

Rooftop car park leisure hub plan set for approval

Plans to transform the roof of a landmark Chester multi-storey car park into a retail and leisure hub featuring silent cinemas, craft fairs, food and drink stalls look set to be rubber-stamped.

Cheshire West and Chester Council's planning committee meets on Tuesday where it is recommended to approve proposals for the new venue on the top two decks of the Pepper Street multi-storey car park.

The application has been submitted by Trustees of the Fourth Duke of Westminster's 1964 Settlement (Grosvenor) and IKO Events Ltd.

If given the go ahead, four re-purposed shipping containers for housing food and drink stalls would be installed. A further three shipping containers would provide hygiene facilities and storage. Covered units described as 'cabanas' would also be put in place.

A total of 69 car parking spaces would be lost from the top two levels, with a further four axed on the level below. Car parking provision would be reduced from 273 spaces to 200 on the remaining levels to provide the parking for the venue.

The venue would open from 8am-10pm for a maximum capacity of 300 people. A total of 20 full-time and 30 part-time jobs would also be created.

The scheme has proven controversial in some quarters, with concerns raised over noise and loss of parking by former ward councillor Martyn Delaney. A total of 20 objections had been received from the public, including from the Almhouses of William Jones Charity and the Bridgegate East Residents

Association (BERA). A petition signed by 209 people opposing the scheme was also submitted.

The application was initially made to cover a period five years, but planning officers are recommending that is reduced to three to monitor the development in light of the received objections.

Recommending approval, a report to the committee said: "The proposed venue is a novel addition to Chester city centre's entertainment provision and would contribute to Chester's economy.

"It would provide 20 full-time and 30 part time positions as well as employment during construction. It would utilise an underused space associated with anti-social behaviour and inappropriate gatherings."

It added that although there were 'significant concerns' regarding noise and disturbance from the venue and how it may affect the surrounding residential area for local residents, it was considered those concerns could be mitigated.

It added: "With regard to the strength of objection still received to the proposal from local residents and the acknowledgement that mitigation is not going to eliminate all potential noise from the venue, it is proposed that a three year temporary permission (be granted(in order to fully understand the impact."