



an independent force for a better Bristol

19 July 2021.

Summary.

Bristol Civic Society supports, in principle, the development of the land adjoining Ashton Gate Stadium which will create a sporting and hospitality hub of benefit to the City and south Bristol in particular and boost employment opportunities in the area. However, the Society is generally averse to tall residential buildings. They are visually intrusive and, unless very well managed, frequently result in poor living conditions for their occupants. We welcome the four storey reduction in the height of the residential tower but the Society cannot support the impact of the high buildings on the topography of the city and valued views.

We urge the developers, Bristol City Council and transport providers to maximise public transport accessibility, and other measures that could lead to a further reduction in on-site parking in order to achieve a sustainable development.

Overall View.

The Society has not changed its earlier overall view on the proposed development namely,

“The Society strongly supports the new uses that the Club wishes to introduce. In addition to the creation of a centre for sporting excellence, the scheme will be a substantial investment of private money in south Bristol. Expansion would considerably increase local employment opportunities for young people with modest educational attainments. Aspirations include attracting residential conferences business to the stadium. The Society supports the introduction of new homes on the site.”

Building heights and impacts on views.

We are however, opposed to the proposed 14 storey tower block. Our concerns over the social and environmental harm arising from high living were conveyed at length in our February 2019 submission to the developers and we are disappointed that such a tall residential building remains part of the scheme although we acknowledge its reduction from 18 storeys. The location of the residential tower adjacent to the main road is also not ideal. The Society has considered the verified views submitted with the application and conclude that, contrary to the Urban Living SPD, the proposal would hide or mask the topography of the city and harm valued views from key vantage points. The following views taken from the application exemplify our concerns:

Views 1 and 2 – These show the proposed buildings breaking the skyline and thus being at odds with the topography of the city which sits beneath the skyline in these views;

View 4 – Similar to views 1 and 2 plus diminishing the significance of Cabot Tower and Brandon Hill;

View 17 – Looking south across the site the view of the hills near Dundry will be harmed and the skyline broken;

View 20 – The buildings are prominent to the point of harming the view towards and across the site from above Ashton Court at Woodmans Cottage.

We would like the new buildings to be no higher than the football stadium stands. If the City Council considers the residential high building acceptable, the Society urges that it is designed to a high standard for market rent or purchase so that its occupants would, on the whole, choose to live there and it would be well managed.

Transport considerations.

The Society understands that the proposed development will generate a considerable number of car journeys and we urge the developers to maximise public transport accessibility and not to give up on securing a train station at Ashton Gate. We ask the Council to work with the developers and public transport providers to ensure a high degree of sustainability minimising road traffic and maximising public transport access. The Society appreciates that the Portishead line is still some years from opening to passengers but there is a longer term opportunity to provide an interchange between the rail line and the metrobus. This would not only improve public transport accessibility to the stadium but also have wider benefits for those travelling between Bristol and points on the Portishead line. The proposed development could act as a catalyst to bring the necessary agencies together.

The potential of the Long Ashton Park and Ride to reduce the number of car trips to the stadium and its environs should also be fully explored. We would hope that this would reduce the need for on-site parking. Further reduction of the number of spaces provided on-site would be welcomed by the Society. We also urge the developers to continue working with the City Council on measures to keep road traffic bound for the stadium away from the city centre. The proposed multi storey car park is a dominant feature of the development. The Society urges that its visual prominence is reduced as much as possible.

We note that the proposals include cycling hubs. We urge plentiful provision convenient for entrances and overlooked for enhanced security. The Society hopes that the development team will encourage the development of a walking and cycling route alongside Longmoor Brook between the Long Ashton Park and Ride and the stadium.

Public Realm.

We welcome the public realm proposals.