

ERECTION OF RETIREMENT LIVING HOUSING AT CHARTERHALL DRIVE, CHESTER (23/00344/REM) – REVISED SCHEME

CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY COMMENTS

- 1.0 These comments refer to the revised scheme dated 10 May 2023 on the CWaC website.
- 2.0 The principal revisions to the external appearance of the building are: 1) replacement of the metal cladding of the topmost two stories by brickwork; 2) division of the southern arm into three warehouse-style bays (one in a lighter-coloured brick) with shallow pitched roofs; the northern arm appears still to have a flat roof with a ?low parapet; 3) lighter-style balconies on the southern façade.
- 3.0 A major failing of the original scheme was the failure of the design to make any attempt to respect local distinctiveness and history, as required by the Local Plan and NPPF, let alone to do so in an innovative way. The increased use of brickwork and the change in the design of the southern arm in the revised scheme are a nod in the right direction, but can reasonably be criticised as tokenism and facadism, as the design changes only apply to the relatively small southern arm of the building, overlooking the canal. Save for a small projecting wing on the east side, the much larger northern arm remains an unrelieved monolithic, monochromatic cuboid that bears no relationship in style to the southern arm.
- 4.0 The northern arm needs to be rethought to break up the massing and to echo the southern arm in its roof form; this might be done by breaking it up into bays, some surmounted by gables, and by the use of a second colour of brickwork. Lessons might be learned from the design of the retirement apartments on City Road on the north side of the canal.
- 5.0 With their upright supports, the balconies on the northern arm of the building are heavy and obtrusive. So far as possible, they should be lighter, as on the south arm.
- 6.0 Failing satisfactory further revision along these lines, the application should be rejected as setting a precedent for declining design quality adjacent to the Canal Conservation Area.

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