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6<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**The Society's response to the revised proposal presented on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019 to redevelop land between Silverthorne Lane and the Feeder Canal 18/05434/PREAPP**

The Society is grateful to the developers' teams who presented the most recent revisions to this scheme shortly before its presentation as a hybrid planning application to the Council. The Society strongly supports the plan to redevelop this major site and its return to economic use. We welcome the approach of producing an integrated plan for the area before moving on to detailed plans for each development site. We responded in the Autumn of 2018 to the scheme's earlier iteration. We are encouraged that Square Bay has secured development partners for each of the four development areas. This response discusses several issues that redevelopment raises which we trust will not be interpreted as negative criticisms. We assume that with the phased delivery of redevelopment, it is probable that there will be revisions to aspects of it.

**Student accommodation**

It is disappointing to make a negative response about the design. Without imaginative design, student accommodation with its standard rooms, creates repetitive elevations. The buildings would be anonymous and indistinguishable from Bristol's many other 'value architecture' student accommodation blocks. Only one building attempts to create a visual incident with its upper floors. All the buildings rise directly from the ground. The Society dislikes vertical cliff faces that descend directly to pavement level. This scheme will create a large new centre of population where there is an opportunity to create a sense of place and local character. We contrast the current proposal with past projects such as the Bristol University's Stoke Bishop estate.

There are prominent views into the site from the railway and the spine road. There is no architectural context, the Developer has an unconstrained opportunity to design a cluster of buildings to create a landmark of contemporary architecture at the heart of a developing commercial area that will transform and reunite this run-down location. An example of an imaginative design for bespoke student accommodation is the Print Hall on Temple Way; which the Society has given an award.

There are no local convenience shops. The closest are distant at Temple Meads, Avonmeads to the south and Avonvale Road to the east. The Society has seen no information that the

site will promote the necessary infrastructure to support residential use. This scheme should support these facilities for both the residents and students. Little information is given on the design of the open space around the student buildings which is important for the students' well-being.

Bespoke student development should be adaptable to other uses should there be a fall in demand for this form of accommodation. The spacing of the structural walls and windows should be sited to enable the purpose-built student housing to be converted into residential apartments in a manner that minimises modification to the external envelope.

The Society notes the Developer's reasons to support the tall buildings of the student accommodation, but a view has been expressed that these tall buildings would conflict with the linear character of the canalside and fail to make a positive contribution to mid-range and immediate views. The Council is asked to assess the shadow whether these buildings will cast shadows on the school buildings and the playground. The height of the proposed new student accommodation could have significant implications for the future development of the land to the south of the Feeder Canal; it would introduce close-by large scale development. Has the developer considered whether it is possible to achieve a similar residential density with buildings spread on a wider footprint without an adverse impact on the open amenity space around the buildings?

### **The new school**

The Society was pleased that the scheme will restore and convert the Grade II listed warehouse but was disappointed with the design of the new teaching block which would be monolithic. We suggest that the outline of this building and its roof line should be more broken and include architectural features, such as entrances, to give it an appearance appropriate to its human purpose.

### **The residential accommodation**

The residential blocks towards the west end is 13-storeys. The building height advice given in the Temple Quarter Spatial Framework (Framework) is that the site to the west of the 'retained buildings area' is 5-8 floors. The planning advice in the Framework and the Urban Living Special Planning Document (Urban Living) sets a scale for sites in the vicinity. The Framework sets out principles to inform development in the Silverthorne Lane character area. A tall building must be justified against the assumption of a medium rise scheme in both the Framework and in Urban Living. The site's character has a distinct horizontal quality created by the canal and the retained former industrial buildings. There are no ground-level visualizations from different viewpoints to judge the impact of these tall residential blocks. There is no visual connection to Bristol University's proposed Temple Meads development. The massing would have significant implications for the future development of buildings in St. Philip's south of Feeder Road.

The development should not be a monoculture of small flats. Emerging Draft Policy H4: Housing type and mix requires all new residential development to provide a mix of housing to support mixed, balanced and inclusive communities. After the University Campus opens the area's demographic will change rapidly. The choice of housing mix should enable households to grow and for households to remain within their community when their circumstances change.

