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6th December 2018

The Society's response to a proposal to redevelop 59-68 Feeder Road, St. Philips - 18/04844/P

1 The proposal

Outline planning application for demolition of existing buildings and mixed-use development comprising up to 760 student bedrooms 30 affordable dwellings, up to 1200sqm of 'flexible' commercial floor space.

2 Change of use

This is an area of employment use. If the developer satisfies the Council's policy requirement to justify the loss of employment use, the Society would in principle, support mixed-use redevelopment.

2.1 The Mott Macdonald scoping study for the redevelopment of St. Philip's Marsh is pending. Although the site lies outside the Enterprise Zone the Society suggests that redevelopment should support the policy aim to increase employment in this area. Commercial use is proposed for the ground floor. The Council may wish to consider whether some of the upper floors should also support commercial use. We support the suggestion made by the Plan-EL Neighbourhood Planning Group to consider the use of the ground floor areas to provide services for the growing residential population in the area.

2.2 The Society welcomes the commitment of 30 units to affordable housing. However, like Plan EL, we are concerned that most of the accommodation is dedicated to students. The University proposes to build 1,500 student-bed accommodation on its new campus. The Society knows of two other major student accommodation development proposals close by. A development of this size should contribute to local housing needs as part of a mixed development. Emerging Council policy ULH 6: 'Specialist Student Housing' supports the inclusion of residential space within large student accommodation of more than 100-bed spaces to create mixed used

developments. This development should contribute a greater proportion of space for new homes.

- 2.3 We expect bespoke student development to be adaptable to other uses should there be a drop in demand for student accommodation. The spacing of the structural walls and windows should be sited to enable the purpose-built student housing to be converted into residential apartments in a manner that minimises modification to the external envelope.

3 **Demolition**

There are two isolated, surviving attractive late 19th century terraced houses that redevelopment would clear. The Society accepts that the benefits of redevelopment would outweigh the loss of these traditional structures.

4 **Height and mass**

There is no local planning advice that relates to this area. The Core Strategy and Development Management DPD are the only planning policy references. The Society would be surprised if the Mott Macdonald study produces specific advice relevant to this site. The area has little built context beyond the canal facing frontage, which has long-views along Feeder Road and from the far side of the canal. The Council needs to consider as a matter of strategic urban planning both the height and mass of the proposal that will probably set a standard that later development proposals will quote. Would the development be better if it were built in more than one block?

5 **Design**

The exposed site of this prominent building that faces the waterside demands good quality architecture to satisfy policy BCS21 – Quality Urban Design. The Society supports the construction of the taller elements at the rear of the site. Whilst we understand that this is an outline application, we consider it appropriate to comment on the design aspects that we consider less satisfactory.

- 5.1 The view from the north bank of the Feeder Canal will become important because the redevelopment of the Silverthorne Lane site will introduce a large population in that area. The proposal will be perceived as a large solid masonry block. Could this Feeder elevation be modulated in a manner to create the appearance of several buildings? The elevations in the side streets also need to be considered. Long unrelenting elevations offer little to pedestrians and create a grain that excludes a human scale.
- 5.2 The accentuated gables are too insignificant to successfully animate the large Feeder facing elevation. The proposal reads overall as a large flat-roofed building. Policy DM29: Design of New Buildings - refers to the treatment of the roofscape and skyline as particularly important. Well-designed enclosures for plant and photovoltaic equipment could enhance the building's appearance.
- 5.3 We do not support externally mounted shipping containers which would increase the building's perceived bulk. Probably these structurally unrelated additions would soon become outdated architectural fashion; like cedar cladding. The aesthetic of used shipping containers in this context, compares unfavourably with the exterior ironwork

of earlier industrial buildings. The architectural structure should create the building's appeal. The Society would prefer internal balconies in this context.

- 6 **Materials** - Except for the cantilevered shipping containers, the Society supports in principle the inclusion of the proposed palette of materials to complement the retained industrial buildings on the north bank of the Feeder. The Society hopes that the planning permission requires public consultation upon the reserved matters planning application.
- 7 **Public realm** - To mitigate the hostile environment of the Feeder Road the development could provide a larger green edge. The Society welcomes the proposed tree planting that could be extended along Feeder Road, following further redevelopment. Is shared space proposed for the secondary access streets?