

Application No: 22/4472N

Location: SOUTH CHESHIRE MAGISTRATES COURT (LAW COURT), AND LAND TO WEST UP TO AND INCLUDING THE LIBRARY BUILDING, PRINCE ALBERT STREET, CREWE.

Proposal: The dismantling of the existing library building (to be replaced by a new History Centre as part of a separate application by others), the dismantling of the existing raised concrete deck between the existing library building and the existing law courts, the construction of a new entrance extension to the western facade of the law court building and the installation of a new public realm landscape to replace the existing car park with connection to Memorial Square.

Applicant: Mr Charles Jarvis, Cheshire East Borough Council

Expiry Date: 13-Jan-2023

SUMMARY

The application proposes the demolition of the old Crewe Library building and the raised concourse between the existing library building, Magistrates Courts, and the police station, and the delivery of a new landscaped public realm.

The proposals accord with the Councils objective of remodelling the civic hub with the Civic and Cultural quarter in Crewe town Centre. In conjunction with the intrinsically linked development of the History Centre (22/4451N), this public realm improvement project will deliver town centre redevelopment in accordance with the objectives of Policies RET 9 and RET 10 of the SADPD.

The demolition of the Library is considered acceptable in urban design terms, and also given the very significant structural and technical issues it cannot be successfully re-purposed to accommodate the Archive and associated facilities.

It is considered that the public realm scheme represents a significant physical and visual improvement on the civic offering, urban landscape and green offer within this key part of the town centre. The scheme incorporates the design qualities found within Memorial Square and removal of dated and problematic undercroft/raised concourse will importantly open up a direct pedestrian route from the square to other key civic elements to the south with clearer views towards Christ Church (grade 2). The proposed entrance extension to the Magistrates Court will also result in a high-quality civic design response and a positive backdrop to Memorial Square.

The proposal are therefore of a siting and design which accords with the objectives of CELPS Policy SE1 and SE4, and policies RET 9 and RET 10 of the SADPD.

The development will not adversely affect the amenities of nearby residents and also achieve an acceptable relationship with the adjacent Magistrates Courts building. It is considered the proposal therefore complies with policy SE1 of the CELPS and Policy HOU12 of the SADPD.

The site is in Crewe town centre with existing pedestrian and public transport infrastructure within the vicinity of the site, or within short walking distance. The proposed replacement car park for the existing undercroft car park (Civic Centre) is of acceptable layout and design including sufficient numbers of disabled persons spaces and EV charging bays with safe vehicular and pedestrian access from Street. Notwithstanding the reduction in parking spaces the proposals will not have an adverse impact overall town centre parking provision.

Other issues including designing out crime have been addressed, subject to condition requiring the provision of secure cycle parking and detailed scheme for the treatment of the former "sunken garden" including the provision of public art. In addition, to ensure measures are undertaken to mitigate the impact of construction/demolition work on the Magistrates Court and nearby residential properties a condition is recommended for the submission and approval of an updated CEMP.

On this basis, the proposal is for sustainable development which would bring environmental, economic and social benefits and is therefore considered to be acceptable in the context of the relevant policies of the adopted Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, the SADPD and advice contained within the NPPF.

Recommendation: APPROVE subject to Conditions

REASON FOR REFERRAL

Given Council interest/ownership of the site

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located within Crewe town centre to the south of Memorial Square and between Prince Albert Street to the west and the South Cheshire Magistrates Court building to the east. Crewe Police Station adjoins the southern site boundary. Crewe Street and the Grade II listed Christ Church lie to the south of the site.

The site includes the Crewe Library building which dates from 1967 and forms part of a wider civic complex comprising the Magistrates Court and Police Station. It also includes the raised pedestrian concourse which provides the main public access to the Library and the adjacent Magistrates' Court building, as well as first floor access to the police station.

A public car park (Civic Centre) is located beneath the raised concourse. This also provides access to a staff car parking area located below the southern end of the Magistrates Courts building.

Crewe Library closed in 2016 and was relocated to the Lifestyle Centre on the southern end of Memorial Square. The building has remained vacant since this time.

The site forms part of the civil and cultural quarter of Crewe town centre, which also contains the Lifestyle Centre, the Lyceum Theatre, the Market Hall and Lyceum Square.

PROPOSAL

This application proposes the demolition of the old Library building, and the raised concourse/undercroft car park between the existing library building, Magistrates Courts, and the police station.

