

ITEM NO. 5

COMMITTEE DATE:

4 JANUARY 2016

APPLICATION NO:

15/1086/03

FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

APPLICANT:

Primus Exeter Ltd

PROPOSAL:

Demolition of the existing building and erection of a new building for student accommodation comprising 153 units (Use Class C2), cycle parking, works of hard and soft landscaping and other works incidental to the proposals

LOCATION:

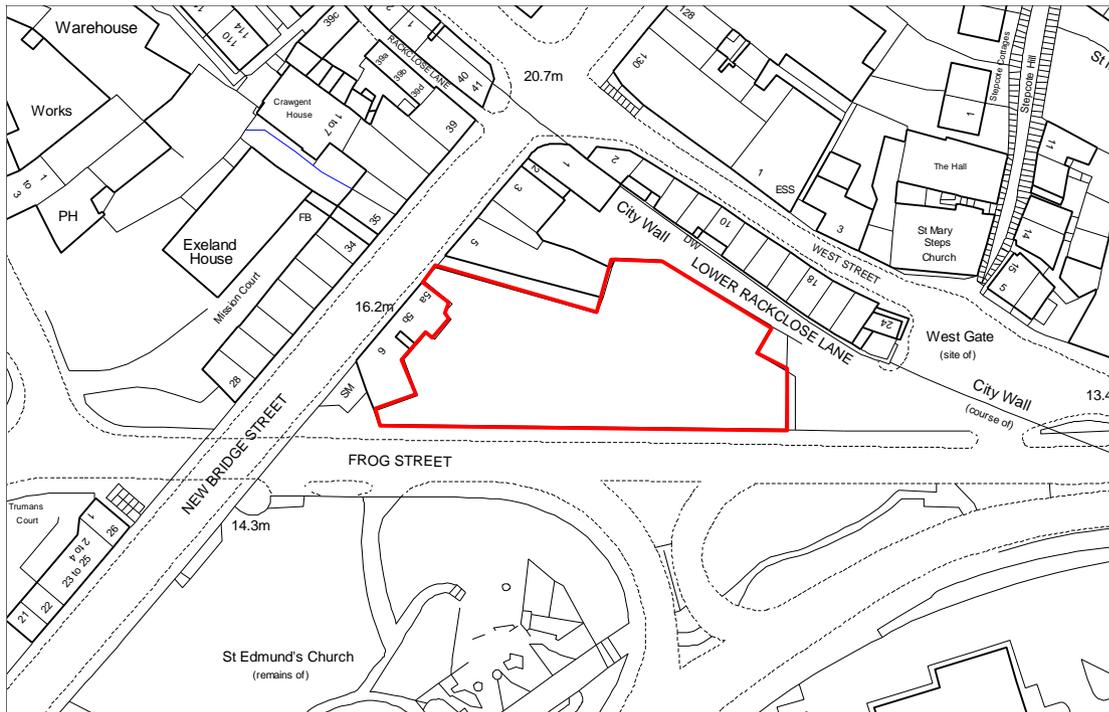
Radmore & Tucker site, Frog Street, Exeter, EX1 1BR

REGISTRATION DATE:

05/10/2015

EXPIRY DATE:

04/01/2016



Scale 1:1000

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DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The site is located on Frog Street, the predominantly brick building on site is currently occupied by Radmore and Tucker a garden machinery specialist who use the building as retail showroom with ancillary offices, workshop space and storage. Following the construction of Western Way in the early 1960s which formed the new eastern extent of the realigned Frog Street, the building that occupies the site was erected on the northern side of the new street. Originally designed as a car showroom with offices the building was extended eastwards between 1966 and 1968 to provide additional showroom space with large glazed windows. The footprint of the building occupies nearly the whole of the site.

Beyond Frog Street to the south are the remains of the former medieval bridge, St Edmund's Church and medieval tenement remains. To the north of the site is Lower Rackclose Lane along which runs the city wall and above which are the rear of properties on West Street. The

Roman leat is partly visible down Lower Rackclose lane and in part runs underneath the existing building.

