

#



an independent force for a better Bristol

28th February 2017

The Society's response to a planning enquiry to demolish 21, 23, 25 and 29 Park Row - 17/00587/PREAPP

The Proposal

The planning enquiry is limited to the demolition of 23, 25, 27 & 29 Park Row to permit later redevelopment of the land. Under record number 907M in the Monuments layer of the Council's Heritage Register, 'Know Your Place', No.29, Park Row is described as *"A tall 19th century 4-storey warehouse with lower 3-storey flanking ranges - Pennant Sandstone with limestone dressings."* 25 and 29 Park Row represent a competent commercial design of modest ambition executed with good quality traditional building materials. The applicant offers no replacement building scheme.

Introduction

The Society supports the University's long-standing ambition to redevelop the land above Park Row (23 & 27) and agrees that these buildings have *"a 'utilitarian' appearance that do not make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area"*. The Society strongly opposes the demolition of the buildings 25 and 29 Park Row. The site is within the St. Michael's Hill and Christmas Steps Conservation Area. 29 Park Row is prominent in the streetscape, is a positive feature in the conservation area and contributes to the local identity of large 19th/early 20th century stone faced structures. The Society supports the retention and repair of the western boundary wall.

Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework provides - Paragraph

133 *"Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss."*

136 *"Local planning authorities should not permit loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred."*

Local Policies BCS22 and DM31 seek to ensure that development proposals safeguard or enhance heritage assets in the city.

Is the proposal to demolish 25 and 29 Park Row policy compliant?

In the absence of any replacement building scheme the answer must be, no. Planning policy raises a presumption against demolition that can only be rebutted by evidence that the public benefits of the replacement building scheme would outweigh the harm that demolition of the heritage asset would cause to the character of the conservation area. The inclusion of 29 Park Row in the list of Monuments is official recognition the value placed upon the building by the local planning authority. The applicant has not provided any evidence that 29 Park Row is structurally unsafe. There is no evidence that the building's construction prevents its conversion and reuse and that demolition is the only strategy to achieve the benefit of redevelopment to bring the building back into use. The applicant's continued neglect of its heritage asset is not a material planning consideration.

Conclusion

25 and 29 Park make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area; they represent heritage assets of acknowledged significance. Complete demolition would represent substantial harm to the character of the Conservation Area. In the absence of an acceptable scheme of redevelopment there is no evidence upon which the Council can give planning advice and no justification for demolition. The Society does not support demolition with the retention of the building façade. The incorporation of the façade of the neighbouring former Coliseum into the University Gate building is uncomfortable.