This application also proposes the delivery of a new, landscaped public realm incorporating a smaller replacement public car park and a north/south pedestrian connection from Memorial Square through to Christ Church (Grade II). A two storey addition is proposed on the western facade of the Courts Building to provide a new entrance and public access to its first floor following the removal of the upper concourse.

A separate and intrinsically linked planning application (22/4451N) to these proposals has been submitted for a two storey, building known as the History Centre to occupy the footprint of the demolished library. The proposed building will accommodate the Cheshire Archives and local studies services as well as space for research and exhibitions and also a ground floor café. This application is also on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

RELEVANT HISTORY

None relevant

POLICIES

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

LPS 1 - Central Crewe
MP 1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
PG 2 - Settlement Hierarchy
SD 1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD 2 - Sustainable Development Principles
EG 5 - Promoting a Town Centre First Approach to Retail and Commerce
SC 1 - Leisure and Recreation
SC 3 - Health and Well-being
SE 1 - Design
SE 2 - Efficient Use of Land
SE 3 - Biodiversity
SE 4 - The Landscape
SE 5 - Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands
SE 7 - The Historic Environment
SE 9 - Energy efficient Development
SE 12 - Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability
SE 13 - Flood Risk and Water Management
CO. 1 - Sustainable travel and transport

Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)

PG 9 - Settlement boundaries s
GEN 1 - Design Principles
GEN 2 - Security at crowded places
ENV 3 - Landscape Character
ENV 6 - Trees, hedgerows and woodland implementation
ENV 15 - New development and existing uses
ENV 16 - Surface water management and flood risk
HER 1 - Heritage Assets
HER 4 - Listed Buildings
HER 8 - Archaeology
RET 9 - Environmental improvements, public realm and design in town centres
RET 10 - Crewe Town Centre
HOU 12 - Amenity
INF 2 - Public Car Parks
INF 3 - Highway Safety and Access
INF 9 - Utilities
REC 5 - Community facilities

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Strategy
Crewe Town Centre Public Realm Strategy
A Cultural Strategy for Crewe 2019 -2029

CONSULTATIONS (Summary)

Environmental Health: No objection subject to conditions for remediation of contamination and amendment of the CEMP submitted with the application for Saturday working hours of 0900-1400. Informatives are recommended in respect of Construction hours for Noise Generative Works, requirements for Piling, floor floating and provision of a Site Specific Dust Management Plan (DMP)

Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service - No objection, and comments that it is unlikely that there will be any surviving below ground remains of those houses at this site given the extensive 1960's building.

Highways: No objection subject to a condition subject to a condition for cycle storage

United Utilities - Object, as land drainage is shown to be going into the public sewer. But further adds that should planning permission be granted a planning condition is attached requiring that prior to the commencement of development, details of a sustainable surface water drainage scheme and a foul water drainage scheme are submitted to, and approved by the LPA.

Cheshire Constabulary, Designing Out Crime Office – Comments. A series of issues need to be addressed to reduce the potential for crime and anti social behaviour in relation to CCTV provision, lighting, secure cycle storage, measures to secure the retained undercroft staff car park below the courts building and proposals for the existing “Sunken Garden”.

Cadent Gas : No objection

VIEWS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL:

Crewe Town Council : Supports the principle of development but raises the following observations and concerns:

- i. Reduction in town centre parking capacity, particularly that used for access to the Library and Lifestyle Centre*
- ii. The car park design layout should include for more disabled parking bays*
- iii. The car park design layout should include for more family-friendly parking bays*
- iv. The car park design layout should include for an increased proportion of EV charging bays.*

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:

A total of 5 representations have been received objecting to the application and the points raised are summarised below;

- The existing library building should be re-purposed. The proposed demolition goes against Cheshire East's stated aims of achieving Net Zero. Construction and building accounts for 40% of the U.K.'s carbon emissions and demolition causes two-thirds of the country's total waste.
- No serious consideration was given to repurposing, or altering, this award winning landmark building.
- Alternative and cost effective reuse of existing library building suggested for a college specialising in Financial Literacy, with accommodation for the Archives provided through the renovation of Christ Church.
- The design of the new building is totally unacceptable for the Cultural Quarter, being sandwiched between the Victorian Christ Church and Edwardian Municipal Buildings and reflecting neither.
- The existing utilitarian building must be replaced with an ambitious and remarkable structure that blends in with the surrounding architecture.
- Removal of parking spaces used by visitors to Crewe Lifestyle Centre.
- Provision of parking for the lifestyle centre must be a requirement for any approval.
- Potential of increased anti-social behaviour on Memorial Square and plans for an ice-cream van would be wholly out of character with the surroundings.
- Inadequate public consultation

