

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

31st January 2019

Helen Garside
Principal Conservation Officer
Wiltshire Council Central

Officer's Name: Andrew Guest
Officer's Title: Area Development Control Manager
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Application No: 18/11957/FUL
Demolition of the existing building at 30-36 Fisherton Street, currently used as retail. A new building will be constructed on the site, which will house a library, gym, restaurant and 86 room hotel.
30 - 36 Fisherton Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 7RG
Eastings: 414160 Northings: 130020
Janus Henderson UK Property PIAF

Please note the particulars in connection with the above planning application are available to view on the planning website <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment.htm>

I would welcome any comments that you have about this particular application by **07 February 2019**. If I do not receive your observations and comments by this date I will assume you have none. If you require an extension of time please contact the Planning Officer above who will do their best to accommodate this.

Recommendations:

<input type="checkbox"/>	No Comment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support subject to conditions (please set out below)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Object (for reasons set out below)
<input type="checkbox"/>	No objections

Matters Considered:

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Site: the site is currently occupied by a retail building constructed in the late 1970s on the site of a number of earlier buildings including the grade II listed 30 & 32 Fisherton Street. The site is the recorded location of a C13th Dominican Friary.

Proposal: the application seeks consent for the demolition of the existing building and construction of a new building which will house a hotel on the upper floors with a relocated library and a gym and restaurant on the ground floor.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 requires that **special** regard be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The site is at the heart of the Salisbury City Conservation Area and Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that **special attention** be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

The Council's Core Strategy 'Core Policy 21: The Maltings/central Car Park' sets out the Council's aspirations for the redevelopment of this key city centre site in a 'retail led mixed-use development'. The policy requires that the "redevelopment of the Maltings/Central Car Park will be sensitive to Salisbury's skyline and respect the scale and building forms of the historic urban fabric."

The Council's Core Strategy 'Core Policy 22: Salisbury Skyline' sets a maximum height for development within the central area of the city in order not only to protect views of the cathedral but also to protect the City's roofscape.

The Council's Core Strategy 'Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' requires a high standard of design in all new developments. xiii advocates a masterplanning approach for major development sites in order that other objectives are met including: 'i. enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment' and iii. responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

The Council's Core Strategy 'Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' notes that development should "protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment".

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Policies place responsibility on both applicants and the Local Planning Authority to take steps to achieve an understanding of the historic environment which can inform the development and assessment of proposals. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF requires a balanced approach towards decision making with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved.

Local policy documents including the South Wiltshire Design Code 2006, the Salisbury Vision and the Salisbury Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan are relevant.

Supporting information: Paragraph 189 requires that applicants should describe the significance of heritage assets affected, including the contribution made by their setting. Government guidance and the Council's Core Policies require a holistic treatment of the wider site, informed by a master-planning approach to ensure that aspirations are achieved. Design advice within the National Planning Practice Guidance and documents such as the South Wiltshire Design Guide place emphasis on the need for full and detailed analysis of the wider setting of sites to inform design which responds to its local context and reinforces local distinctiveness.

The submission is accompanied by a Heritage Statement, Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement.

The Heritage Statement appears to have been completed after the development of the proposals rather than being carried out in advance to provide a full understanding of the context and inform the development of proposals as envisaged by the NPPF and Council policy. Whilst the Statement is adequate in identifying the affected heritage assets, describing their significance and providing some assessment of the context, the impact assessment lacks any objective analysis. Suggested benefits such as 'courtyard landscaping within Priory Square' or "opportunities for improvements in pedestrianisation of Malthouse Lane and Priory Square" do not appear to form part of the application.

The Planning and Design and Access Statements refer to this as Phase 1 of the wider redevelopment of the Maltings/Central car park area and the D&AS includes a small scale site plan apparently illustrating one of the masterplan options. However there is no discussion of the proposals or potential outcomes and it is acknowledged that due to “poor economic conditions, a guaranteed commitment to delivering the current Masterplan is not possible”. In the absence of an adopted masterplan or overall brief for the site it is difficult to understand how the current proposals would contribute to achieving the city’s aspirations in terms of either uses and facilities, or the design of buildings and spaces.

The application is restricted to the building itself with no proposals for surrounding landscaping or associated public realm works. As a result the proposals must be judged as a stand alone proposal.

n.b There are inconsistencies and errors throughout the accompanying documents such as outdated references to the need for conservation area consent for demolition (removed via the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013) and varying references to the height of the building, number of storeys or scope of proposals within the application. The ‘proposed elevations’ are also at odds with other submitted drawings.