To the north west of the site, at a higher level, is New Bridge Street

The forecourt of the existing building, which is used informally for car parking, merges into an ill defined area of car parking and highway at the foot of Stepcote Hill and West Street. Now open to Western Way this important historic area of the city (which includes the site of the old West Gate) is an area of poor townscape quality and identified as such in the Central Conservation Area Character Appraisal. The existing building actually lies within the Riverside Conservation Area and is identified as making a negative contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

There are a number of identified Heritage Assets within the environs of the site whose setting may be affected by the development. Besides the conservation areas and the city wall, which is a scheduled ancient monument, these include the Grade I listed Church of St Mary Steps at the foot of West Street and, the Grade II listed St Edmund's Church ruins referred to above. In addition all of the buildings on the south side of West Street are listed Grade II whilst Nos. 5&7 West Street at the foot of Stepcote Hill are Grade II* Listed.

The proposal as originally submitted was for a part 6 and part 7 storey building constructed primarily in brick. Following discussions with the applicant the proposal was amended by the removal of one of the central storeys. Due to level changes the ground floor of the building is split with the eastern section providing the entrance, cycle parking, office and "back of house" with student accommodation units in the western half of the structure. At basement level, the scheme proposes cycle storage (80 spaces in total), a large common room and space for plant. Student accommodation is then provided on the floors above, up to sixth floor. In total the scheme provides for 125 studio units (8 of which are duplexes). A total of 8 wheelchair accessible student accommodation units are provided along with two disabled car parking spaces. No other parking is provided on site.

The area between the building and the historic wall will be landscaped and is designed to create a series of small connected open spaces. Level changes allow the creation of a small "amphitheatre" and seating will be provided. Additional amenity space for some students will be provided via a series of roof gardens on the 5th and 6th floors.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE APPLICANT

Plans/sections/elevations/visuals
Design and Access Statement
Planning Policy Compliance Statement
Archaeological Assessment
noise impact Assessment
Geotechnical and Contamination Assessment
Heritage Statement - Significance and Impact

REPRESENTATIONS

14 letters of objection have been received, three from residents of West Street, three from local businesses/freeholders on West Street and New Bridge Street, six from residents elsewhere in the city and one from the Civic Society.

There are no objections to the principle of redevelopment of the site although four correspondents argue that the site would be better suited to residential or retail use. Some concern is expressed about possible disturbance from students and one correspondent is worried about littering on West Street. All three of the objections from West Street are from residents worried about the loss of view and the overbearing nature of a higher building on site and consequent loss of light. A number of the objections make reference to the scale

and massing of the site which is considered by most to be too high and four objectors are critical of the design approach describing the building as "ugly", "horrendous", "a typical brick monster" and "an eyesore". Two objectors - a tea room and charity both sited on New Bridge Street are particularly concerned about noise and disturbance during the construction phase. The applicant has visited these businesses to discuss their concerns in more detail. One objector argues that the mix of uses is wrong and that there should be an active frontage at ground floor. The Civic Society consider the building to be too high and "alien" to its surroundings.

CONSULTATIONS

Historic England object to the proposal. Whilst they do not object to the principle of redevelopment they do not support a development of such height, their primary concern being the loss of the key historic view of the city from the medieval bridge. They are concerned about the relationship between the bridge, a scheduled monument, the tower of St. Mary Steps church and the tower pinnacles of the cathedral beyond. In their own words they are keen to maintain "the clear progression of stages in one of the key views of the City that take the visitor's eye along the scheduled bridge and the surviving tower of the chapel of St. Edmund's to the tower of St Mary Steps acting as a punctuation point on the route to the towers of the cathedral that crown the busy, tumbling mass of buildings in this quarter of the city." Notwithstanding the objection Historic England recognise the increase in the historic slot between the city wall and the development and the benefits of better access and display of the historic leat."