A representation has also been received in “overall support” of the application but raises issue as summarised below;

- Lack of information for how this proposal would integrate with the Southern Gateway connectivity corridor scheme. Need for wayfinding signs and there is a lack of detailing regarding the artwork and place-finding panel paving.
- Crewe's Public squares have a lack of railway heritage and history. A pre-commencement condition could be placed regarding the artwork and history features and to work with the Heritage Centre to place some railway artwork or features within the square to improve place making, and making this a true link with the town.
- Free standing exhibition boards are proposed as part of the Ly2 development on Lyceum Square, part of the Cultural Quarter. Including this could tie in the development as all are part of the same site allocation.
- Cycle stands should also form part of placemaking, perhaps being steel hoops which spell out words around the centre including 'Crewe', 'Heritage' or 'Memorial'.
- Regarding the design of the planters, contrasting colour planters could be included which match the Ly2 development to tie in the two areas and integrate with the Southern Gateway landscaping proposals.
- A Path, seat or landscaping is required for the patch of grass in the southwest corner and closest to the Southern Gateway development (This is the former "sunken garden" for which landscaping proposals and location for public art have been submitted).
- The proposal incorporates 4 electric car charging points, Will all other car parking spaces have passive provision?
- Why are the disabled parking spaces next to the stairs and not located in the centre part nearer the ramp? Are any disabled parking spaces having EV provision?

A representation received from Cushman and Wakefield on behalf of HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) in respect of 22/4451N and raises the following concerns which are also relevant this application;

"The HMCTS understand the wide-ranging benefits that the proposed development would deliver however HMCTS do have concerns regarding the likely impacts to the court operation from the proposed development as it is constructed and brought into operation. Any disturbance or disruption from external activity, particularly significant external noise, is likely to interfere with evidence being given in the many cases that the court hears. This would lead to adjournments and delays to cases and have a detrimental impact on HMCTS performance and those that use the court building."

"It is imperative that safeguards and mitigation measures are put in place and enforced to protect the effective and smooth running of court activity through all phases of construction. It is therefore respectfully requested that the following actions are undertaken by the applicant and enforced by the Council:

- *Submission of an assessment of construction noise on the court operation in collaboration with HMCTS so that the levels of construction noise that will adversely impact court proceedings can be properly understood and assessed. This will allow adequate and robust management and mitigation measures to be identified and enforced through any future planning conditions, specifically those that relate to the proposed Construction Environmental Management Plan.*
- *Where construction operations will emit significant noise impacts that are likely to disrupt the proper functioning of the court, such activities should take place outside of*

core court hours, the core hours being 09:00 – 16:00. This will require bespoke construction hours to be agreed with HMCTS to limit disruption of any sort to court proceedings and enshrined within the proposed Construction Environmental Management Plan and any bespoke planning condition related to noise emissions.

- *A further assessment of construction vibration on the court operation and building so that any adverse impact can be properly understood and assessed. This will allow adequate and robust management and mitigation measures to be identified and enforced through any future planning conditions, specifically those that relate to a Construction Environmental Management Plan.*
- *Future planning conditions to ensure that any Construction Environmental Management Plan includes the requirement for construction traffic entering and leaving the site to be closely controlled, vehicles that make deliveries will travel via designated traffic routes to be agreed with the LPA and other interested parties including HMCTS, and that construction traffic will be controlled by means of a vehicle arrival and departure management plan to achieve an even spread of vehicle movements during the working day.*
- *The internal configuration of the building and new public realm/spaces are designed to ensure that there is no overlooking to any of the following private and sensitive areas, hearing rooms, administration offices, and witness/judge/CPS/prisoner entrances. “*

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site lies within the settlement boundary of Crewe where there is a presumption in favour of development. Policy PG 2 (Settlement Hierarchy) of the CELPS identifies Crewe as a principal town where significant development will be encouraged to support its revitalisation and recognising its role as the most important settlements in the borough. Development will maximise the use of existing infrastructure and resources to allow jobs, homes and other facilities to be located close to each other and accessible by public transport.

In principle, the proposals are supported by CELPS Policy LPS1, which identifies Central Crewe, including the town centre, as an opportunity to regenerate under-exploited assets and provide a strong mix of uses. In particular Policy LPS1 seeks to achieve this through;

- support for an enhanced cultural offer
- a focus of civic functions
- support for multi use facilities to drive footfall and a diversity of uses within the town centre

The proposed development further accords with CELP Policy EG5 which supports a town centre first approach, including proposals for cultural development.

