THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY

The national charity campaigning for the Victorian and Edwardian historic environment

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Chairman Dr Colin Cunningham

Alex Baldwin
Conservation Adviser
Direct line 020 8747 5894
alex@victoriansociety.org.uk

C Horton
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Council offices
Argents Mead
Hinckley
Leicestershire
LE10 1BZ

Your reference: 09/00142/LBC & 09/00141/DEEM
Our reference: 2009/01/012

1 April 2009

Dear Ms Horton

Former Atkins Brothers Hosiery Factory, Lower Bond Street, Hinckley: Application for Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission to redevelopment of former industrial site for educational use and conversion of listed factory buildings

Thank you for your email and attachments of 3 March 2009, notifying the Society of the above applications.

We are **generally supportive** of the scheme which will provide the listed factory building with a long-term viable use and will facilitate very necessary repairs and on-going maintenance. We would like to comment on the following aspects of the scheme:

Conversion of the listed building

This appears to be a very sensitive conversion scheme for a former industrial building. From the plans and elevations it appears that virtually all the existing window and door openings are to be retained. We are particularly pleased to see that the original circulation pattern will be used and that there will be very few new openings created in the floor-plates. The proposed use is particularly appropriate for this type of historic building; the current trend for open-plan offices means that the large open floor plates of the factory can be used in their existing form - in this case over half of the factory floors will remain open-plan. There are only two small extensions proposed and if well-detailed, they should not be physically or visually damaging to the listed building.

Design of the new college building

We have no objection in principle to the construction of a new purpose built college building to the north of the site. This was previously a densely developed area occupied by large industrial buildings; a new educational building could help to reinforce the existing character of the site.

While we encourage high quality modern design and would certainly not recommend a pastiche of the Goddard building, we feel that a new building adjacent to a number of listed

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buildings and within a conservation area should be contextual, responding to the established character in terms of scale, massing, proportions and materials. And so, while we are supportive of the general design, size and massing of the proposed college building, we are not sure that the extensive use of painted render is suitable in an area where buildings are predominantly constructed of brick. The use of brick should not restrict the potential for exciting new architecture, nor the use of contrasting modern materials, rather it should help the building to preserve and enhance the existing character of the conservation area.

Car parking and landscaping

It is regrettable that so much surface car parking is proposed as this can have a detrimental impact on the setting of historic buildings and the character and appearance of the conservation area. Historic photographs show this area to have been more densely built up with the factory site fully occupied by industrial buildings and shops before that and the vacant site next to the grade II-listed weavers cottages occupied by a row of cottages built right up against the back of the pavement. It is a shame that this land has been cleared and left undeveloped and even more of a shame that the opportunity is not taken to re-establish the building line. Have the applicants considered the possibility of putting some of the parking on the college site underground allowing better use to be made of the land adjacent to the cottages?

In summary, while we do not wish to object to this application, we hope that the detailed design can be amended to take into account our suggestions.

Thank you for your consultation. We would be grateful to be notified of your determination in this case, in accordance with Circular 01/2001.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baldwin
Conservation Adviser