Environment Agency – to be reported

Devon County Council (Highways) – to be reported

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Central Government Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework, in particular;

Section 1 - Building a Strong, Competitive Economy - paras. 18-22

Section 6- Delivering a Choice of High Quality Homes - paras. 47-55

Section 7 - Requiring Good Design - paras. 56-68

Section 12 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment - paras. 126-141

Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy

CP1 - Spatial Approach

CP4 - Density

CP5 - Student Accommodation

CP10 - Meeting Community Needs

CP12 - Flood Risk

CP15 - Sustainable Construction

CP17 - Design and Local Distinctiveness

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011

AP1 - Design and Location of Development

AP2 - Sequential Approach

H1 - Search Sequence

H2 - Location Priorities

H5 - Diversity of Housing

T1 - Hierarchy of Modes
T2 - Accessibility Criteria
T3 - Encouraging Use of Sustainable Modes
T10 - Car Parking Standards
C5 - Archaeology
EN2 - Contaminated Land
EN5 - Noise
DG1 - Objectives of Urban Design
DG2 - Energy Conservation
DG7 - Crime Prevention and Safety

Exeter City Council Supplementary Planning Documents:-

Archaeology and Development SPG (November 2004)
Sustainable Transport (March 2013)
Riverside Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (September 2005)
Central Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (August 2002)

Exeter City Council Draft Development Delivery DPD

DD1 - Sustainable Development
DD3 - Retention of Employment Land
DD8 - Housing on Unallocated Sites
DD12 - Purpose Built student Accommodation
DD13 - Residential Amenity
DD20 - Accessibility and Sustainable Movement
DD25 - Design Principles
DD26 - Designing out crime
DD28 - Conserving and Managing Heritage Assets
DD30 - Green infrastructure

OBSERVATIONS

The Principle of Redevelopment

The existing building is in hybrid employment/retail use. However it sits outside of a defined retail centre and outside of established employment areas within the city as defined in Core Strategy Policy CP2. In addition the NPPF supports proposals to change commercial buildings to residential where there is an identified need for additional housing (para. 51). Given the absence of a policy protecting retail/commercial uses in this location and noting the outdated nature of the building in terms of meeting modern requirements for commercial floorspace there can be no policy objection to the loss of the use.

The existing building is noted in the Riverside Conservation Area Appraisal and Management plan as having "no streetscape value and detracts from the character of the conservation area" It further notes that "redevelopment of the site could create opportunities for links to the medieval bridge and an improvement to the whole Frog Street elevation and to the setting of the historic city wall which is currently hidden immediately behind". Its horizontal emphasis is atypical in this part of the city and it is very much "of its time" architecturally. The current occupiers have been looking to relocate from this site for the best part of the decade and there can be no objection to the demolition of the building.

The Principle of the Use of the Site for Student Accommodation

In terms of the appropriateness of the use, Members will be aware of the challenging housing delivery targets set out in Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and of the continuing growth of student numbers within the city.

The principle of student accommodation in a City Centre location is supported by the Development Plan and the publicised version of the Development Delivery Development Plan Document subject to certain criteria. Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy states that purpose built student accommodation should be provided to meet housing need. In paragraph 6.28 it states that *'75% or more of additional student numbers should be accommodated in purpose built student housing. New purpose built student housing should be located on, or close to, the University campuses, at sustainable locations at or near to major transport routes, or in the City Centre'*.

Whilst some concern has been raised regarding the need for additional purpose built student accommodation in the city, the University's plans for growth means that significantly more additional bedrooms will still be needed by 2018/19 and therefore opportunities for new purpose built accommodation should be welcomed on appropriate sites.

This site lies within a mixed use area which does contain residential accommodation. However the scale of the development is, in relative terms, quite modest and with the primary access point away from sensitive uses it is not considered that any harm to residential amenity by reason of noise and/or disturbance would be sufficient to withhold consent. The majority of student accommodation within the city centre lies to the north and east of the existing site and there is not therefore an issue of local concentration or imbalance in the community.

The Design of the Development

Conceptually the building is designed to appear as a series of buildings placed next to each other as opposed to one long horizontal building thus reflecting the vertical emphasis of the majority of buildings in the "West Quarter". The base of the building is clad in stone to complement the city wall with upper floors of brickwork and, given the nature of the building, substantial glazing.