SADPD Policy RET 10 supports opportunities for improving and regenerating Crewe town centre and in particular states that within the Civic and Cultural Quarter Development Area (CCQDA) the following development schemes will be supported;

i the re-use or redevelopment of the former library buildings for a range of civic, cultural, community and other town centre uses, including a potential history centre

In addition, Policy RET 10 also supports town centre public realm improvements that improve the quality of the public spaces, including green spaces, enhance the setting of heritage assets, enhance the setting of heritage assets and improve routes across the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Civic and Cultural Quarter brings together a range of leisure, cultural and civic functions including the Lifestyle Centre and the Municipal Buildings, in addition to the area around Memorial Square and Christ Church. The supporting text of policy RET 10 adds that, “The vision for the quarter will look to remodel the civic hub, currently comprising the former library, police station, law courts and undercroft car parking”.

In line with CELPS Policy SE1 “Design”, SADPD Policy RET 9 further supports town centre development provided this makes a positive contribution to their surroundings. Policy RE9 sets out the principles that town centre development should follow including designing buildings and spaces that create a sense of identity, are adaptable, accessible, inclusive, easily understood, and enhance local character and where the public realm associated with new development positively integrates with that of the wider town centre.

These proposals are intrinsically linked to the development of the proposed History Centre which is the subject of planning application of 22/4471N. This will deliver town centre redevelopment within the Civic and Cultural Quarter Development Area in accordance with the objectives of Policies RET 9 and RET 10 of the SADPD. Detailed issues relating to the demolition of the library and on course, car parking provision, design of the public realm and the proposed extension to the Magistrates Courts building are addressed below.

Background

The proposals seek the demolition of the vacant library building and the existing decked concourse structure to create ‘at grade’ southerly public realm connection between Memorial Square and the southern part of the civic quarter. The former library is to be replaced by a History Centre building which is the subject of planning application 22/4451N, whilst a new contemporary entrance to the law courts is also proposed, echoing the design approach of the proposed History Centre.

A smaller replacement public car park is to be provided on the eastern part of the former civic centre car park at its original level with a landscaped embanked edge and crinkle crankle (serpentine) wall between it and the new public realm. The scheme will result in some established tree loss but new areas of soft landscaping, comprising planting beds, rain gardens and tree planting are proposed, both within the car park and main public realm. It will significantly enhance soft landscape coverage compared to the current situation and result in a far more positive public realm to the south of memorial Square, enabling further potential for civic life and activity.

The entire scheme is therefore subject to two planning applications (22/4472N & 22/4451N) and will be delivered in 2 overall phases. The first phase being the demolition, ground re-modelling, the provision of the re-configured car park and eastern part of the public realm and the new entrance to the law courts. Phase 2 will entail the development of the new History Centre building and the remaining, western area of public realm.

Planning application (22/3996N) relating to the Southern Gateway connectivity corridor scheme, proposes a new public realm area including a pedestrian walkway/cycleway between High Street and the rear of the Lifestyle Centre to Moss Square. Whilst the northern end of this route is located on the southern side of Christ Church, this is however a short distance from which to access the proposed north/south pedestrian connection from Crewe Street through to Memorial Square of this application (22/4472N).

Demolition and Redevelopment

Memorial Square is an important civic space situated at the heart of the Civic and Cultural Quarter of the town centre and is positively enclosed by the listed Municipal Buildings and recently regenerated Market Hall to the north. The square was re-designed to a high standard over 20 years ago and has become the main focus of civic activities, with the re-location of the listed war memorial to that space and its hosting of various town events.

However, immediately to the south of Memorial Square, and in conjunction with the old library building and law courts, is a very dated and problematic sub-terranean car park, with a raised concourse deck above which provides access to the law courts and the library at equivalent first floor level. The concourse space is accessible by steps from Memorial Square and a ramp from Prince Albert Street entrance into Memorial Square.

The car park structure is showing its age and the area is largely hidden from public view, except by car park users. The upper concourse has little positive landscaping and has a tired, bleak character, with limited scope for improvement given its elevated nature and design. Both the parking and the space above are unwelcoming at night and experience antisocial behaviour.

Importantly, the car park structure also constrains direct pedestrian flow and visibility from Memorial Square towards Crewe Street and the remainder of the civic quarter (Lifestyle Centre and Christ Church). The change in levels, with an oppressive, enclosed environment, inhibits connectivity, and essentially 'disconnects' the southern part of the civic quarter from Memorial Square, despite their close proximity.

