

CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

COMMENTS ON PLANNING APPLICATION FOR REDEVELOPMENT OF 105–11 FOREGATE STREET (19/02556/FUL)

Summary

- *A pre-determination evaluation will be required to ascertain the character of archaeological remains close to the Foregate Street frontage and the destruction caused by the present building and associated ground disturbance.*
- *The use of piled foundations for the present building means that archaeology has been destroyed without the opportunity for it to be investigated and understood. Foundation design for the new development, and archaeological mitigation, must take account of this danger.*
- *The proposed built form seems to comply with Council design policies and advice for Conservation Areas and to be generally satisfactory. However, some detailed modifications are desirable.*
- *This response deliberately confines itself to the impact of the proposal on Chester's heritage and does not consider traffic, parking, noise, overlooking and other important matters.*

Detailed comments

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The site lies within the Area of Archaeological Importance and Primary Archaeological Character Zone 23 of the *Chester Archaeological Plan*; also within the City Centre Conservation Area and Area F of the *Chester and Approaches Characterisation Study*. These documents describe the character and significance of the area, while the Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Heritage Statement do the same for the site itself. We do not propose to repeat this information.

2.0 Archaeology

- 2.1 Little is known about the archaeology of the site, and what there is relates to the rearward areas. As the Development Management Archaeologist points out, the character of the street frontage areas could be different, with cellaring or other forms of truncation of deposits. Even to the rear the character of the remains is not properly understood. However, the presence of waterlogging should be noted. This is unusual in Chester but has been found at other sites along Foregate Street and may give a hint about the ancient landscape; the Historic England Regional Science Adviser should be consulted about the potential.
- 2.2 The character of archaeological remains in street-frontage areas, and the degree of destruction caused by the present building, need to be determined by pre-determination evaluation in order to inform the design of foundations and other intrusions for the new development and resultant archaeological mitigation. In particular it should be established if the piled construction of the present building has led to desiccation of the waterlogged deposits.
- 2.3 Remains in this Archaeological Character Zone are classed as of national importance and therefore worthy of preservation *in situ*. Large intrusions, eg lift pits, should be confined to modern deposits if possible. Again, if possible, the present pile caps

should be reused. However, if new piles are proposed close to existing ones, larger-scale excavation should be considered as an alternative to supposed 'preservation *in situ*', as in reality the archaeology would be subject to 'death by a thousand cuts', being gradually eroded without being understood.

- 2.4 Significant discoveries should be published in a synthesis of archaeological work carried out on the eastern outskirts of Chester over the past two–three decades.

3.0 Built Form

- 3.1 The proposed development seems to respect the 'Design Principles for New Development' set out in the *Chester and Approaches Characterisation Study*, page 164.
- 3.2 The Foregate Street façade is approximately the same height as that of the present building, while the division into three bays, each of slightly differing appearance, adds interest. The rear extensions are higher than the existing but do not seem to overshadow the neighbouring Grade II Listed Parker's Buildings. The overall height, scale and massing are thus satisfactory.
- 3.3 However, the mixture of colours of brickwork is not entirely logical or satisfactory. It is presumably intended to give the impression of separate buildings, but this is belied on the Foregate Street façade by the uniform roofline and spacing of rooflights and to the rear by the use of lighter brick on all sides of the three-storey extension. Either only one colour of brick should be used, or the appearance of separate buildings needs to be carried through convincingly. Only one colour of brick should be used on the two-storey extensions.
- 3.4 The windows in the rear extensions are an improvement on the present blank walls. However, at the moment those on the second and third stories are small and mean-looking for frontages visible from the Bold Street car park and Parker's Buildings. Moreover, the height of brickwork above the windows of the topmost storey looks excessive (*cf* the unsatisfactory appearance of Waterside Court on Whipcord lane). The height of all these windows should be increased, while the apparent height of the brickwork above should be minimised by the use of one or more bands at eaves level, as used on the Foregate Street façade; the string courses on the two-storey extension could be omitted.

4.0 Surroundings

- 4.1 In the *Chester and Approaches Characterisation Study*, pages 153 and 160 the lack of 'green infrastructure' in the area is commented on and the Bold Street car park in characterised a key detractor. Could both problems be mitigated, and the surroundings of the proposed hotel be improved, if NCP could be persuaded to plant some trees or hedges around the car park?

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For Chester Archaeological Society
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