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15 November 2022

Dear David Wordsworth

REF: 2022/65/93235/W& 2022/93248

Queensgate Market Hall, Huddersfield Library and Art Gallery and Piazza Shopping Centre, Huddersfield

The Twentieth Century Society has been notified of the above applications for the 'Kirklees Cultural Heart' (KCH) project. The Society's Caseworker has been involved in multiple pre-application meetings and attended a site visit, and the scheme has been reviewed by the Society's advisory Casework Committee.

Background

The proposed development site is home to the Grade II listed Huddersfield Library and Art Gallery which was built in 1937-40 to designs by E. H. Ashburner. Also on the site is the Grade II listed Queensgate Market, constructed in 1968-70 to designs by the J. Seymour Harris Partnership, working with Leonard and Partners as consultant engineers. The unlisted Piazza Centre is nearby, built in 1971-74 also by the J. Seymour Harris Partnership as part of the same development by Murrayfield Real Estate, working for the Huddersfield Corporation. The site is adjacent to (but not included within the boundaries of) the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area.

Proposals

The applicant proposes to convert and extend the Grade II listed library and art gallery to provide a new museum, and partially demolish and adapt the Grade II market to create a food hall and library. The unlisted Piazza Centre would be demolished to clear the site for a new gallery, and a new venue and car park built nearby, along with new landscaping work.

Policy

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that "In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority [...] shall have special regard to the

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desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.” Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) states that “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation”. Paragraph 200 outlines that “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.”

Assessment

The Society has no objections to proposals to convert the Grade II Library and Art Gallery, and we take no issue with the proposed extension to the north. Overall, we feel that the architects have addressed the concerns that we raised at pre-application stage and have sought to conserve original fabric where possible (we refer to p.37 of the Design & Access Statement). High significance spaces and key fixtures and finishes will be preserved.

The Society also does not wish to object to the proposed conversion of the Grade II Queensgate Market to a food hall and library. We have no objections to the proposed removal of the surrounding retail units and arcades, which we consider to be of less significance than the main market space with its hyperbolic paraboloid roof with its distinctive ‘mushroom’ columns. We remain concerned about proposals to ‘peel back’ the market elevations to reveal the mushroom columns, which are currently concealed except for on the principal east façade where they are externally expressed. The Society welcomes proposals to retain and conserve the Fritz Stellar ‘Commerce’ and ‘Articulation in Movement’ artworks, which are of high significance. We remain concerned about the loss of the market manager’s office (the ‘panopticon’), which is an original component of the plan and design of the market’s interiors. The loss of the market stalls and plinths would also involve fabric loss, but we accept the justification behind these removals. We do not wish to comment on other proposed alterations.

Lastly, the Society would regret the loss of the Piazza Shopping Centre. The centre was a key phase of the Murrayfield development and a good example of the architect’s commercial work and of the kind of American-style enclosed malls built in England in the 1960s and 70s. It should be considered a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) and positive contributor to the setting of the Grade II Market Hall. In weighing up applications that affect NDHAs, the NPPF states that “a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”

We hope that these comments are of use to you. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if the scheme is amended or if you require further advice.

Yours sincerely,

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Remit: The Twentieth Century Society was founded in 1979 and is the national amenity society concerned with the protection, appreciation, and study of post-1914 architecture, townscape and design. The Society is acknowledged in national planning guidance as the key organisation concerned with the modern period and is a constituent member of the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies. Under the procedures set out in *ODPM Circular 09/2005*, all English local planning authorities must inform the Twentieth Century Society when an application for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition is received, and they must notify us of the decisions taken on these applications.

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