The library building has been vacant since the transfer of library services to the Lifestyle Centre some years ago. The Council's Design Officer considers the library building is a non-jarring, brick, contemporary building that architecturally 'of its time'. Furthermore, in rejecting an application to list the library, Historic England concluded that, "the standard, functional design of the late-1960s former library in Crewe means that it lacks special architectural and historic interest to merit listing in a national context"

The submitted Design and Access Statement explains the rationale why the existing building is not able to be re-purposed for the proposed History Centre. This is principally due to a series of technical considerations, including a significant structural issues and required need for airtightness, given the specific needs for an archive facility. which cannot be achieved through a retrofit of the existing library building

The new history centre building will occupy the same footprint to that of the library but with levels raised to ensure it sits at grade to the levels of Memorial Square and Prince Albert

Street. The Design Officer considers this will result in a far better and responsive design than exists currently. The positioning and orientation of the building will help to frame Memorial Square and the new public realm, also creating active frontage/usage that will further animate this public space.

As a result the demolition of the Library is considered acceptable in urban design terms, and also given the very significant structural and technical issues the existing building cannot be successfully repurposed to accommodate the Archive and associated facilities.

Landscape, Character and Design

Public Realm

The Council's Landscape Officer considers that the proposed public realm scheme will significantly improve a failing landscape, rejuvenate, revitalise and open up an important piece of the 'Civic' jigsaw which is present in and around the site.

At present the key existing landscape features are the dark/foreboding undercroft parking area, an elevated stark, featureless, mostly treeless civic plaza (upper concourse) and a key route to the Magistrates Courts (None DDA compliant), a key roadside tree-lined frontage to Prince Albert Street and a secondary roadside frontage to Crewe Street which offers future potential links to other interesting opportunities/relationships with Christ Church and beyond.

The landscape scheme intends to carry on the design qualities found within Memorial Square through opening up a direct pedestrian route from the square to other key civic elements to the south. This will include clearer views towards Christ Church and Crewe Lifestyle centre.

Furthermore, the inclusion of rain gardens is an evolution of that design, reflecting national and local policy objectives around sustainable drainage, seeking to incorporate surface-based SuDS with multiple benefits.

The Landscape Officer recommended that some modest adjustments to the detail of the scheme to tighten the landscape design including that the key visual route and connection to Magistrates Court are kept open from street views, and some in-paving trees should be moved to facilitate this.

In particular the Landscape Officer advises that trees should be relocated from the circled paved area to create clear line of sight from Prince Albert Street to the Magistrates Court and also to allow a strong visible connection between the Town Hall and the new Library. Tree types should also be compact fastigiate varieties mixed along the proposed North to South pedestrian footway.

Where feasible trees should be moved to the neighbouring planting beds adjacent to proposed parking. It is considered that addition trees should be planted within planting bed island of the proposed car parking area, and which are "car friendly" to soften the carpark environs if practicable.

The Landscape Officer considers that details for the securing of the retained area of undercroft parking below the Magistrates Courts building should include screening to

enhance this area. Whilst, this area is outside of the application site and not within the Councils ownership, the applicant has been liaising with HM Courts and Tribunal Service to develop a design solution for securing the undercroft. It is anticipated that in the longer term HM Courts and Tribunal Service will install security screening / fencing and automatic gates to secure the area. However as an interim solution, and to also address concerns raised by Cheshire Constabulary (Designing Out Crime Officer), the proposals have been amended to include the installation of a 2.3m high, weldmesh security fence and access gates to secure the boundary between the application site and HMCTS land to prevent unauthorised access from the new car park into the retained undercroft.

A condition requiring the submission of further details of planting specification and details of the landscape scheme will enable the adjustments to the proposed scheme recommended by the Landscape Officer to be addressed. A condition is also recommended requiring a schedule of landscape maintenance.

In response to representations concerning some derailed aspects of the scheme, it is advised that the proposed display panels are intended to be similar to those installed as part of the Ly² development. However the environment, design and function of the Lyceum Square is not intended to be replicated in this location, which provides a very different setting adjacent to the Courts and Memorial Square.

