

PLANNING APPLICATIONS [SDNP/13/02497/FUL](#) & [SDNP/13/02499/CON](#)

FORMER MAGISTRATES COURT, LEWES

Further comments of Friends of Lewes Society

The Society has considered the revised plans for this proposed development which have been submitted by the applicant. Although the Society concedes that some improvements have been made to the design and the materials proposed these are insufficient for the Society to withdraw its objection to the proposal.

Lewes is a town of specious architectural merit where it is important that new developments are considered by urban designers as well as those who specialise in building design. Whilst it is accepted that some nearby buildings to this site have no architectural merit (see Pevsner's book on Lewes p532) this is no reason why further bland buildings should be erected in the conservation area particularly as the town now benefits from national park status. The proposed building appears to be a typical Premier Inn box like design which has only had the minimum of modification in order to fit the site. No attempt appears to have been made to consider alternative designs which would have had a positive impact on enhancing the street or roof scene so that the end result was an improvement on the current building. In the Society's view Lewes deserves better than what has been proposed.

Specifically the Society is concerned that the northern elevation of the proposed building is too close to Fitzroy House which is a building of architectural merit. Whilst this was designed as a library it is now a residential property and the proposed building will reduce the sunlight into the small amenity space of Fitzroy House as well as the few windows at the back of that building. In addition by not keeping the northern building line of the proposed building to that of the former Magistrates Court an opportunity will have been lost to widen the narrow passageway between it and Fitzroy House and improve this part of the public environment.

The Society had understood that whilst the existing private car park associated with the former Magistrates Court would become the Premier Inn car park, it would be available for other users at charges in line with the nearby public car park. The Society considers that if, despite its objection, the National Park Authority is minded to give permission for the development the use of the private car park in this way should be regulated by a planning condition.

As stated in [our objection of June 2013](#), which should be read in conjunction with this one, the Society does not object to the concept of the site being used for hotel and retail purposes but if the present building is to be demolished the replacement must be an improvement in enhancing the street scene of this part of the town centre. The present proposals do not, in the Society's view, achieve this and so its strong recommendation is that the planning applications should be refused so that discussions can take place on what would be appropriate so that there is no longer a disused building on the site.

Friends of Lewes Society
October 2013