

21/05063/PREAPP – REDEVELOPMENT OF VASSALL CENTRE, FISHPONDS.

Summary.

Bristol Civic Society supports the principle of redevelopment of this under-developed site to use it more efficiently but we have some concerns with the preapp proposals. It is important that building design reflects the scale and character of the locality. Uses should reflect community needs which should be assessed in conjunction with the local community. Car parking provision needs to balance the relative remoteness of the site and the particular needs of potential client groups with the wider environmental aim of reducing private car journeys. We hope the following comments are viewed positively to seek an improved solution to the much needed redevelopment of this site.

Height, Massing and Design.

There are few design details available at present. Much of phase 1 and the apartments in phase 2 appear to be three storey buildings with flat roofs. The Society doubts that this is compatible with the predominant character of the surrounding residential streets. We note that the applicants have suggested that the massing could be ameliorated through articulation of the street facing elevations but the Society suggests that the scale and massing of the residential and office elements of phase 1 and the apartment block in phase 2 are revisited to seek a better relationship with the surrounding houses.

Proposed Uses.

The Society welcomes the provision of affordable residential accommodation, supported housing and housing for older people. The appropriateness of providing a nursery adjacent to housing for older people needs very careful consideration. It is important that the office/workspace block fully reflects the space and accessibility needs of existing organisations at the Vassall Centre. Provision of a café is a positive feature but perhaps this space should be flexible enough to accommodate other community needs for meeting space. These should be identified in conjunction with local residents.

Public Realm.

There are few details at present and the Society will comment more fully when more information is available.

Access and Parking.

The Society feels that these aspects of the proposal need much further consideration. Although public transport is good on Fishponds Road, the No 5 bus service is poor. The site is some distance from Fishponds Road and, if existing uses continue, there will be a requirement for adequate parking space for visitors and staff with disabilities. There is clearly a need to strike an appropriate balance between the needs of user groups and residents with the need to reduce unnecessary car journeys. Without that, the development would inadequately serve the needs of client groups and could lead to increased parking pressure on surrounding streets.

Climate Change and Energy Considerations.

We support the Council's policies to reduce energy consumption and mitigate the impacts of developments on climate change. We note the developers' commitments to producing a low energy development, support that approach and look forward to seeing details in later plans.