At the pre-application stage the scheme was presented to the Devon and Somerset Design Review Panel who wholeheartedly endorsed the design rationale and also supported the scale and massing of the building. Their concerns related to the treatment of external areas - primarily the space between the building and the city wall - and these issues were subsequently addressed through the formal submission.

Concern was expressed during consideration of the application about the height of the development. Specific reservations in respect of impact on amenity of occupiers of nearby buildings and the historic environment were voiced (see below) and subsequently the scheme was reduced in height through the removal of one of the central (full width) storeys. This amendment allows the building to sit more comfortably within its context and improves its relationship with the city wall that lies behind it and the West Street properties that sit upon it and is welcomed.

It would not be difficult to improve architecturally on the building that currently occupies the site but it is considered that the proposed building responds very positively to its context and will significantly enhance the sense of arrival in the city centre as one travels along Western Way.

The Impact of the Proposal on the Historic Environment

There are a number of important designated and undesignated heritage assets in the environs of the site and the impact on each is detailed in Appendix 1.

As members will note there is no physical impact on any of the above ground heritage assets. The main impact on the heritage assets is in terms of their setting, particularly on the ability (now and in the future) to appreciate and understand them, their significance, and how

they relate to the townscape and to one another, and how they contribute to the character and appearance of the two Conservation Areas (themselves heritage assets).

As can be seen in the analysis contained in Appendix 1 the impact on the historic environment is a complex one. On the one hand there is undoubted harm to the visual connection from the medieval bridge to St.Mary's Steps Church and beyond to the cathedral (although curiously this is not identified as important in the conservation area appraisal) whilst on the other hand the immediate settings of some listed buildings, the historic wall and leat are enhanced. What is unarguable however is that the existing building detracts from the both the character and appearance of two conservation areas and substantially compromises the setting of the city wall, leat and important listed buildings including St.Mary Steps church and that the site would benefit from redevelopment.

The scale of the building as originally submitted was of concern both in terms of the impact on the amenity of local residents (see below) and the impact on the setting of heritage assets. In response to these concerns the applicant has amended the scheme as originally submitted by removing one of the central (full width) storeys and therefore bringing the height of the building down. Observations on the amendment are still awaited from Historic England but there is no doubt that this reduction in scale and mass will result in the new building sitting more comfortably within the grain of the historic city. The reduction will also retain more of the view from the bridge towards the city diminishing somewhat the harm previously identified.

In conclusion it is considered that whilst there is some identifiable harm to heritage assets as a result of the proposal this harm is less than substantial. Indeed in respect of some assets the impact is very positive. In such circumstances the NPPF requires that this harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. There is a need for further purpose built student accommodation in the city and widespread support for redevelopment on the site. It is not considered therefore that consent should be withheld because of the impact on the historic environment.

The Impact on Amenity of Nearby Residential Occupiers

The new building will sit on a smaller footprint than the existing and thus the northern elevation is moved further away from the properties on West Street and New Bridge Street. However the new building is significantly higher than the existing rising to a height of just over 24 metres. (The existing building is 11.7 metres high fronting Western Way and between 8.6m and 9.3m at the rear. At its closest point the existing building is within 3 metres of the rear elevations of West Street, extending to 7.1 metres elsewhere. The new building will be a minimum of 5 metres further away from the closest West Street elevation and in parts the distance between frontages will increase by 10 metres.

Intervisibility between the occupiers of the student bedrooms and existing residents is kept to a minimum by clever positioning of the bedroom windows which are orientated either to the west or east. There will be some loss of light to the nearby properties - largely during Autumn and Winter - but it is not considered that this in itself will be significant enough to refuse the application. Objections from residents on West Street cite loss of view as an issue but this is not a planning consideration. However it is acknowledged that a larger building in close proximity has the potential to cause harm by being overbearing. In determining whether a particular impact is unacceptable one must have regard to context. In this respect the "West Quarter" comprises some of the highest density development in the city, much of it in residential use and most of the buildings between 3 and 5 storeys high. Relatively close relationships between relatively tall buildings are not at all unusual and given that there is no overlooking it is not considered that the proximity of the new building per se is a reason for refusal (not least of course because it is further away from West Street and New Bridge Street than the existing building). The view from the buildings will be considerably altered - but this is not a planning consideration - and there is some loss of light built that is marginal.

