

# CHANGE OF USE FROM FORMER QUICKS BUILDING INTO PUBLIC CAR PARK WITH TWO RETAIL UNITS AND ERECTION OF DWELLINGS TO REAR (26/01689/FUL and 26/01690/FUL)

## CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY COMMENTS

### Summary

We deem it sensible to consider applications 26/01689/FUL and 26/01690/FUL together. The Chester Archaeological Society would welcome redevelopment of this long-disused site, the introduction of retail units and the principle of reusing an existing building. However, the proposed remodelling of the Lower Bridge Street façade does not address the fundamentally unsympathetic form of the building. The proposed primary use as a public MSCP is one that we consider unnecessary and would pre-empt the *Chester Movement Strategy*; residential/small office use would be far preferable. The style of the townhouses on Duke Street needs to be significantly refined to be sympathetic to their setting and if possible communal parking for occupiers of the whole development should be sited in an internal courtyard.

### Detail

#### 1.0 Archaeology

1.1 It is not clear what impact the proposals would have on ground levels and thus on any surviving archaeology. Our [comments](#) regarding the previously submitted scheme (18/04893/FUL), section 1.0, should be taken into account in this respect.

#### 2.0 Use

- 2.1 A fundamental concern with application 26/01689 is the proposal to repurpose the building as a public car park. This should not be considered until the *Chester Movement Strategy* has been finalised.
- 2.2 The Transport Assessment accompanying the application is based on the 'predict and provide' principle, justifying the development on the grounds that it would meet supposedly unmet demand for parking. However, the assessment concedes that there is spare capacity on the Little Roodee car park, and it should be noted that the top floor of the Pepper Street MSCP has been taken out of use for parking. By contrast, the *National Planning Policy Framework*, section 15: Promoting sustainable transport, takes a vision-led approach aimed at promoting sustainable transport and implicitly reducing car use; this is echoed in CWaC's LTP4. A frequently advocated way of reducing car use in urban areas is by reducing the amount of parking available, although this must be accompanied by adequate alternative means of transport. There will be an ongoing need for parking for businesses and residents in the Lower Bridge Street area, but in general traffic and parking within the City Walls/Inner Ring Road should be minimised to improve the urban environment and make it a more pleasant place to live, walk and explore.
- 2.3 Given the demand to maximise city-centre accommodation, a development that was primarily devoted to apartments, with perhaps retail and small offices, would be far preferable; a MSCP would be a waste of space along one of Chester's historic and most attractive streets. The principle of the townhouses on Duke Street for which permission is sought in 26/01690 is acceptable.

#### 3.0 Design

3.1 Although the reskinning of the main part of the building (26/01689/FUL) in brick would result in an appearance more in keeping with the rest of the street in terms of

materials, it would not improve its unsympathetic form (see previous [comments](#), section 2.1–2.3); the façade needs to be broken into shorter units of varied appearance which reflect the gradient of the street, if that were possible while reusing the existing structure.

- 3.2 The design of the terrace of townhouses on Duke Street (26/0190/FUL) has some welcome detailing and articulation – coloured string courses, door- and window sills and lintels – and reflects the fall of the street. However, the recessed garages and fourth storeys produce a downmarket effect reminiscent of 1960s maisonettes.
- 3.3 The garage doors fronting the undercroft parking result in a ‘dead’ street-level frontage. This frontage should be made more active and attractive, if possible by relocating parking to a communal courtyard that could also cater for the apartments that we suggest within the main building.
- 3.4 The height along Duke Street should be reduced by one storey, as recommended by the Council’s conservation officer re application 18/04893/FUL.
- 3.5 In keeping with the very varied style of existing buildings along Duke Street, perhaps each pair of townhouses could have a slightly different appearance.

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