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20th November 2018

The Society response to planning enquiry - 18/05231/PREAPP – the redevelopment of the Avon Fire And Rescue Service Headquarters Temple Back

The proposal

To construct 300 homes - 80% build to rent and 20% affordable provision in a building that includes a 16x storey (including ground) located on corner of Counterslip and Temple Back together with a 7x storey commercial building (including ground) with basement car and cycle park located on Counterslip and Temple Street.

Demolition

The Society supports demolition of the current buildings that have no architectural merit and are not easily convertible and reusable.

Change of use

The Society have preferred a greater proportion of residential accommodation in this area.

Height and mass

The tower on the corner of Counterslip/Temple Back must be assessed against the requirements of the Urban Living SPD. The Central Area Plan gives no specific advice for the site. Subsequent planning advice has overtaken the Future of Redcliffe SPD. The developer must show that a tall building is more appropriate for the site than a building of amplified height. The scheme adopted must show an approach to urban intensification which is broadly consistent with its setting. Previous planning advice considered the scale of an earlier scheme to be too great and advised that at a lower level, more human scale should be adopted. At 16-floors the tower is a step-change above the surrounding buildings in Counterslip and Temple Street, not 'amplified height' that the Urban Living SPD recommends as a starting point for city centre urban living. The Society invites the Council to assess whether the hyper-dense Finzel's Reach development on the opposite side of the road the 16-floor tower would create robust placemaking principles, based on street scale enclosure.

Design

A significant urban design aspiration has been to amend the urban grain of the area, damaged by post war redevelopment. The Society supports the principle of a perimeter arrangement that reinforces the street frontages notwithstanding that it would be desirable to reflect the scale of Temple Street to create a more human scale and legible route between Victoria Street and Finzel's Reach. The stand-out view from the street into the large, double height reception area is welcome but we question whether the curved entrance creates an unresolved street frontage. Would a squared corner be preferable to the proposed swept corner? This cut-away recalls the design of road widening in an earlier planning regime and loses the sense of enclosure that the new policy advice seeks to achieve.

Residential Accommodation mix

The proposed communal living approach that devotes 10% of space to communal use will add an attractive new form of housing for residents in the expanding city centre residential market.

Public realm

The Society welcomes the use of trees and planning to green the edges of the development and reduce the impact of the street widths. The site offers the opportunity to achieve improvements to the historic line of Temple Street and the setting of the listed Cornubia Public House. Can the developer discuss with the Council and neighbouring land owners improvements to integrate the remnants of historic fabric including the Cornubia and Temple Church, into a better context? This issue was raised by the Central Area Plan. The area is a small site with a high visual impact on the Temple Meads Finzel's Reach pedestrian route and is in the Redcliffe Conservation Area.