In conclusion therefore it is not considered that the impact on the amenity of neighbours is unacceptable.

Financial Considerations

The proposal, if approved, would generate in the region of £215,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy and in excess of £300,000 of New Homes Bonus over 6 years.

Delegation Briefing

10th November - Members were appraised of the proposal and the objection of Historic England were explained. Members subsequently undertook a site visit (17th November) which included a visit to a residential property on West Street in which they noted the potential impact on amenity of a large building.

1st December - Members were updated on the proposal and expressed concern regarding the impact of a building of this height on the amenity of nearby residential occupiers. They were also appraised of the objection from the Intercom Trust and informed that the developer was proposing a meeting with them to try to mitigate disturbance during the construction period should consent be granted.

Conclusion

The principle of the redevelopment of the site for student accommodation is acceptable and will provide much needed capacity in an area of the city centre where there are relatively few students. The redevelopment of the site also opens up the opportunity to considerably improve the arrival into the city centre via Western Way and to remove a building identified within the Conservation Area Character Appraisal as being of poor quality. That said, the site is heavily constrained and successful redevelopment requires an imaginative but thorough approach to successfully address both the townscape and amenity issues. The approach to redevelopment of the site was enthusiastically supported by the Devon and Somerset Design Review Panel and the proposed building is of high quality and creates an enhanced setting for the historic wall and leat. Despite the proximity to buildings on West Street and New Bridge Street the privacy of existing occupiers is maintained through clever positioning of the fenestration on the new building.

There remains however a strong objection from Historic England, at least to the scheme as originally proposed. (To date no comments in respect of the amended scheme have been received). The question for members therefore is whether this identified harm to heritage assets outweighs the benefits that redevelopment of the site will bring.

The owners of the site have been discussing various redevelopment options on and off for over a decade. To date this is the only scheme which has reached the planning application stage that, in part, demonstrates how difficult it has been to find a viable development solution. In this context it is considered that the marginal harm to the *setting* of historic assets is strongly outweighed by the considerable benefits to the character, appearance and economy of the city of the proposed scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to a Section 106 obligation relating to a student Management Plan and the following conditions

- 1) UN6 - Unique Condition 6
- 2) C05 - Time Limit - Commencement
- 3) C15 - Compliance with Drawings
- 4) C12 - Drainage Details
- 5) C17 - Submission of Materials
- 6) C35 - Landscape Scheme
- 7) C58E - Contract Prior to Demolition
- 8) C57 - Archaeological Recording
- 9) C70 - Contaminated Land
- 10) The development hereby approved shall not commence until details of the proposed finished floor levels and overall ridge heights of specified dwellings, in relation to an agreed fixed point or O.S datum have been submitted to, and been approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details
Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area and the residential amenities of future occupants and existing neighbouring occupant.
- 11) A Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development on site and adhered to during the construction period. This should include details of monitoring and mitigation measures to control the environmental impact of the development during the construction and demolition phases, including site traffic, the effects of piling, and emissions of noise and dust. The CEMPs should contain a procedure for handling and investigating complaints as well as provision for regular meetings with appropriate representatives from the Local Authorities during the development works, in order to discuss forthcoming work and its environmental impact.
Reason: In the interest of the environment of the site and surrounding areas.
- 12) Construction work shall not take place outside the following times: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Fridays); 8am to 1pm (Saturdays); nor at any time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.
Reason: In the interests of the amenity of occupants of nearby buildings.
- 13) Prior to the commencement of the development a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SUDS) to deal with surface water associated with the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (in consultation with Devon County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority). The said scheme shall include details of the on-going maintenance arrangements associated with any drainage system to be installed. The development shall be implemented strictly in accordance with the approved scheme.
Reason: To ensure the satisfactory drainage of the development.
- 14) Prior to occupation of the building hereby approved a Wildlife Plan which demonstrates how the proposed development has been designed to enhance the ecological interest of the site, and how it will be managed in perpetuity to enhance wildlife has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out and managed strictly in accordance with the approved measures and provisions of the Wildlife Plan.

