier remains. Any core samples collected during the work should be analysed alongside samples already taken for their possible contribution to our understanding of former river channels. A report on the results of this work should be published, to complement those in volume 82 of this Society's *Journal*.

3.0 Design

- 3.1 As stated above, the current proposal is far more modest than those submitted in 2018. In particular, the unsympathetic Lane building has been omitted, the grandstand has been moved to the western end of the site (presently a car park), and a publicly accessible lawn created on the site of the Leverhulme stand, allowing an unhindered view between the City Walls and the Roodee. These are significant improvements that the Society welcomes.
- 3.2 However, we note that the height of the grandstand (c 30m AOD) is still approximately the same as in the previous scheme. It would thus compete with buildings immediately inside the City Walls, significantly harming the tiered roofscape that is a distinctive feature of the skyline of the southern and western sides of the city, especially when viewed from the far side of the railway viaduct. This is listed as a key view in the publication draft of the CWaC *Local Plan* Part 2, 24, no 19 and page 259. The building does not justify such prominence, and at least one storey (preferably two) should therefore be removed, bringing its height down to c 20-25m AOD. We leave detailed comment on the design of the two buildings to others.

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For Chester Archaeological Society
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