

PROPOSED RE-DEVELOPMENT OF FORMER LEWES MAGISTRATES COURT

The Friends of Lewes Society is the civic society for the town of Lewes. It has been in existence since 1952 and has about 500 members. It appreciated being invited to a private presentation of the Quora proposals. Whilst recognising that these are only indicative at this stage it gives an opportunity to make comments that can be considered before detailed plans are drawn up and a planning application made.

On an overall basis the Society welcomes the proposed use of this site as it is preferable to having a disused building in the town centre. The Society also welcomes the potential arrival of a budget hotel and opening up the east side of the site to the public car park. Adding further retail and possibly restaurant provision on the ground floor will improve this part of the town centre and act as a counter-balance to the proposals being discussed by the developer of the North Street Quarter site.

The Society's main interest in any new development is its design and whether that design complements existing buildings in the area rather than detracts from them. Adjoining the site, and only separated by a passageway, is Fitzroy House which is a historic building of architectural merit and where the owner is concerned that the proposal may reduce the light into windows of this property on the southern side. Before expressing a view on this issue the Society would welcome seeing technical data as to whether this concern is justified and, if so, whether it could be ameliorated by either moving your proposed building back to the existing building line or by reducing the height of the north end of it. Related to this is whether the line of the existing passageway between the buildings could be changed to remove the existing S type bend which is hardly attractive. It would also be helpful to see an artists impression of the proposed north elevation of the development.

At the Friars Walk/Court Road corner the Society has some concern about what could appear to be a filled in doorway and trust that this impression can be avoided in the final design. It also questions the colour of the tiles on the western elevation and thinks that something lighter would be more appropriate. Whilst the Society accepts the proposed east elevation being different from the west elevation it is visually uninteresting and it would prefer that the wooden boarding is vertical rather than horizontal. It also has some concern over the green wall to ensure that it avoids damp ingress and does not provide a site to wedge beer cans and crisp packets among the plants provided. It would therefore like to know what maintenance is proposed for this green wall and for that matter the brown roof. It is pleased to note the other measures proposed to enhance sustainability but has a question as to what arrangements will be put in place to ensure that these measures are properly maintained in the future.

The potential opening up to the public of the hitherto private car park associated with the Magistrates Court is welcomed albeit that charges similar to those levied in the existing public car park will be levied.

The Society would like to remind the developer that the plaque on the side of the building mentioning past use of the site should be retained and fixed at a suitable place on the new building.

The Society looks forward to having responses to the various questions posed in this commentary. It would welcome seeing the architects designs when they are available but must, of course, reserve its final position until commenting on the planning application.

Robert Cheesman
Friends of Lewes Society
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