

CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL DEE HOUSE LISTED BUILDG CONSENT APPLICATION (21/03217/LBC)

CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY RESPONSE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Chester Archaeological Society is strongly supportive of the retention of Dee House, its restoration without obtrusive additions, and a viable future use that ensures public access to the grounds and exterior of the building and preferably to its interior so that its heritage values can be appreciated.
- 1.2 To achieve this we regretfully accept that the stabilisation needed after decades of neglect will result in the removal of internal walls and associated fittings. We also accept that the salvage of fittings will be determined by practicality and condition. Likewise, their reinstatement will need to be balanced against the practicalities and financial viability of possible future uses.

2.0 Heritage Significance and Planned Approach

- 2.1 However, given the re-affirmation in the letter from Historic England of 15 September that: 'The core of the building is a Georgian townhouse, which although in poor condition, still retains the ability to appreciate its historic plan form, high quality fixtures and fittings, and attractive decorative detailing', we consider that wherever possible interior fittings should be removed as intact as possible and stored against possible re-use, and that, so far as possible, redevelopment should retain significant elements of the historic plan form.
- 2.2 We therefore consider that the statement from the Conservation and Design Team that:

The intention to retain interior fittings for potential future reuse is laudable, though we would urge further thought on whether the potential incorporation of removed and retained fittings balances against the cost-implications of their storage and/or repair. We don't think we would be able to condition the incorporation of these fittings in a new development, though it could of course be encouraged. We also wonder though how far they retain heritage value in the event of complete loss of interior walls and their context being lost.

amounts to a self-fulfilling prophecy: if fittings are not retained, they cannot be incorporated into a new development. Similarly, it also seems to be accepted that the replacements of existing interior walls that are necessarily removed will not reproduce the historic plan form and that fittings will therefore lose their context or merely be reintroduced as a 'memory or relic' (*Heritage Design and Access Statement*, page 26, section 5.1.3).

3.0 Recommendation

- 3.1 Doubtless compromises will need to be made, but we consider that at the outset a more ambitious approach to the restoration of the building's historical character and significance is needed, and that the restoration of its historic plan form and the incorporation of salvaged material (or replicas) should be one factor in selecting a redevelopment partner.

Dr P Carrington FSA

For Chester Archaeological Society, 21 September 2021