Reason: In the interests of protecting and improving existing, and creating new wildlife habitats in the area.

Local Government (Access to Information) 1985 (as amended).

Background papers used in compiling the report:

Files of planning applications available for inspection from the Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter: Telephone 01392 265223

APPENDIX

Impact of the Development on Heritage Assets

Medieval Exe Bridge, church and tenements (Scheduled Monument)

This was the principal approach into the city from the West from the 1200's until the 1770's and of very high overall significance, reflected in its scheduling.

Setting

Immediate setting

The setting is in the form of a modern urban park, with landscaping and tree planting, including along the line of Western Way. Is isolated by busy roads on three sides and by the elevated New Bridge St on the other, but has pedestrian access. It is floodlit after dark.

Broader setting

Due to its strong functional and historical relationship with the city, by virtue of it being the main point of access and gateway into the city from the west, it is functionally, and visually, intimately connected with the terminus of the route/journey at the West Gate, and with the city above and beyond it, including the Cathedral which dominated, and still dominates to some extent, the city from its hilltop position. It is clear from the historic maps and illustrations, and from the topography, that an approaching traveller is likely to have seen buildings and a church (St Edmund's) at the city end of the bridge, with his eye drawn into the city via the West Gate beyond, the tower of St. Mary Steps Church protruding above it to the left, and up over the rising rooftops to the Cathedral at the top of the hill. Some glimpses of this view are still present from the bridge approach today, particularly when the trees are not in leaf, enabling some appreciation and understanding of the fundamental relationship between, and historic interdependence of, the bridge and city. Whilst not improved by the present buildings on the Radmore & Tucker site, and in part obscured by the evergreen tree at the end of the bridge in particular, this view and the basic relationship between bridge and city, can still be discerned, along with the important visual interconnections between the bridge and the towers of the St Mary Steps and the Cathedral in particular.

Impact of the development on setting

Immediate setting

No direct impact, other than as a backdrop to the park and thence to the bridge ruins. The current building does not provide a particularly distinguished backdrop, and the greater architectural quality of the proposed replacement should represent an improvement, though this may be balanced to some extent by its considerably greater height, which may dominate the space in front of it rather more than the present one does.

Broader setting

The present building, although not architecturally striking, allows the roofscape of the city (including of some of the buildings up West Street) to be seen above and behind it, together with the more prominent towers of St Mary Steps and the Cathedral. Visually therefore there is still a connection between city and bridge, allowing that historic and functional relationship to be appreciated, notwithstanding the present building and the effect of Western Way & the

trees. Closer views along the bridge are obscured by the latter, particularly the evergreen one on the traffic island, but trees, more than buildings, are essentially transient.

The new building is much larger and higher, with the result that it will block off views of the tower of St Mary Steps Church and of the roofscape of the Central Conservation Area behind, and of one tower of the Cathedral (with only a glimpse of the other being apparent).

The proposed development will harm the broader setting of the bridge, as it will sever the fundamental connection between bridge and city, thereby making the significance of this relationship even more difficult to appreciate.

The Church of St Mary Steps (Grade I listed building)

Setting

Immediate setting

This comprises the area (currently a car park) in front of the church, and the close approaches to it from West Street and Stepcoth Hill and from Western Way. The car park, and the presence of Western Way and heavy traffic, detracts from the ability to appreciate the church, though it is relevant to note that this area would also have been very busy and cluttered historically, as the main entry point into the city from this direction. The church is also currently scaffolded, though this is not permanent.

