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December 2020

## **The Society's response to 20/01655/F - Old Rail Depot, Clanage Road**

### Summary

These are the Society's comments on the revised planning application submitted in November 2020. The Society commented in April 2020 on the previous proposal. We continue to support the development in principle, but we continue to object to the height of the buildings at the north end of the site. The new proposal makes a small concession to this, but the changes do not address our comment that "All parts of the scheme should harmonise and not exceed the form of the Paxton Drive estate if it is to be consistent with its site on the edge of the built-up area."

### The changes in the revised application

The changes include:

- The tallest building is 8 storeys, not 9, and its footprint has been reduced.
- The number of homes is 242 homes (was 253), and the density 88 units/ha (was 93), compared with the Local Plan's 150 homes (55 units/ha).
- The cycle route is aligned along the existing route
- The access road has been relocated to the western edge, and the town houses have been replaced by 3-storey blocks of apartments - G1, G2 and H. The access road no longer borders the large central space.

### BCS comments

#### 1) Building heights

We welcome the reduction in height and footprint of the northern buildings, but we think they are still too high at 6/7/8 storeys. The developer justifies this by considering the buildings in the context of the Brunel flyover, but we think the appropriate context is the green space in which the flyover sits. The northern edge of the development is just as much on the boundary of the city's built-up area as the western edge. The developer also refers to the context of the bonded warehouses and the "elevated back drop of Hotwells and Clifton", but these are too far away to be relevant context.

The views reinforce the point. In particular:

L VIA viewpoints

- V01 - Metro Bridge and National Cycle Route 33 in City Docks Conservation Area
- V03 - A3029, adjacent to Bonded Warehouse in City Docks Conservation Area

- V04 - River Avon Trail recreational route and National Cycle Route 41 in City Docks Conservation Area
- V05 - River Avon Trail recreational route and National Cycle Route 33 in City Docks Conservation Area

Heritage visually verified montages

- VP4 From Ashton Court RPG, above Summerhouse Plantation.
- VP5 From Brunel Way looking toward Clifton Suspension Bridge.

The views from the north of building E are of large areas of plain walls, with little sign of life.

A reduction in height to four storeys would harmonise across the development and align with Paxton Drive. And it would bring the density down to a more appropriate level.

## 2) Layout

The diversion of the access road improves the large central space. However, the replacement of town houses by blocks, and the completely rectilinear arrangement would seem to give an austere feel to the space. The layout is very constrained by the shape and access of the site, but is it not possible to design in more curvature and variety to both public space and the buildings?

## 3) Design.

We consider the design of the residential blocks to be uninspiring and monotonous in terms of massing and roof heights. This is a particularly sensitive location where Bristol's built environment meets the open landscape of Ashton Court. The proposed regimented blocks of uniform design are considered inappropriate in such a setting.

## 4) Festival Way cycle and pedestrian route

We welcome the retention of the existing Festival Way route. We note that Transport Development Management have recommended that the route "must be 5m wide, fully segregated, illuminated and signed, whereas a 3m width is proposed. The Festival Way is a popular route, particularly as a leisure route at weekends, hence the justification for a wide route. Commuting cyclists will want to travel more quickly and segregation is appropriate.

## 5) Access at the southern end of the site

The desire line for walkers and cyclists coming from the south-west access point to the south-east access point, via the Metrobus route to Ashton Gate, does not seem to have been considered.