In addition the existing "sunken garden" located on the corner of Prince Albert Street and Crewe Street has been a place of antisocial behaviour as it is hidden by its lower levels and obscured by design features. To address this, the "sunken garden" is to be removed and the ground levels raised to that of the adjoining public footway. Given its prominent, corner location it is considered that public artwork can be sited here. However, artwork within the scheme is yet to be commissioned and furthermore details regarding how Crewe's heritage can be reflected within this artwork, paving and public realm will be explored in the future. Similarly once the artwork is commissioned for the south west corner further consideration will be given to the public realm and provision of street furniture. A condition is therefore recommended with regard to the details for the provision of public art within the "former sunken garden".

A condition is also recommended requiring details of boundary treatment (such as low railings and/or an extended hedge planting) to be provided between the former sunken garden and the adjoining ear service area of the History Centre to discourage pedestrians from using this back of house area as a short cut/desire line.

In summary, the Landscape Officer considers that the scheme therefore represents a physical and visual improvement on the civic offering, urban landscape and green offer within this key part of the town centre.

Extension to Magistrates Building

The Magistrates Court Building is a three storey building dating from the mid 1960s, with the main courts and public areas on the first floor. The public entrance to the building is currently located at first floor level off the existing raised concourse which also links to the old library and police station.

A two story extension is proposed to the western façade of the lawcourts building to allow access to the existing entrance at first floor following the removal of the raised concourse deck as part of the wider Public Realm project.

The Council's Design officer advises that the design of the entrance extension draws on the design of the proposed History Centre (22/4451N) , creating a smaller 'bookend' to the new public realm, whilst also dovetailing with the architecture of the Court building. A feature full length window will overlook the new public space toward the History Centre, with active elements on the north/south elevations toward Memorial Square and the car park.

However the Design Officer also considers that the detailed design should explore how lighting can be used innovatively to help animate the square at night. A condition is recommended requiring the approval details of lighting.

Overall, the design of the extension to the Magistrates Court will result in a high-quality civic design response and a positive backdrop to Memorial Square.

Amenity

Residential properties will not be adversely affected by the public realm proposals including the provision of the new car park or the extension to the Magistrates Courts building. The impact on residential amenity of the new History Centre and specifically on the apartments of Imperial Chambers located on the opposite side of Prince Albert Steet is addressed in the consideration of planning application 22/ 4451N.

The removal of the upper concourse and the undercroft public car park, will have significant benefits in improving the appearance of the area adjacent to the Magistrates Courts as well as reducing the potential for criminal activity and anti social behaviour.

Furthermore, the removal of the existing concours will essentially remove overlooking of upper floor windows within the western elevation of the court building. Therefore, the public realm proposals will not have an adverse impact on the operations of the Magistrates Court.

Highways

Sustainable access

The site is in the Crewe town centre with existing pedestrian and public transport infrastructure within the vicinity of the site or within a short walking distance. The site is considered well located to cater for staff or visitors to travel by sustainable modes of travel.

Safe and suitable access

An existing vehicle access off Crewe Street currently in use is proposed to be restricted to maintenance vehicle access to the public realm only, with entry controlled by retractable bollards. A new vehicle access with pedestrian access from Crewe Street will serve the new surface level car park and be of a sufficient width and visibility.

Parking

A total of 89 car parking spaces are provided the existing civic centre car park, but this will be replaced with a new public car park of 32 spaces including 4 spaces for disabled persons. 2 further space are provided within the service area to the rear of the proposed History Centre. This results in a net reduction of 55 parking spaces.

The closest car parks to the site are Oak Street, Thomas Street , Chester Street, Gatefield, and Holly Bank. A Crewe town centre parking study was carried out, which analysed pre-covid ticketing data, and indicated that the Chester Street car park was almost fully utilised but the others were not, and that there would be sufficient spare capacity to cater for the loss/reduction in spaces of the Civic Centre car park. Nevertheless, there are plans for a new multi-storey car park in Crewe a short walk away which would provide almost 400 spaces and is due to become operational early 2024.

In terms of the proposed numbers of disabled person spaces and family friendly spaces the highway officer has further advised that the provision is sufficient. In particular disabled provision at 13% (4 spaces) exceeds normally applied CEC standards. Furthermore the Highway Officer also considers that the layout of the new car park is satisfactorily, and particularly the location of disabled spaces on the western side of the car park which are adjacent to a footway providing direct access to the ramp serving Memorial Square.

The Environmental Protection Officer has advised that the overall provision of 4 electric vehicular charging bays within the public car park (13%) is acceptable as it exceeds the recommended 10% provision as set out in the Low Emissions Strategy.

The existing Magistrates Courts undercroft staff parking will be retained and accessed via Crewe Street through the new car park.

Cycle parking is to proposed to be provided, although the Highway Officer recommends that a condition is imposed to ensure that this is suitably secure and sheltered.

