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OLD
MARKET
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Association

The joint response of the Bristol Civic Society and the Old Market Community Association to pre-application proposals to redevelop the Central Ambulance Station site

27th October 2015

Introduction

The Society and the Association are grateful to that Bougyues Development (BD) and their team for early public engagement at a time when public comment can influence the outcome of development. The Society and the Association welcome the housing-led, mixed use scheme. The Society and the Association recognise that the current issues are the mass and height of development and its disposition within the site.

Mass and height.

BD showed the Society and the Association several massing options without a preferred option. BD will discuss the options with the Council as part of the pre-app process. The Society and the Association accept the planning policy argument to build a point building on this site. The question is what height is feasible, in terms delivering the required housing, without creating a building that overbears the east end of Castle Park? The new buildings must create a strong relationship with the Park. The 18 floor tower above the Harvey Nicholls podium is much lower at ground level in relation the elevation of the ambulance station site; possibly 3 to 4 floors. Castlegate is 12 floors. The Society and the Association suggest that there is a strong argument to step down the storeys from the Marriott Hotel towards the south west, which would create a better visual link to the Finzels Reach development. The proposal for a large building to the north of the site and two smaller buildings to the south would allow for a new public space in the centre of the site and anticipate redevelopment of the Central Clinic. The Society and the Association support the proposal as good land use.

Design

There are no proposals for the design or materials. Bristol has embarrassingly few examples of outstanding modern architecture. A fine architectural statement would be the ideal at this end of the city and Castle Park. The design and materials of a building to face the Park are critical. This landmark site could attract further investment.

The public realm

The Society and the Association do not challenge BD's argument that the cost of exposing the moat would not produce a greater public benefit. The Society and the Association support BD's proposal to reference the ditch in a thoroughfare through the development to provide a break between the two sections to the site.

The Society and the Association supports the creation of a new public space at the centre of the site, which could help animate the space around the blocks. The Society and the Association support measures to reduce the influence of traffic on Castle Street and Queen Street and BD's proposal to work with the Council to reclaim some of the unnecessary tarmac that surrounds the site. Traffic reduction in Castle Street and Queen Street could be the opportunity to create pedestrian priority zones or to lay shared surfaces.