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The Society's response to proposals to redevelop the Pithay to residential led use

9<sup>th</sup> October 2015

The Society is grateful to the ADAPT Real Estate and their team for making available the presentation boards of the proposed conversion of the Pithay to an apartment block. The Society strongly supports the scheme. The scheme would add 35 flats units in addition to the 206 flats permitted under prior approval reference 13/04109/COU and to build a two storey roof top extension to accommodate 20 duplex units.

#### **The Process**

Because of the prior approval of the change of use, the aspects of the scheme upon which ADAPT consulted related to the external alterations to the building and the surrounding public realm. In the context of this application, the Society could not expect more.

#### **Change of use**

The Society supports the conversion of obsolescent 1960s office blocks to residential use. This avoids the expense and waste of demolition. This scheme would attract more residents to live in the centre of the city. Not only will the scheme significantly contribute to the Council policy to build 7,200 new homes in the city centre by 2026, it also presents a once in a lifetime opportunity to improve a cheerless part of Broadmead. Because All Saints Street will never be a primary shopping frontage, the Society suggests that street level planning uses should be as flexible as possible. The arrival of more residents will create a demand for new soft infrastructure. The building should be able to offer space for whatever demand emerges, which no one can anticipate.

#### **The design of the changes that would have an impact on the public realm**

##### **A new two story roof top extension to accommodate 20 duplex units.**

The Society supports this proposal. The new units will increase the building's height but the extension will sit within the context of the taller buildings that

surround it. The gain from the removal of the roof level service clutter to the basement will mitigate and outweigh the effect of any the height increase. Subject to the approval by the Council of the detail and materials of the roof extension, the Society supports the proposed light-weight design.

### **Reglazing the existing building**

The Society supports this proposal to replace the current glazing. The Society is uncertain whether the design of the new glazing scheme is settled. The late pattern 'Critall' style windows sub-divide the window voids to prevent them appearing as a ribbon of blank spaces. Without necessarily copying the current glazing pattern the Society suggests that the new glazing system should subdivide the window openings within the spirit of the original design. The success of the regeneration of buildings with architectural merit depends on details such as glazing bar patterns and proportion. The Society suggests that glazing bars sub-divide the ribbon fenestration. The effect would give the building the character of residential use. There was a similar discussion in relation to the new glazing system for the nearby Electricity House.

### **Recladding the ground and first floors on all four elevations**

Subject to the approval by the Council of the detail and materials, the Society supports the principle of cladding the lower two storeys of the All Saint's Street elevation to conceal the former occupiers' clutter. Cladding the area below the ring beam and installing glazed shopfronts and new first floor windows would create a unified podium to support the upper floors, which would improve the building's appearance.

### **Removal of the podium with level access from The Pithay and Tower Lane**

The Society supports the removal of existing Podium level car parking and vehicular access to the front of the building with landscaping to create a semi-public garden or pocket park. This would be a major landscape gain.

### **Off-site public realm works**

**All Saints Street** – Although the Nelson Street Public Realm Strategy retains general traffic in this street, it has low vehicle use. The Society would support the creation of a unified surface to create a pedestrian priority shared space. Concrete paving blocks could replace the current tarmac. It would improve All Saints Street to remove the on-street parking. The new residential Council Tax stream would more than off-set the loss of parking revenue. The Nelson Street NCP car park could absorb displaced short-term parking. This proposal could transform the depressing character of All Saints Street.

### **Tower Lane**

The Society supports the proposals to improve Tower Lane, which would visually unite the garden in front to the Pithay's main entrance. This work, together with the re-surfacing the eastern part of Tower Lane, would unify St.

John's Steep, Newmarket Avenue and Tower Lane to make the area more attractive for pedestrians.

**The Pithay**

The removal of the current ramp from the Pithay roadway will require some reinstatement of the highway. The Society suggests that this is an opportunity to continue the All Saints Street improvements up the hill. Few vehicles now use The Pithay whose pavements are too narrow for safe or comfortable use. Improvements to The Pithay would unify it with All Saints Street.