

Planning application comment was submitted on the **27 July 2023 18:11 PM**

The following is a comment on application **P230385/CD3** by **David Fowler on behalf of Hereford Civic Society**

Nature of feedback: Objecting to the application

Comment: Please see attached

Attachment: sandbox-files://64c2a4cc8d018181039236

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Infrastructure from section 106 to consider: City Centre cycling infrastructure. Secure/ covered cycle storage facility

Link ID: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200142/planning_services/planning_application_search/details?id=230385

Form reference: FS-Case-534927499

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Comments on planning application P230385, Museum, Hereford Library Broad Street Hereford
Herefordshire HR4 9AU

Application for the proposed renovation and adaptation of the existing Hereford Museum and Library to become a dedicated and enhanced facility for Herefordshire Museum Service and viable for the future. This would comprise a museum, education space, galleries, cafe, and staff facilities.

Comments below have been drafted by a Hereford Civic Society case-worker to reflect the generality of the view of the Society and do not necessarily reflect the views of all members.

Overview

The Applicant's current proposals were developed from a conceptual design on which Hereford Civic Society were invited to comment. We are pleased that the current design incorporates a number of our suggestions made to the Applicant's architect in August 2022.

We support the architect's intention to conserve much of the original building, in particular the front façade on Broad Street, the retention of the Broad Street facing dormer windows and the removal of the current ground floor window display cases.

We commented (not objected) when responding to the Applicant's original proposals (receipt ref: 500806500 dated 24.03.23 timed 17.03). We are disappointed that the Applicant's revised plans do not adequately address points made in our earlier feedback, leaving us no alternative other than to formally object to the revised plans.

Comments

Exterior:

1. We remain concerned that the building doesn't have "street presence". For all who walk along Broad Street, we ask ourselves "does the building stand out from its neighbours or begs to be visited, and what more can be done to bring the building to passers-by attention". The final paragraphs of this feedback include a proposal for the applicant's consideration.
2. We question the removal of the "modern iron railings to be removed" (drawing 10265-ART-XX-OO-DR-A-16000) from the front of the Broad Street building. We acknowledge that they are "modern" and aren't original to the 1874 building, but elsewhere retention of more recent alterations is retained to tell the building's story. Shiny gloss paint should be avoided, also white and black. Black blue or black green is historically more correct for C19 ironwork.

Entrance Foyer/ Lobby:

1. The entrance foyer/lobby is cramped. Because of the central entrance, on entry, the space divides into two small areas either side of a passage way (the lobby) that will need to be kept free of obstruction and leads to a (2nd) set of double doors that takes the visitor into the stair well. The two small areas are shown to accommodate a retail area and an orientation exhibition. Confusingly, an illustration of the entrance area on drawing 10265-ART-AA-OO-DR-A-16000 show the entrance area containing casual seating in contrast to the Plan numbered 1

- “Entrance Plan Proposed” (on the same drawing). What is it to be – casual seating or retail/ orientation exhibition area?
2. On entry into the lobby, the proposed layout invites visitors to walk directly ahead to the next (second) set of double doors and into the stair well. Possibly the route that will be taken by those heading directly to the roof observation platform/ refreshment facilities. Signage within the building will require careful consideration.
 3. Visitor flow. Presumably on entry, visitors will be required to first visit the Orientation Exhibition, where tickets for visiting exhibitions will be issued, where there will be we assume an enquiry desk, be given a plan of the museum displays together with the opportunity to talk to staff as to those galleries that they should first visit if their time is limited. A possible location for the storage of visitor possessions?
 4. We welcome the removal of “roller shutter”/ “proposed sliding” screens that were included in the Applicant’s original plans. However, what is now proposed are by-fold screens (drawing 10265-ART-XX-OO-DR-A-16000), notwithstanding that drawing 10265-ART-XX-OO-DR-A-27601 has not been updated and the roller shutter screen is still shown. Buried amongst the 111 drawings, these inconsistencies somewhat undermine our confidence on what exactly the applicant’s plan really is. Drawing 10265-ART-XX-XX-DR-A-27600 suggests that the screens are full height (3500 wide x 2500 high). Design and materials are not disclosed. Space taken up when the screens are stored away out of use is not shown.
 5. When the by-fold screen is in place, the lobby will be a very dull, plain and a dark place. The front entrance door into the lobby is recessed which means there will be very little natural light even in summer. It will be a 3.7m dark, plain walled cube. In our opinion, not an appropriate, desirable or welcoming entrance into a historic, heritage listed building. We suggest the by-fold screens are made of clear glass (similar to a by-fold bath/shower screen). Visitors by looking into these two closed off areas, will have confidence that they are in the right building. The lobby would then benefit from light from the two adjoining areas whilst at the same time being secure. Do the screens have to be full height? A maximum height of 1.7m will probably be sufficient to prevent any incursion.
 6. The counter in the retail area when allowing space for queuing customers occupies more than 25% of the space devoted to retail. The adjacent single door opening into the retail space further limits space available for shelving, tables, book and display cases on which merchandise that is for sale can be displayed. Is the single door, the exit door for visitors wishing to leave the building, with Hereford Museum adopting the approach of many heritage organisations, of routing visitors as they leave their premises of having to walk through the shop, encouraging impulse purchases? We recall that during public consultations, the importance of the sale of merchandise to the museum’s viability was stressed. Indeed, “viability” is included in the wording of this planning application’s title. We question whether the proposed plan with such a small area devoted to “retail” will enable the museum to achieve this objective.
 7. We note that drawing 10265-ART-AA-OO-DR-A-16000 shows no provision for the storage for visitors’ possessions (bags, coats, umbrellas). Most museums and art galleries for safety and security reasons insist such items are not taken into gallery spaces.