Broader setting

Historic churches, particularly their towers form an integral and generally very visible part of the wider rural and urban landscapes and, as such, of the character of historic city roofscapes and of the relevant conservation areas. This prominence is deliberate, as for various reasons they were meant to be seen, usually from as many different directions as possible. The ability to appreciate this visibility is therefore a fundamental part of their significance, and also of the wider conservation areas that they are often located within.

St Mary Steps is located immediately behind the West Gate. Its tower protrudes above the city wall at this point. It thus overlooks/would be visible from the western approach to the city and, as such, is intervisible with the medieval bridge. Thus the bridge and the approach to the city and the church (particularly its tower) do have a strong historical and visual relationship and probably historically a functional one too; and so the medieval bridge approach does form a fundamental part of the church's wider setting.

Impact of the development on setting

Immediate setting

The development, although higher than the present building on the site, does not extend any closer to the church. Although its greater height and presence means that it is more likely to compete visually with the church and tower when viewed from the SE (from Western Way). This on balance should be offset by the higher architectural quality of the proposed building and, crucially by the potential enhancements to the open space in front of the church, if these can be secured.

Therefore the impact should be neutral to positive.

Broader setting

The impact on this is similar to that of the medieval bridge (for analysis see above). By blocking off the view of the church tower from the main western approach to the city, and of the latter from the tower, the development will clearly cause harm to the wider setting of the church. Whether or not this constitutes substantial harm can be argued both ways,

depending on how much weight is given to the potential for substantial improvement to the church's immediate setting, in terms of providing public benefit, and whether the impact on the broader setting is treated separately. It is a matter of whether the permanent loss of the intervisibility between the Grade I church and the scheduled bridge is outweighed by the public benefits of the potential improvements to the immediate public realm in front of the church, and how certain the latter are to be delivered as part of the proposed development; and whether in time they could not be delivered anyway without causing such harm to the wider setting.

Cathedral (Grade I)

Located in the centre of the walled city, and visible from all directions, it has a much broader setting in addition to the immediate one of the Cathedral Close.

Currently the tops of both Cathedral towers can be seen when approaching the city from the west, from Exe Bridges and along the medieval bridge. As currently designed the new development will largely block off the view from the medieval bridge leaving a glimpse of part of one tower, which will be more incidental and difficult to appreciate it for what it is.

The development will, by blocking views of the Cathedral from the historic western approach to the city, cause incremental harm to the wider setting of the Cathedral, to add to that already arguably caused by other tall and large buildings within the city.

Nos 5 & 7 West Street (including Nos 15 & 16 Stepcote Hill). Grade II* Listed Buildings

Setting

The immediate setting is the same as for the church (see above). Historically the area would have consisted of relatively narrow streets (busy and cluttered with traffic) immediately behind the West Gate, as the main entry point into the city from this direction. As a result, any wider views of the buildings would have been blocked by the city walls and gate and other buildings, with only some glimpses down West Street & Stepcote Hill, and so historically these buildings did not have a broader setting.

However, currently they are now more visible and visually prominent than before, as the space in front is no longer occupied by the city wall, west gate, and various buildings. As such, with the church, they do represent part of the sense of arrival into a historic city from this direction, albeit one rather tarnished by Western Way and its traffic.

Impact of the development on setting

Immediate setting

Although higher than the present building, as the new development will be sited off to one side of the group comprising these two buildings (the church and the House that Moved) it should have a relatively marginal effect on the ability to appreciate the immediate setting of these buildings and, by being of a higher quality than the present building, should act to enhance it.

Broader setting

In as much as this exists, this should not be affected, as the buildings are sited further east than the church and the main element that obscures (and will obscure) views of them from the west is the evergreen tree.

Nos 2 – 24 West Street (including the House that Moved; all grade II listed) & No. 1 New Bridge Street (grade II)

Setting

The immediate setting comprises both West Street, on to which they front and are principally visible from (in terms of footfall), and their rear elevations along Lower Rackclose Lane. It is from the latter that their historic relationship and importance can be best observed and understood, together with their close relationship to the city wall (now continuous with the rear property boundaries) and the way they have encroached over the rampart walk over time.