Principle of demolition and replacement: the existing building was constructed in the late 1970s following the incremental demolition of the historic buildings across the site, including the listed Nos. 30-32 Fisherton Street. Whilst the process to remove reference to these buildings from the statutory List appears never to have been completed, it has been confirmed that the historic building were demolished with consent in the late 1970s and that no fabric remains extant within the current structure. Delisting should therefore be a formality. It is agreed with the Heritage Statement that listed building consent is not required for demolition. However, the suggestion that Conservation Area Consent is required instead is incorrect as this consent was replaced by the need for planning permission under the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.

Whilst it is open to accusations of pastiche, the main frontage of the 1970s building was relatively carefully designed with well executed brickwork and scale and window proportions etc. which reflect the character of the immediately surrounding townscape. The remainder is in a more modern ‘vernacular’ style which the Heritage Statement plausibly suggests was intended to reflect the malthouses which occupied the land to the rear, themselves also demolished by the late 1970s. Taking into account the curve of Fisherton Street which limits the visual impact from this key thoroughfare, the overall impact of the building can be considered as largely neutral. There is no objection in principle to the demolition of the current building however policy requires that a replacement should be of high quality design and construction in order to preserve or, ideally, enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and the settings of neighbouring listed buildings.

Assessment:

Layout – the proposed development occupies virtually the same footprint as the current building, with the building line to Fisherton Street reflecting the set back of the historic No 30-32. Historically, however, it was only Nos 30-32 which were set back with adjacent buildings (Nos 34-36) following the established line to the west with buildings located immediately at the back edge of the relatively narrow pavement. Historic photos suggest that the courtyard space against No.34 created by the setting back of Nos 30-32 was enclosed by railings, echoing the frontage of the Congregational church which was enclosed by separately listed walls, piers and lamps. The enclosing boundaries of both are now lost and the area has the appearance of left over space, an area of inappropriate block paving demarcated from the main pavement by functional plastic bollards. Incremental changes in the alignment and width of Malthouse Lane have compounded the issue to create a visually weak junction and unattractive area of streetscape.

The current situation illustrates the cumulative adverse impact that poorly resolved leftover space and successive unplanned highway changes can have on appearance. A comprehensive redevelopment of the area should, in theory, allow the ideal opportunity to address such issues and recreate a positive streetscape. It might have been expected that the opportunity would have been taken via the master-planning approach which is suggested as being ongoing in conjunction with Wiltshire Council, to address issues such as the weak visual quality of the Malthouse Lane/Fisherton Street corner. However, the

development is on the same footprint as the previous building and the red line is drawn tightly around the site. There are no proposals beyond those for the building itself i.e. no works to surrounding surfaces or other public realm enhancements. In the absence of any proposals it is assumed that opportunities to enhance the streetscape of this part of the conservation area will not be realised at the current time.

Scale and mass and form:

The scale and bulk of the proposed development is substantially greater than that of either the existing or surrounding buildings and, unlike historic development in the vicinity, it scales upwards towards the rear of the site. Lift overruns and plant add further height at the rear. Whilst it is acknowledged that the listed former Infirmary, clock tower and church are existing tall buildings, these are landmark civic buildings within the city and important focal points within the townscape. Their designed impact within their surroundings risks challenge from development of the scale proposed. From northern and western views the proposed development will hide substantially more of the body of the church, changing the visual relationship of the building with its surrounding townscape.

Some measures have been taken to break up the apparent mass of the development by the introduction of an alternative elevational treatment and vertical emphasis along Malthouse Lane - and these are welcomed – but the scale, mass and bulk of the overall development as a single building block remain evident and appear at odds with the historic surroundings. The large areas of flat roof, partially disguised by faux pitches, and the heavy ‘mansard’ storey are uncharacteristic of the city roofscape and of limited design quality.

The supporting documents suggest that the relationship of the development with its surrounding townscape eg Malthouse Lane, Priory Square and towards the Playhouse is improved by the increased scale which “assist[s] closing the gap on Malthouse lane to form a better relationship to No.38 and a more appropriate/traditional gap seen elsewhere on Fisherton Street”, the intention presumably being that the tall building creates a perception of narrower streets. Unfortunately, the payoff is the tendency to an overbearing impact on the surrounding spaces, particularly to the rear where Priory Square is already described within the Design and Access Statement as a space which receives “limited sunlight”. It is regrettable that the opportunity to address shortcoming of the street layout are not addressed at whole site level within the masterplan, calling into question the effectiveness of this process in planning for the area.