Conclusion

The proposal is considered acceptable by the Highway Officer and no objections are raised to the application subject to a condition requiring details of sheltered. secure cycle storage.

Designing out Crime

The Cheshire Constabulary Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) has raised a series of detailed issues in respect to planning applications 22/4472N and 22/4451N given the need to discourage criminal and anti-social behaviour. In respect of the public realm scheme and proposed parking areas these concerns primarily relate to;

- CCTV and lighting provision
- Amount of seating proposed
- Measures required to secure the retained undercroft parking beneath the Magistrates Court building
- The inclusion of the “sunken garden” within and the development provision of public artwork here
- Lockable barrier should be provided to the new car park

- Pavement required to serve car park
- Provision of suitably located secure and sheltered cycle storage

The Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) has advised that the details of proposed CCTV coverage by CEC, provision of lighting within the areas of public realm and the location/ amount of seating (to include anti-skate studs where necessary) are considered acceptable following a review of the submitted information

As set out above, the proposals have been amended to include the installation of a 2.3m high, weldmesh security fence incorporating access gates to secure the party boundary and prevent unauthorised access from the new car park into the retained undercroft below the Courts building. The DOCO acknowledges this to be a temporary solution as the undercroft is the responsibility of the Law Courts, but prefers that a final measure to secure this area would be with an aesthetically pleasing grill/ fencing /gating solution to Secured by Design Standard.

The public realm proposes that the existing “sunken garden”, will be removed with ground levels raised to the level of the adjoining public footway. As this this will be prominent corner location it is proposed public artwork is located here. However, the artwork has yet to be commissioned and will be subject to further consultation, to involve the Designing Out Crime Officer. Following clarification of the proposals for the existing “sunken garden” and associated location of artwork the DOCO considers that the original concerns have been addressed

The proposals have also been amended to include lockable gates as a part of a height restriction barrier to the new car park and also footpaths have now provided on either side of the car park entrance. The DOCO advises this has addressed the original issues raised.

Although the provision of appropriate secure cycle storage is also being addressed in respect of the application for the History Centre building (22/4451N), cycle storage is also being required to be located within the area of public realm / new car park. It is accepted cycle storage should be located close to the entrance doors of buildings and within areas of reasonable footfall and guardianship. It is recommended that a planning condition requiring the approval details of the location of secure, covered cycle storage is attached.

Drainage

United Utilities have raised an objection to application 22/4451N on the basis that the plans show land drainage going into the public sewer on Crewe Street. Although notwithstanding this, a planning condition is recommended requiring the approval of details of the drainage system.

The proposals of this application (22/4472N) include a sustainable surface water drainage system to serve the entire development prepared with regard to the principles of the Cheshire East Council Sustainable Drainage Systems design guide. In particular, the use of rain gardens / bio-retention is encouraged in the guide as an infiltration system to control surface water run-off.

The library and its predominantly hard surfaced environs already drain to the existing sewer. This scheme seeks to introduce a greater area of soft landscape and includes SuDS within the design, creating the potential for significant betterment in slowing the flow of surface water to the mains sewer, as set out in the submitted drainage report.

The surface water drainage scheme is currently being assessed by the LLFA and its comments will be reported in an update to Southern Planning Committee.

Other Matters

Impact on the Magistrates Courts during construction

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted with this application. This sets out arrangements for mitigation measures to reduce noise, dust and vibration levels, including a traffic management /logistics plan, working hours and delivery times. However In response to the concerns raised by the planning agent acting on behalf of HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) additional information has been submitted in respect of managing the impact on the Magistrates Court buildings during the course of the development.

The applicant has advised that, "Cheshire East Council have been liaising with HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) on an ongoing basis since September 2021 with regard to the design of both the extension to the court building and the wider project, including the potential impact from noise and vibration. Monthly co-ordination meetings have been held since August 2022 ", and as result the following arrangements are proposed in respect of noise monitoring;

- An independent specialist consultant will be appointed jointly by Cheshire East Council and HMCTS. They will assess the proposed works, existing environment and activities with the Court, and adjacent site and establish the upper limits for noise and vibration levels. These upper limits will be agreed by both parties and included in the Heads of Terms agreement. The consultant will be retained throughout the construction period to undertake site visits, review the monitoring data provided by the contractor and assist in dealing with any noise or vibration related matters;
- A specialist company is to be appointed by the contractor to install noise, vibration and dust monitoring stations around the construction site and noise monitoring equipment will be installed within the courts building which will continually monitor the noise levels. If these exceed the agreed upper limit then an alert will be issued to the Contractor and they will immediately cease the activity in question;
- Activities which are considered higher risk in terms of noise and vibration will be undertaken outside the core hours for the Court. This will involve additional weekend working on Saturdays and selected Sundays

It is therefore recommended that a condition be imposed requiring the submitted CEMP be updated to incorporate the addition measures and arrangements to mitigate the impact on the Magistrates Courts, as set out above, and further to engagement between Cheshire East Council and HMCTS.