The Society has not seen the plans for the internal spaces of these blocks of flats but assumes that the Council will apply the Policies which DM29 – Design of new buildings requires in relation to, among other things:

- Internal space standards
- Maximum sunlight of internal spaces
- No north facing single aspect homes
- No long artificially lit corridors
- Adequate, user-friendly outdoor amenity space and private amenity space.

### **Office and workshop accommodation**

At the outline permission stage the Society has no comments.

### **Heritage assets**

The Society is delighted to note the retention and reuse of the spectacular Grade I\* listed St. Vincent's Works Norman Romanesque offices. We have not entered the site. The Society's principal interest in the heritage assets is their townscape value, which in the context of this site includes their contribution to the scheme's interior views. The Society supports the retention and reuse the Canal facing walls. We assume that the matters detailed in the Conservation Officer's response to the planning enquiry are capable of agreement. The Society would welcome the reconstruction of the missing gatepost and other elements of the east entrance to Silverthorne Lane which could become another positive feature.

### **Access to the site**

#### **Silverthorne Lane to the east of Gas Lane to the railway underpass**

The Society supports the proposal to redesign the entrance to this road and to remove the non-business resident parking. We were pleased to hear that the principal access to the school for most of its future pupils will be improved to make the tunnel child friendly.

#### **Pedestrian/cycling access to the site from Silverthorne Lane**

We accept that the pedestrian/cycling route through the site is probably the best that can be devised for this longitudinal site with its different uses. The eastern part of Silverthorne Lane is part of an important arterial cycle route – the Wesley Way. We welcome segregation between cyclists and pedestrians, and the use of bollards to prevent parking.

### **Feeder Road**

It is necessary to improve the bridge over the Feeder Canal at the east of the site which is in poor condition and is not wide enough to allow pedestrians and cyclists to pass one another. It is difficult to understand why the Council requires the improvement to the path that accesses the bridge without improving the bridge itself. The bridge should be enlarged.

When complete, the area will have a large population. The site will generate enough value to justify the construction of a new foot/cycling bridge over the canal in addition to the existing one. A site on the school's western boundary might be an appropriate place. A similar situation arose with the redevelopment of the brewery on Finzel's Reach. A planning condition required the developer to build what is now Finzel's Bridge.

## **Public realm**

**The Canalside Walk** - We appreciate the permeability to the public of the university and residential sites. We welcome the realisation of the Council's aspiration to create a new walk beside the Feeder Canal. The retention of the heritage wall facing the canal is a planning gain. However, the overhang of the new residential buildings would create an uncomfortable feeling of enclosure. The single opening on to the Feeder canal with informal seating places is attractive but the heritage wall encloses the walk for the rest of its length. More openings in the walls would partially mitigate the negative effect of enclosure. Without additional breaks in the wall, the benefit of the canal environment will be lost. If it can be achieved, we support the extension of the Canalside walk along the edge of the school site in a way that satisfies the school's safeguarding needs without constructing a harsh fence.

**Avon Street/Silverthorne Lane junction** - The Society supports Historic England's suggestion that the development gives an opportunity to create new public space at the Silverthorne Lane Avon Street junction in which the new University building responds to the Grade II listed former Marble Mosaic Works and the surviving buildings stone buildings and walls of the former gas works.

### **Travel and access from outside the development**

The Society notes that there are no bus services closer than Temple Meads and Temple Way, but assume that this will be addressed as part of the development of the wider area.

Realistic provision for car parking needs to be made for the users of the railway arches to ensure that they do not obstruct Silverthorne Lane. It is not clear what provision is made for access for parking for a school bus or coach. Sports facilities will be away from the school, so coach travel may be a daily occurrence.

The pre-app documents' coverage of access and highways does not go beyond the site's boundaries. The Society would expect to see a 'travel plan' for the occupants of each site, and commentary on what transport improvements are necessary to ensure sufficient provision for them to travel sustainably. This is important for this site because access is limited by its enclosed nature. For example, how will the school's pupils travel? It is possible that the travel plan for the school would show most of the children walking or cycling from the east (e.g. Barton Hill) under the bridge, but the catchment area may be wider.

We understand that there are council has unpublished plans for improving transport in the area which have yet to secure funding. These include:

- a bus service, with road changes to facilitate passage
- a segregated cycle lane along Feeder Road
- a bridge across the River Avon from the new University campus to Avon Street.
- Is there evidence that the emerging transport plans are sufficient to support the proposed development?