When built, their rear elevations would have faced out to the west over the top of the city wall, and would have been visible from that direction and allowed views out to the west. They therefore possess a broader setting in this respect. The present building has largely compromised this broader setting (as some of the higher 19C buildings may have done before), although from the west some of the roofs of the West Street buildings are still just about visible behind it, hinting at the steep slope of the street down from west to east.

No. 24 (the House that Moved) is atypical in that it was built elsewhere and was only moved to its present position in the 1960s. Historically there was probably a very similar building occupying this location. Its immediate setting is West Street, and also the space in front of the church and Nos 5 – 7; its side elevation alongside the city wall is relatively plain and perhaps betrays its origin elsewhere. Its broader setting is similar to Nos 5 – 7, with which (and the church) it currently forms a distinct and familiar group.

Impact of the development on setting

As currently designed, it is assessed as having the following impact:

Immediate setting

In terms of the principal frontages along West Street the development should have no impact. Regarding the rear elevations, the new development will be set further away from the rear elevations and from the city wall than the present building is, and create a much wider and more welcoming space. Therefore on this measure it will have a positive impact on the immediate setting and on the ability of people to appreciate it. For No. 24 the impact would be as per Nos 5 – 7. In these terms the development would represent an enhancement of the immediate setting of these buildings.

Broader setting

Although the present building already largely cuts off these buildings visually and physically from their wider setting as defined above, the greater height of the proposed building will complete this truncation, and will completely hide from view from the west the roofscape of these buildings and their context on top of the city wall. In these terms the new building would reinforce and complete the harm caused to the wider setting of these buildings by the present building.

The Riverside Conservation Area

Impact

The replacement of the present building with one of greater architectural presence and quality should act to enhance this CA, as would any public realm improvements that can be secured in relation to it.

However, as part of its character is as the waterfront and historic industrial area of the city, crossed in this area by the main western route into the latter in the form of the medieval and later bridges the present proposals, by erecting a visual barrier along the landward boundary of this area, between it and the walled city rising up the hill behind, will cause harm to the setting and overall significance of the CA and to the ability to appreciate its relationship with adjoining areas.

Central Conservation Area

Impact

The height of the building as currently proposed will create a visual barrier that cuts off much of the view of the CA from the historic (and current) approach to the city from the west, including that of St Mary Steps church tower and the varied roofscape rising up the hill and one of the Cathedral towers, and will therefore act to divorce the CA - the walled city, from its riverside and waterfront context and from the western approaches to it.

The new building will therefore cause harm to the setting of the Central CA, when seen from the main western approach to the city by dominating the foreground of the latter and obscuring and masking its character by cutting off much of the view of the CA as a historic walled city on a hill.

City Wall

Setting

Historically, before buildings developed immediately outside the West Gate in the later medieval period, the ground in front of this fortification would have been kept clear of buildings, in order to deny attackers any cover. However, this area was attractive for development and from the late medieval period until the present day it has been built up, except for a short period during the civil war sieges in the 1640s. Currently, the immediate setting of the city wall here is a narrow lane, with the present building immediately on the other side, creating a narrow canyon and little sense of the city wall being what it is, a fortification built to command the area in front.

Impact of the development on setting

Immediate setting

By drawing back the building line from the face of the city wall, and creating a wider and more welcoming space here, it will enhance the immediate setting of the city wall and allow it to be better appreciated. However, this enhancement will be counterbalanced to some extent by the much greater height of the new build.

Broader setting

The city wall's wider setting to the west that is already significantly compromised although the greater height of the proposed building will make it more difficult to pick out the line of the wall as represented by West Street.

The Higher Leat

Although shown on earlier maps as being largely open by the 18th and 19th Centuries several lengths of the leat were culverted or ran under buildings within what was an intensively developed industrial area. This includes the section lying within the site. It was principally an industrial watercourse.

Impact of the development

By opening up the leat and its immediate environs somewhat it will enhance its setting, not least the ability of people to appreciate its existence.