Public Consultation

The Council's Statement of Community Involvement SPD (January 2022) states that for, "For significant or major applications, developers will be encouraged to carry out pre-application consultation with interested local parties and community bodies".

The applicant has advised that an extensive programme of pre-application engagement was undertaken to provide CEC Officers and Members, Crewe Town Council, local residents, businesses and other key stakeholders the opportunity to view and comment on the development proposals, prior to the submission of the planning application. A Public Consultation Exercise was carried out on 13th October 2022 for both the Public Realm Proposals and the Court Extension Design at the Municipal Buildings, Crewe.

In terms, of the planning application publicity and consultation has been undertaken in accordance with the statutory requirements and the procedures of The Council's Publicity for Planning Applications Protocol.

CONCLUSION

The proposals accord with the Council's objective of remodelling the civic hub with the Civic and Cultural quarter in Crewe town Centre. In conjunction with the intrinsically linked development of the History Centre (22/4451N), this public realm improvement project will deliver town centre redevelopment in accordance with the objectives of Policies RET 9 and RET 10 of the SADPD.

The demolition of the Library is considered acceptable in urban design terms, and also given the very significant structural and technical issues it cannot be successfully re-purposed to accommodate the Archive and associated facilities.

It is considered that the public realm scheme represents a significant physical and visual improvement on the civic offering, urban landscape and green offer within this key part of the town centre. The scheme incorporates the design qualities found within Memorial Square and removal of dated and problematic undercroft/raised concourse will importantly open up a direct pedestrian route from the square to other key civic elements to the south with clearer views towards Christ Church (grade 2) . The proposed entrance extension to the Magistrates Court will also result in a high-quality civic design response and a positive backdrop to Memorial Square.

The proposal are therefore of a siting and design which accords with the objectives of CELPS Policy SE1 and SE4 , and policies RET 9 and RET 10 of the SADPD.

The development will not adversely affect the amenities of nearby residents and also achieve an acceptable relationship with the adjacent Magistrates Courts building. It is considered the proposal therefore complies with policy SE1 of the CELPS and Policy HOU12 of the SADPD.

The site is in Crewe town centre with existing pedestrian and public transport infrastructure within the vicinity of the site, or within short walking distance. The proposed replacement car park for the existing undercroft car park (Civic Centre) is of acceptable layout and design

including sufficient numbers of disabled persons spaces and EV charging bays with safe vehicular and pedestrian access from Street Notwithstanding the reduction in parking spaces the proposals will not have an adverse impact overall town centre parking provision.

Other issues including designing out crime have been addressed, subject to condition requiring the provision of secure cycle parking and detailed scheme for the treatment of the former "sunken garden" including the provision of public art. In addition, to ensure measures are undertaken to mitigate the impact of construction/demolition work on the Magistrates Court and nearby residential properties a condition is recommended for the submission and approval of an updated CEMP.

On this basis, the proposal is for sustainable development which would bring environmental, economic and social benefits and is therefore considered to be acceptable in the context of the relevant policies of the adopted Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, the SADPD and advice contained within the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to the following condition

- 1. Commencement of development (3 years)**
- 2. Development in accordance with approved plans**
- 3. Details of materials and finishes**
- 4. Details of lighting/illumination of extension to Magistrates Building**
- 5. Details of secure cycle storage/parking**
- 6. Details of the siting and provision of public artwork**
- 7. Provision of boundary treatment between former sunken garden and rear service area of History Centre**
- 8. Submission/approval of tree planting specification**
- 9. Implementation & maintenance of landscaping**
- 10. Submission and approval of full details of Drainage scheme**
- 11. Provision of ultra low emission boilers**
- 12. Contaminated land - Submission and approval of Remediation Strategy**
- 13. Contaminated land - Submission and approval of Verification Report**
- 14. Contaminated land – soil testing**
- 15. Measures to deal with unexpected contamination**
- 16. Submission of updated CEMP**

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chair of the Southern Planning Committee, provided that the

