

FTAO Philip Mullineux
Development Management
Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

16/06/23

Dear Philip,

Your Ref 23/01422/FUL

**Proposed mixed use development to include 83 Bed Hotel and 3 No. Retail Units with associated Car Parking and Landscaping
Car Park, Barker Street, Shrewsbury**

Applicant Response to Design Comments and Proposed Revisions

Further to our previous discussions and correspondence I write on behalf of the applicant to respond to points raised about the proposed hotel and in particular to comments about the overall design and massing. I also submit further design revisions to the application for the council to take into consideration prior to determination.

The application has attracted a comments from several technical consultees and been publicised in the press.

The planning application has been developed positively with Council officers. The initial scheme which was withdrawn had been the subject of pre-application engagement. The amended scheme also followed this path and included face-to -face meeting with officers as well as discussions on site.

Notwithstanding this engagement process the planning application has attracted comments from the public and key stakeholders. Many of the public comments are reflected in the responses from three technical consultees which are summarized and considered further below.

Shrewsbury Town Council

The Town Council objects to the proposal on the grounds of:-

- Scale
- Impact on sight line of Rowley's House
- Height
- Not in keeping with the character of the area

Historic England

Historic England raises the following comments:-

- Acknowledges that changes to the design have been made but considers potential harmful impact to conservation area
- Is concerned about overall height
- Does not consider the scheme an improvement compared with extant scheme.
- Recommends continued discussions to improve design
- Recommends consideration be given to the Council's emerging Design Code

Shrewsbury Civic Society

- Supports the principle of redevelopment of this site but objects to scheme in current form
- Acknowledges changes to design to reduce bulk
- Considers design fussy and highlights that building would not read as the patchwork of buildings that typify Shrewsbury's townscape.
- Suggests building should step down to reflect the topography
- Would prefer a masterplan for the wider site
- Welcome the potential s106 contribution for off-site work.

Having regard to the principle of development here, a Map regression exercise illustrated in the Heritage Impact Assessment supporting this planning application confirms how the tight urban grain in this part of the town centre, completely encapsulating Rowley's House evidenced in Figure 6 (P18) which includes an extract of the 1882 Ordnance Survey Map reproduced below confirming Rowley's House was not experienced as an "object " building for much of its history.



Clearly it has assumed greater significance within the town centre following slum clearance in the 20th century and now sits in as an island within surface car parks.

A positive urban design solution would support the reintroduction of built development to create massing and street frontages that reinstate the urban form and grain currently missing from this part of the town centre conservation area.

While some representations have objected on the grounds of height and massing, the proposed building is lower than the extant scheme which could be implemented in any event. The principle of height and overall form are therefore established in principle. An overlay of the extant scheme having regard to its height and length is illustrated with the image below (note this image is the scheme as submitted and without the further amendments accompanying this letter).



This illustrates that the application scheme is demonstrably lower than the extant scheme with a significantly lower eaves line. While it extends closer to Rowley's House than the extant scheme there remains a gap of some 10.5m and the architecture steps down and away from the frontage highlighting Rowley's mansion within Barker Street when viewed from the South.



The visual relationship between the proposed hotel and Rowley's House is illustrated in the street scene images – see example below (images depict the scheme as submitted without the amendments accompanying this letter). The sightline to Rowley's House has been considered with care so that it remains a focal point, clearly legible in the street scene.



In terms of the principle of development for this site in the town centre conservation area the principle is established with the extant planning permission and historic precedents. Other points of criticism relate to the architecture in terms of its design language and approach. Having established that mass and height are comparable or favourable in relation to the extant scheme, the approach to the design is set out in the supporting Design and Access statement accompanying the application.

Importantly the resubmission has been developed in a collaborative way with the Councils Officers and the design informed by their advice. The

approach has been to develop a building intended to be respectful of the historic grain of the town.

A vertical emphasis expressed through window proportion, deep set reveals, shop front materials, eaves line and a vertical rhythm reinforced with recessed down pipes acknowledges the plot width and grain of buildings opposite the site. The scheme is not attempting to emulate particular buildings, or create an unsatisfactory pastiche purporting to represent a series of buildings with different phases of construction. It is meant to read as a single building, is of one age, and is articulated so as to acknowledge its context.

The planning application is not speculative, it has a named end user. If permitted this would represent a significant investment to the town and the local economy. The hotel use will provide further support to the visitor economy, Travelodge consider this will provide significant support to the local economy as the hotel has no cafe or restaurant, which is a significant factor for Shrewsbury. Clearly the end user requirements have informed the design and this will impact on the form, layout and disposition of windows and accessibility i.e. internal floor plates without steps or level changes. However, the scheme as presented is bespoke to this site.

The feedback received from consultees is helpful and further revisions to the design have been developed in response to these. It is however important for consistency in decision taking that this application is assessed carefully with regards to parameters established the extant scheme.

The emerging design code has been mentioned by a number of respondents including Historic England. The application has to be considered on its merits in relation to the current policy framework. The building cannot anticipate a design code that is not in the public domain. However, applicant and architect did meet with Council officers and LDA in November last year to discuss this and other sites. At that time LDA explained that the emerging design code was not intended to be prescriptive or restrict commercial development but will consider matters of architectural character, materials and the importance of street scene. The resubmission design has been developed in light of relevant local plan policy, in particular SAMDev Plan Policies MD2, MD10a and MD13, and the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan which the Council has confirmed will be material to its decision taking on planning applications.

Design Revisions

In the context of the feedback received further consideration has been given in particular to the roofline treatment. The dormer windows have

been amended significantly so as to reduce their prominence in the street scene. This would also have the effect of reducing emphasis at height and bring the gravity of the building down reducing the “fussiness” identified by the Civic Society and the apparent height, a concern raised by both the Town Council and Historic England.

Further consideration has also been given to the treatment of the elevations particularly at the corner of Claremont Street and Barker Street. Having regard to the feedback received further consideration has been given to the design and this has been revised in collaboration with the Councils officers.

The revised elevations include a more historicist approach with fenestration at first and second floor that reflects the pattern of the Barker Street elevation and a shopfront fascia in stone defining the entrance to the proposed hotel. We consider this provides a positive response to the feedback received.

Other Matters

The potential for a s106 contribution remains to support offsite landscape and drainage work that will improve the visitor connectivity through the West End, help drive footfall alongside Rowley’s House and assist with surface water management on Council owned land adjacent to the application site that would assist reducing water ingress to Rowley’s House.

In summary, it is not unusual for a planning application of this nature in a historic town centre, to generate debate and feedback. This letter seeks to explain the design rationale clearly in light of the context for the site which has established principles in terms of design, height and massing. The design language and materiality have evolved and would in any event be the subject of planning conditions so the Council would retain control over these significant matters.

I trust this provides clarification and assurance on these points and will be taken into consideration in the determination of the planning application.

Yours sincerely,

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