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23 November 2020.

## **BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY COMMENTS ON 2-18 STOKES CROFT 20/04743/F.**

### **The Proposal**

20/04743/F | Proposed demolition of existing buildings, erection of student accommodation, ancillary student services, flexible commercial floorspace and associated works including cycle parking, landscaping, and refuse storage. | 12 - 18 Stokes Croft And 2 Moon Street Bristol BS1 3PR.

### **Summary of Bristol Civic Society's Views.**

Overall, the Society welcomes the redevelopment of this underused and unattractive site. We support the proposal but still have reservations about some of the design elements. The Society welcomes the increase in employment space and the changes to the ground floor frontage to Stokes Croft. Our preference for conventional residential accommodation rather than student accommodation remains. Our comments below are intended to help secure, in our view, positive changes to the proposal, not to seek refusal.

### **The Site.**

The proposal relates to a large urban block south of North Street/Stokes Croft with a return frontage on Moon Street. 2, Stokes Croft are empty offices, the Blue Mountain Club site is demolished, and the remainder of the site formerly occupied by Seabright Printers is vacant.

### **Change of Use**

The Society was concerned that the pre-app proposal resulted in a considerable loss of employment space when local evidence from the St Pauls Planning Group revealed an unmet demand for local employment space. The applicants have increased the amount of employment space to circa 495 square metres which they claim would be able to match the existing employment capacity of the site. We expect the Council to test this against the requirements of BCAP 7.

Whilst we would prefer to see conventional residential accommodation, we accept the policy constraints arising from the present stage of the Local Plan Review which would preclude the Council from successfully resisting student accommodation here although we note that the Council's new document entitled Progressing Bristol's Development seeks to create mixed and balanced communities and avoid harmful effects, particularly impacts on existing residential areas. We continue to suggest that the student accommodation is designed to allow ready conversion to residential use should the market for student accommodation decline.

### **Building Design.**

The Society welcomes the redesign of the ground floor frontage to Stokes Croft. The increased verticality and more traditional pattern of shop fronts does much more to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area.

We note the changes to the gable designs and the set-back of the mansard roof. However, we are still not convinced by the emphasis that has been given to the gables, particularly those

either side of the courtyard adjacent to Stokes Croft. They seem very dominant and detract somewhat, in our view, from the welcome introduction of the courtyard.

Similarly, we do not understand why the dormers do not relate regularly to the fenestration of the lower floors or why the design of windows turning the corner suddenly change from a vertical to a horizontal form.

**Public Realm.**

We note and welcome the increased pavement width opposite the Full Moon pub. It is not clear if this extends along Moon Street but we think that it should.

There is still an opportunity in this location for a co-ordinated approach to improving the public realm in conjunction with other neighbouring developments. The applicants state that their proposals would not prejudice any future alterations to the junction of Moon Street and Backfields but a more pro-active approach to achieving public realm improvements here would be welcome. We still urge the Council, therefore, to seek a planning obligation to improve the junction area.