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12th February 2019

1-3 Unity Street and Kingsown House – The Society’s response to the revised scheme-planning enquiry

The proposal – is to demolish the current buildings on the site to construct 209 student accommodation units, and 103 co-living apartments aimed at young professionals wanting to live in, co-working and workshop space for small and medium size enterprises.

Demolition - none of the current buildings has architectural merit; they are negative features in the Old Market Conservation Area.

Change of use

In its response dated the 3rd October 2018 to the earlier planning enquiry, the Society set out its objections to the proposed exclusive use as student accommodation; those objections remain valid. The Society does not repeat its earlier comments because the Council’s advice letter dated the 2nd November 2018 gave more authoritative advice about building exclusive student accommodation. Following this later enquiry the Council must decide whether the inclusion of co-living apartments and workshop space adequately mitigates the loss of employment space and the increased concentration of the student population in the area.

A relevant factor is striking absence of a local convenience store despite the substantial influx of new residents around Old Market., in recent times. Businesses in areas of concentrated student accommodation find it difficult to survive the void periods of university vacations. These businesses succeed only where there is a stable demand.

Mass height and design

The Society supports redevelopment of the site with an intensified density. The proposed design attains a good quality and uses durable materials. The developer should consider the use of graffiti resistant materials. This is an area that is subjected to persistent tagging which sometimes reaches higher levels.

We note the changes to the built form to address the concerns expressed in the Council’s advice letter about the relationship of height, roof form and articulation of the Unity Street

elevation to the Grade II* listed Almshouses in Midland Road. We also note the changes in design to retain some of the Almshouses's soft landscape setting and the stone boundary wall that gives distinct character to this corner ont Midland Road.

Public realm

The new connection between Unity Street and Jacob Street will be a planning gain as will the repair and reinstatement of the surrounding pavements.