

THE PHOENIX PROJECT DESIGN FESTIVAL

North Street, Lewes 10-12th September 2021

Response to Human Nature from the Friends of Lewes

It is evident from the large number of people that attended the festival that it was a great success in terms of a public relations exercise.

It is appreciated that "Human Nature has been working on plans for a new walkable, renewably-powered, super-green neighbourhood on the former Phoenix Industrial site" and as such the emphasis on promoting a sustainable development that would seek to limit its impact on limited resources is acknowledged.

Several Committee Members of the Friends of Lewes attended the design festival and following some preliminary discussions it was considered appropriate to forward some of our initial thoughts for your consideration in terms of identifying some 'key issues' as follows: -

- (1) The design festival was welcomed but the plans were too disjointed to be able to make substantive comments on what is proposed as apart from a large scale isometric sketch, very few plans and elevations were available. As such many visitors had difficulty in understanding the proposals.
- (2) The proposed development will need to demonstrate how it complies with the policies in both the South Downs Local Plan and the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan.
- (3) The development does not relate to the existing town or integrate well with the existing built form and as such appears to be a totally isolated neighbourhood.
- (4) There is no integrated traffic system in and out of the development. Better links between the site and Phoenix Causeway are essential if the development is to be integrated with the rest of Lewes.
- (5) There is no provision for traffic to circulate through the site and to link with Lancaster Street in order to provide an alternative route avoiding the centre of Lewes.
- (6) There is no increased parking provision and the proposed mobility hub will be in the form of a multi storey car park directly next to Phoenix Causeway which would be both visually unacceptable and is considered to have inadequate access arrangements. Furthermore, the impact of traffic using the mobility hub on the existing street network would also need to be carefully assessed.
- (7) The proposed flood defences would effectively be a 'hard edge' approximately a storey in height when viewed from the eastern bank of the River Ouse. Much of the site lies below the flood defences and will remain vulnerable to flooding unless gaps to provide views are permanently gated.
- (8) The justification for retaining five of the existing buildings is not understood or what they will be specifically used for. Their retention significantly reduces the area available for development and the resulting new residential development is very dense consisting predominantly of apartment blocks up to five storeys in height with some lower terraced housing, which the Society does not support.
- (9) Members of the community will find the proposed siting of the health centre very difficult to get to as it will be remote from any public transport facilities.

(10) In terms of both the overall scale and the range of materials to be incorporated within the individual buildings, there appears to be very little evidence of an assessment of the range of existing building styles within Lewes or the range of local materials that are predominant throughout the town. Both are essential to establishing a 'Design Code' for this site.

(11) An integrated water management system for the site is supported but the responsibility for funding and maintaining these measures on the site in perpetuity must be defined.

(12) In conclusion, the Friends of Lewes would like to emphasise that this site has a 'strategic significance' in terms of its wider impact on the townscape of Lewes and should not be considered as a self-contained and isolated development.

The Friends of Lewes look forward with interest to the progression of proposals for the Phoenix Project and to assessing the more detailed aspects of the design as they develop.

The Friends of Lewes

14th October 2021