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21<sup>st</sup> December 2019

## **The Society's response to planning application – 19/02664/F - the site of Chanson Foods Avon Street**

### **Introduction to the revised response**

- 1 On the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019, the Society responded to the June 2019 planning application. This is a revised response to the proposal, revised in December. The Society has had the advantage of a meeting with the development team. The Society supported denser development on the Chanson Foods site. We had reservations about the single use of the site, its height and mass, and design. This response withdraws our reservations about the single use and revises our views about the mass and design.

### **The proposal**

- 2 Victoria Hall Management Limited (VHML) propose to build managed student residential accommodation comprising 502 bedspaces and communal facilities arranged around central communal courtyard. From the north the buildings are stepped down from 13 to 8-floors, including ground. To the harbour side of the site there is a standalone two storey 'hub' building containing uses ancillary to the student accommodation.

### **Demolition**

- 3 There is nothing of architectural merit on the site.

### **Change of use**

- 4 This is a sustainable location for access to the Campus. The inclusion of and extensive provision of amenity space and collaborative work-space is unusual and welcome. There is no local harmful concentration of student accommodation.

### **Height and mass**

- 5.1 The starting point for any proposal should be the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone Framework (Framework) which remains current and which the Society supports. The height and mass of the Temple Meads Campus is a substantial departure from the Framework guidance. The University justified its tall building proposal by the

weight that it attaches to the National and local value of what is a new University. The University's consent is a material consideration, but the factors relevant to the University's proposal do not apply to commercial student accommodation which cannot claim the same significance.

- 5.2 The Society supports the Framework planning guidance that development in Avon Street south of the railway should adopt a placemaking approach that is absent in the canyon of Avon Street, north of the railway. This placemaking approach is critical in a character area which will be heavily used by pedestrians. The Society would prefer the height of this development not to exceed the height of the new development along Oxford Street that faces the railway. However, we agree that if the height of the development is to exceed 11-floors, the railway end of the development is the preferred position. We assume that, as part of the planning process, there will be a review of whether the mass of this development could inhibit the development of the land east of Avon Street, currently a car compound.
- 5.3 Paragraph 5.2 is the Society's principal submission. If however the viability of the scheme is so marginal that the development cannot reduce the overall usable floor space then, without prejudice to our principal submission, we suggest that the height of the northern block is reduced to a height that does not exceed the developments in Oxford Street north of the railway and that the 'lost' space be transferred to the southern block. We consider that in a building of this mass the overall height is a more critical element than a notional attempt to step down the building from the railway towards the Feeder Canal.

### **Design and materials**

- 6.1 This is a prominent site, visible from the railway, to walkers on the riverside path, and from Avon Street. There is no immediate architectural context. VHML has an unconstrained opportunity to design a cluster of buildings to create a landmark of contemporary architecture. Without imaginative design, student accommodation with its standard rooms, risks creating repetitive elevations. The Society promotes no specific style; we welcome creative architecture. We recognise that our following suggestions represent a subjective view.
- 6.2 The Society supports the use of coloured brick; red brick would be satisfactory. We also support the use of good quality materials. An example of an imaginative design for bespoke student accommodation is the Print Hall on Temple Way to which the Society has given an award. This Print Hall offers a contrast between brick and seamed metal in a unified palette. We do not intend by this comment to compare one architect's work with the work of another.
- 6.3 Local development management policy encourages development of the roof as a fifth elevation. The Society would support a roof structure that supported a photovoltaic array which would add interest to the skyline.

## **Public realm**

- 7.1 The overriding objective of the Framework is to ensure that developments within the area respond positively to the character of the historic environment. We welcome proposals to create an attractive soft landscape and to create an active ground floor. We agree that an exclusively student population would challenge the viability of any retail or food and drink uses during vacations. The revised footprint that allows more space between the building and the river and a wider Avon Street footpath, are planning gains. There is a thoughtful allowance for the redevelopment of the Kawasaki site which will improve permeability between the river and Avon Street in the future.
  
- 7.2 We remain concerned that the aspiration to construct a new bridge across the river from Avon Street to the Campus, necessary for effective pedestrian circulation remains unfunded.