Overall, the proposed development has limited success in responding to the fine architectural grain of the area. Insufficient attention has perhaps been paid to detailed initial analysis and this has not informed the design of the scheme - instead, economic considerations appear to have dictated a ‘metropolitan’ scaled development which fails to reflect the character of the historic city.

Design – the elevations show a pared-back design, with flat facades and large areas of unrelieved masonry. The sparse windows to the upper floors in the southern section of the development and ground floor over-scaled plate glass ‘shop’ windows lack detail. The curved corner is inactive and the set back of the ‘roof’ storey uncharacteristic of Salisbury. Large areas of feature brickwork above the doorways to the library and Travelodge and to the corner introduce an element of interest but do not effectively relieve the austerity of the design which is intensified by the scale of the development. Overall, the design appears more appropriate to a larger metropolitan city and lacks the human scale and rich architectural detail which is characteristic of Salisbury.

Whilst the ground floor elevations include numerous large ‘shop windows’ the proposed uses, with the exception perhaps of the restaurant (depending on the tenant), are not those which would usually be expected to generate active frontages and it is questioned how successful these can be in enhancing the vitality of the area. Pressure can be anticipated in particular for the gym windows to be coated in reflective film to prevent inward views, potentially creating an even more inactive frontage than the current shop.

The buff brick proposed for the Fisherton Street half of the development is alien to the town centre and the proposed use of reconstituted stone and unspecified ‘Metal’ standing seam roofing fail to demonstrate the quality which would be appropriate to this sensitive historic location. Architectural details such as the

parapet copings, textured and hit and miss brickwork are not resolved and may be difficult to secure at construction.

Summary: there is no objection in principle to the demolition and replacement of the existing building which is of limited design quality. The current frontage building to Fisherton Street has a largely neutral impact within the conservation area by virtue of its reflection of the existing character and scale of development within the area. In addition the curve of Fisherton Street limits the visual impact of the site from the key thoroughfare. The remainder, however, constitutes a large mass of development of weak design which makes limited contribution to the area. However, current policy requires that a replacement should be of high quality design and construction which preserves or, ideally, takes opportunities to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and the settings of neighbouring listed buildings.

Unfortunately the scale and mass of the proposed replacement appear to have been driven largely by commercial requirement rather than as a response to context and represent a 'metropolitan' scaled development which is at odds in this sensitive historic environment. The height of the new building means that it will tend to dominate key listed buildings in the vicinity and appear overbearing from surrounding more human scaled streets. The proposed design and materials are not of such demonstrable quality as to offset the impact of the development, neither are there other accompanying proposals for the enhancement of the public realm which might have assisted in mitigating the impact of this large building.

The site represents a single block within a large conservation area covering the whole of the city centre and taking into account that the existing building to be replaced makes no more than a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the area and that the curve of Fisherton Street limits the prominence of this site in key views, the harm that will result from the proposed development should be considered (for the purposes of interpreting the tests set out within the NPPF) to be at the lower end of less than substantial harm. However, paragraph 194 makes it clear that "any harm" "should require clear and convincing justification". Paragraph 196 requires that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

By virtue of its scale, mass and design, the proposed development appears to be in conflict with:

Core Policy 22: Salisbury Skyline policy which seeks to protect the roofscape of the city;
Core Policy 21: Maltings/Central which requires the redevelopment of the site to be "sensitive to Salisbury's skyline and respect the scale and building forms of the historic urban fabric";
Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping which requires new design to respond positively to the existing townscape.... to effectively integrate the building into its setting"; and
Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment which requires not only that new development should protect and conserve the historic environment but, where possible, take the opportunity to enhance it.

Planning balance:

For the reasons discussed above, the proposed development will result in a level of harm to the historic environment. National and local policy allow that such harm may be offset in decision making by the delivery of significant public benefits. It will be for others to determine whether the uses proposed to be accommodated with the development (including the relocated library) can be successful in contributing to the vitality of the area and to the delivery of the aspirations set out in Core Policy 21 and the Salisbury Vision such that the public benefits accruing from the scheme could be considered to offset the harm caused to the historic environment. In the absence of a Masterplan or overall brief for the wider site it seems that such matters will be difficult to assess and that demonstrating the benefits convincingly will be difficult.