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THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY
The champion for Victorian and Edwardian architecture

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Your reference: n/a
Our reference: n/a

22nd June 2022

Dear Cllr Jones,

RE: Ipswich Museum Redevelopment

The Victorian Society has been made aware of the recent interest in the redevelopment of Ipswich Museum, and the opposition to the proposals to the main hall space. We note that a petition opposing the proposals has now gained over 4,000 signatures.

The Victorian Society was consulted on the Listed Building Consent application for the proposals in 2021, and did not object to the proposals. This was because while proposals envisaged significant change to the Museum's interiors, they ensured the preservation of the significant Victorian fabric and fittings in the natural history gallery.

However, the recently released visualisations of the proposed interior cause concern. While the 19th century fittings are retained, they are combined with a bland, contemporary scheme of decoration which would severely harm the character of the space. The listing entry for the building describes this space: 'the (main hall) interior has the highly evocative character and ambience of a bygone era and presents an excellent example of an almost unaltered late Victorian museum - now extremely rare.' The proposals may ensure the preservation of the physical fabric, but they would result in the loss of the space's rare character and ambience.

We understand from the Ipswich Museum website that the visualisations of the interior will change during course of the summer as consultation continues, and we are relieved to know that a final scheme of decoration has not been decided on. We urge that the proposed redecoration scheme for the main hall is reconsidered, and a proposal is developed that would respond sensitively to its 19th century character, whilst also delivering the changes and interpretation of the space needed for a modern museum.

Intact Victorian museum spaces are increasingly rare, and the natural history gallery represents an important artefact in itself, with high value for communicating the history of collecting and curating in Britain during the 19th century. We urge that its character

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is respected, and a historically informed decoration scheme is proposed which ensures its special interest is preserved into the future.

Yours sincerely,

Connor McNeill

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