Height of Building

We are aware of comments concerning the increase in the building’s height and their effect on the Hereford skyline. We are comfortable with the Applicant’s plans. They do not impact views of the cathedral. The increase in building height in our view is not significant and would not set a precedent that would encourage substantially taller city centre buildings. The roof top observation platform and refreshment facilities will we understand, be free to use by both visitors and Herefordshire residents, which we believe will encourage return visits.

Retention of existing building fabric

Our comments regarding the gallery areas and the Woolhope room are unchanged from the feedback provided on 24.03.2023 and are repeated here.

Staircase:

1. We support the retention of the staircase, the removal of suspended ceilings and the opening up of blocked windows to allow in natural daylight.

Woolhope Room:

1. We are pleased to see the plans retain the historic character of the Woolhope Room.

Café/ Roof terrace:

1. Takes up the whole of the 5th floor. The café is likely become a destination in its own right. We support that. What isn't clear are the museum's security arrangements when the café is open and the museum is closed. CCTV coverage of the entrance/ lobby area should possibly overcome this. An intercom at the front door, would enable staff on the 5th floor to control entry for diners with reservations.

Exhibition Galleries:

1. Members of Hereford Civic Society attended consultations conducted at Herefordshire Council's Museum Resource and Learning Centre in Friar Street (January 2023) and a short presentation in the Woolhope Room in early March 2023. We are not aware of any subsequent feedback concerning the intended use of the exhibition galleries. These consultations omitted all mention of the museum entrance and visitor experience/ first impressions on entering the building.
2. Members have expressed a concern that the Museum's plans concentrate on the county's archaeology with little consideration of Herefordshire's art collection. Except for a small room on the 4th floor designed to portray Brian Hatton's studio, there are no proposals to display Herefordshire's extensive collection of art treasures. We suggest that the gallery earmarked for the staging of travelling exhibitions is designed and designated to perform this function at times when this gallery would otherwise remain empty/ locked/ unused.

For consideration:

Free-standing retail facility

We repeat the suggestion made in March 2023 for a free-standing retail facility. This would of course be subject to separate planning application were the museum authority believe it appropriate.

Our concerns with respect to the building's difficulty in drawing the attention of passers-by (both residents and visitors to the city) and the building's cramped entrance foyer/ lobby could be addressed by placing a freestanding structure on the pavement outside the Museum in Broad Street. The Louvre in Paris has of course the glass pyramid. A rectangular glass building, perhaps trimmed with architectural ironwork to illustrate the world renown ferrous skills of our local college, which is sadly not adequately acknowledged in Hereford city's architecture or display of public art. Such a structure

would help avoid the temptation to attach promotional material to the existing building or the siting of temporary promotional material alongside the museum entrance.

Perhaps in design, not too dis-similar to existing glass structures that abut the surface carpark in Hereford's Old Market. Possibly branded as "Information Centre: The Herefordshire Saxon Hoard, Museum and Art Gallery", it could include the museum's merchandising area, attracting both custom and attention of passers-by to the museum and its displays/ collections.

Herefordshire Council consulted on a Burroughs' design proposal for Hereford's Cathedral Quarter. This proposal sought to remove most vehicular traffic from Broad Street and incorporate broader pavements along its length. The placing of our proposed museum Information Centre in the paved area in front of the museum would need to be in keeping with the Burroughs' design brief.

The entrance foyer/ lobby area within the museum building could then become a holding area (as portrayed in the illustration on drawing 10265-ART-xx-oo-DR-A 16000) for the use by tour parties and others to congregate prior to entering/ and after exiting the exhibition galleries. The lobby area of 15m square is we feel insufficient in size, even for small groups. We recall being told that visitor numbers were projected to be around 75,000 per annum. An average of over 200 per day.

Art Gallery

Consideration is currently being given to moving Hereford Library into the Shire Hall. It is our understanding that space in the proposed museum falls short of a "standard" set by Government. In the event that the Shire Hall becomes Hereford library's permanent home, would there be sufficient space in the Shire Hall to locate the Art Gallery there also? This would provide more museum space in the Broad Street Museum building and allow a more representative display of works by Herefordshire's artists at the Shire Hall than we believe possible in the museum building.

djf 27.07.23