

Facts and irregularities concerning the Stew's more recent planning history.

- 1982 An application for demolition was refused.
- 1997 SABC Frankwell Design Brief suggests roles for The Stew & The Maltings in the Quayside's future. (Several other plans also value the buildings, eg the later "Shrewsbury Vision")
- 2004 (October) In negotiating to sell the lease, The Stew's then owner, SABC, reported that "*The... (prospective) purchasers are taking all the risk...with a planning application.*"
- 2006 A full-maintenance 999-year lease was finally signed between a developer and SABC. The developer had an understanding that the Stew could be demolished.
- (This indication was unwisely given and unwisely acted upon.)**
- 2007 An application for The Stew's demolition presented documentation misrepresenting its origin. This application was refused and a subsequent Appeal was withdrawn at the last minute.
- 2008 (Dec.) A Section 215 Order was issued to enforce basic maintenance. This order and the Conditions of the lease have never been enforced. The building is neglected but is structurally sound.
- 2009 The new Theatre was opened, followed by the Guildhall. This represented a reduction in the number of buildings reflecting Frankwell's rich industrial/commercial past.
- 2013 A new **application for the Stew's demolition** was submitted but found incomplete and the applicant was given more time to correct it. Despite the requirement, this application did not declare previous attempts. The property was not offered for sale to test economic viability.
- 2014 The application was refused (by delegated powers) in May. The developer Appealed. These applications ignored the advice of English Heritage (and now Historic England) and a number of other respected organisations. There were several occasions when the developer made late submissions to Applications or the Appeals, including missing documents, so delays.
- 2015 Through the year, a 15-day Appeal Enquiry was heard at which the Inspector ruled that the building could not be demolished (December). Objectors put forward alternative proposals.
- 2016 (January) A meeting with some of the key players was arranged but the developer failed to attend. A basic repairs list, agreed with the Council was not carried out. The developer engaged a local architect to draw up plans for enlargement without demolition. The brief was that some 1000 sq ft would be needed for economic sustainability. This is not proved nor have other uses been explored.
- 2016 (July) The Civic Society applied to Historic England for Listed Status for the building in order to protect it from unsympathetic alteration. (Accommodation is the use that most alters a building internally.)
- 2017 (Feb) The Listing application was unsuccessful. Some basic maintenance work was reported. The architect discussed plans with the Civic Society, who advised a different approach. Submission of this application was unaltered and delayed for months. The plan included an extra floor and 'floating roofs'. The Town Council, professionals, Historic England, and others objected.
- 2018 The next plan was still based on the idea of a "statement building to harmonise new and old". This notion had been encouraged by the LPA. The design, while proposing pitched roofs, was a very basic drawing and the LPA sent it back for detailing in February. The planners had more pre-app discussions with the developer and architect and an amended application emerged in July 2018, meeting some of the previous objections. HE, SC, SCS and many others objected to this as the extension would be too dominant. HE required a viability report to justify such a large extension. The NPPF insists viability reports are made public, for any undetermined application. SC does not.
- 2019 The developer's Viability Report is still not made public. SC commissions an evaluation of it by the District Valuer. This appraisal uses the options, data and costings from the applicant's report. It concluded the building has little or no financial future. The developer determines to progress with the most dominant option that suggests some resultant property value. HE acquiesces but the Georgian Group, Town Council and others do not. SC's polite request for repairs to limit water ingress fail. SC's Conservation Department report seeks to justify the dominant extension with obsequious, architectural commentary, forcing the LPA to recommend approval. An independent, conservation Surveyor submits a plan and viability costing showing that there are other economic possibilities without such a dominant extension.

Some historical findings about The Stew.

- 1334 Taxation records show Shrewsbury was the country's 7th most prosperous town.
The name "Stew" probably came from the word for a (river-fed) pond holding fish to help feed those in the adjacent medieval St George's 'hospital' (i.e. offering hospitality).
- 1406 The Stew "comprising land, a croft and a dove cote" passed to James Dyer's sons.
- 1462 Edward IV passed the "Dyer lands" on to The Shrewsbury Drapers.
- 1471 Although disputed, a petition to the King, allowed the Drapers to retain "*the croft called le Stewe, croft with pond there in Frankwell, next to the chapel of St George and.... the bank of Severn*". There are then records of their various lettings, e.g. to T. Donne in 1553.
- 1713 The owners were the Scotts, of Betton Strange, who passed it to John Astley (a Little Berwick Yeoman). He probably had the merchant's house built, as it is now dated to early 1700s. (This could have been on earlier structures as foundations dated about 1660 were found on the Stew's SE corner.)
The road between the Stew and the Maltings building was 'St George's Waterlode' and a main route to the early fortified bridge (of which footings still exist under the Theatre).
- 1730-on From the existing evidence, historians say that The Stew was playing a very significant role in Shrewsbury's river trade. (The Stew is now Shrewsbury's only remaining building associated with the river trade from that period). This was when Severn Trows (sailing barges) were in their heyday as transportation before the canals or the railways.
- c.1825 The quay-side part of the Stew building was erected as a warehouse and has rare strong roof beams made of imported (Baltic pine). The Stew had several additions built on during Frankwell's industrial period. (Victorian era and 20th Century.) These are now removed leaving superficial scarring to the exterior.

The building has had several commercial uses since its role in Shrewsbury's development as a river-port. These were often associated with Frankwell's industrial and commercial heritage, which only ended recently.

The design of the modern Guildhall/University building copied several architectural features of the Stew to maintain the character of the Frankwell quayside area. The Stew is a popular and valued building attracting the support of some 1500 petitioners.

In heritage terms, the Stew tells two stories. The oldest part reflects Shrewsbury's river-trade and 18th Century architectural history, while the larger 19th Century part reminds us of Frankwell's more recent industrial past, where storage and warehousing were important for the local economy.

The Government Planning Inspector for the last Appeal, described the Stew as "***a regionally important non-designated heritage asset***" and that "***the significance*** (of the designated heritage asset - i.e. the Conservation Area) ***would be harmfully damaged by the loss of The Stew.***" This must include the loss of significant parts of the building (especially its prominent roof-line) and any overshadowing of its historical references.

In several reports the Stew is cited as a potential contributor to a much-needed plan for Frankwell Quay. (One such was the 2011 "Shrewsbury Vision") In view of its position at an entrance for Shrewsbury's visitors, between a university and theatre, the Stew has a large number of possible uses and could contribute significantly to the quayside and the town's economy. The leaseholder has not considered these.

Summary of the background to the Stew, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury.

- The site goes back to the mediaeval St George's Hospital when there was a fish (stew) pond for the Hospital. (1300s)
- The Stew is an important heritage building, being the only remaining building involved with the Shrewsbury's economic development as a River Port.
- It incorporates a Queen Anne (1720s) merchant's house and a later warehouse extension (1830s).
- In 1982 an application to demolish the Stew was refused.
- A long (999yr) lease was bought by a developer in 2004, chancing that it could be demolished.
- Heritage Authorities have stopped other attempts to demolish it because of its historical significance and contribution to the Conservation Area.
- The lease conditions include full maintenance, but this has never been carried out, or enforced by the landlord, currently Shropshire Council.
- Many national and local experts are keen to see the building restored and have a future without the domination of a large extension.

In the last 15 years, there have been many instances of poor decisions and wrongdoing by the landlord and the lease-holder.

While suggesting some interest, the "Big Town Plan" does not include master-planning proposals for Frankwell Quay. However, the area could play a very significant part in the regeneration of Frankwell as an exciting visitor destination and portal, now that a theatre and the Guildhall/University provide significant attractions.

