

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY'S COMMENTS ON DANDARA'S REVISED PROPOSAL FOR LITTLE PARADISE AND STAFFORD STREET, BEDMINSTER, 18/06722/F

The Proposal.

Demolition and redevelopment to provide 2 new buildings (3-16 storeys) comprising 295 no. build-to-rent residential apartments (Use Class C3) including flexible gym, flexible activity space, concierge and residents lounge and 21 residential apartments for affordable housing (Use Class C3) and landscaping, public realm, bin storage, plant areas and cycle parking.

Background.

The Society commented at length in February on this application when it was first submitted. Key points from that submission are included below but it should, nonetheless, be read in conjunction with these comments. Since then the applicants have submitted a number of revisions following earlier public consultation and discussions with the Council. There have been a number of revisions including the removal of the east-west pedestrian street, the entrance to the underground car park and the elevation to Little Paradise Street. There have been some changes to the elevation to Dalby Avenue but it remains as cliff face on the north side of Dalby Avenue peaking at 59M or 16 storeys. The site has been slightly enlarged.

Summary.

The Society welcomes a number of the amendments particularly the removal of the east west pedestrian street, the revised entrance to the underground car park and the Stafford Street elevation. We continue to support:

- The principle of residential development on the site.
- The improvements to Little Paradise and Stafford Street.

However, our principal reason for being unable to support the earlier scheme remains, namely:

- Our concerns about the harm that the proposed height would cause to placemaking in Dalby Avenue and Bedminster Green and the impact of the development on the buildings to the north, among other matters.

This submission focuses on this key objection to the proposal.

Impact of Tall Buildings.

Although the Development Framework for Bedminster Green identified the part of this site bordering Dalby Avenue as a suitable location for a tall building, this cannot be considered in isolation. The Council's refusal of the application for St Catherine's Place Shopping Centre (18/05310/F) established St Catherine's House as a contextual element for development proposals in the area. As our February submission noted,

“The south block must be read as part of a continuous building mass that includes (from the east) Block C of St. Catherine's Place, St. Catherine's House, Block A of St. Catherine's Place and the proposed south block of this scheme.”

This would have a profound detrimental impact on Dalby Avenue as the Society has previously stated:

- The south block rises from the ground as a solid cliff. From street level this building will not be perceived or experienced on a human scale.
- The cumulative impact of this massive cliff of masonry of the south block and Block A of St. Catherine's Place would have a detrimental effect on the domestic and pedestrian scale of the townscape of Little Paradise, Leicester Street and Stafford Street which define the urban character of this part of Bedminster. The south block and Block A of St. Catherine's Place would overbear Stafford Street, dominate the townscape and shadow the neighbouring land.

The revised proposal does contain some stepping down towards the north of the site. However, the Society considers that the proposed tall buildings will overbear and overshadow its neighbouring dwellings to the north and the open spaces provided within the proposed development.

The Society's earlier submission also made the following points which remain relevant regarding the accumulated impact of tall buildings adjoining Dalby Avenue:

“ In addition to the comments above, the Council must consider the aggregate impact of the proposed new structures on the opposite, south side of Dalby Avenue. The aspiration is that, “Bedminster Green be enhanced, brought into community life and better connected as part of an activity and green infrastructure network.” The reality is that the Green is a relatively small area – 75m x 75m, about >5,000m² and this are could be reduced by the proposed widening of Dalby Avenue's existing two lanes and pavements and the Whitehouse Lane segregated cycle path.

14.3 The question for planning officers is whether the tall building of the north block of this proposal unacceptably extends the St. Catherine's Place masonry cliff. 16 floors of the north block beside 16 floors (possibly 21) of Block A of St. Catherine's Place would frame Bedminster Green to the north and be unlikely to realise the aspiration to create a public space that would provide a significant green public amenity in this built up area. The green could offer few more advantages than a pocket park.”



Illustration of Bedminster Green development in the Plot 2 planning application which omits Plot 1 and Plot 3 east of the Malago

Conclusion.

The Society acknowledges that the revised scheme contains improvements on the earlier submission. Although we would welcome development of this site, we cannot support this proposal because of the harmful impacts that would result from the tall buildings proposed for Dalby Avenue.