

22/00942/F | Part demolition of Globe House and the erection of 71 residential apartments (Use Class C3) with integrated amenity space and office space (Use Class E), access, landscaping and associated infrastructure. (Major). | Globe House 10 Eugene Street St Pauls Bristol BS5 0TN

Summary.

This application is an improvement on its predecessor. The Society is eager to see this site developed but a number of its concerns regarding the previous application remain. We believe a further reduction of one storey in Block B would be more appropriate for the prevailing character of the area. This would also lower the density of residential development which remains high. We remain concerned about the preponderance of one and two bed flats and the number of single aspect apartments. Combined with limited amenity space, we believe the proposed density and types of apartments provided will be harmful to the living conditions of residents. The Society considers that a greater variety of non-residential uses at ground floor level and a more diverse range of accommodation are required for the development to contribute well to the regeneration of this area and to comply better with adopted and emerging planning policies for the area. We cannot, therefore, support the proposal as it stands.

Comment on Previous Proposal.

The Society commented on the earlier application 19/04326/F. The Society supported the proposal to redevelop the site with 75 flats and office space but had a number of concerns which it wished to see resolved if the application progressed. These can be summarised as follows:

- The proposal should be considered in the wider context of the Frome Gateway.
- The residential density was extremely high at 370 dwellings/hectare (cf Harbourside and Wapping Wharf at 204 and 294d/h respectively).
- There were too many single aspect and one bed flats.
- There should be more three bed flats
- Overlooking and privacy issues arising from the proximity of the residential blocks to each other.
- The paucity of amenity space.
- Parking space provision substantially below the Old Market Neighbourhood Plan policy requirement.
- More provision of commercial floorspace to contribute to the diversity and vitality of the area.
- The new-build elevation should be subservient to the retained façade and have a vertical emphasis.

This application was refused for many reasons including the harmful impact of the height and massing of the seven storey element on the character and appearance of the area, the poor living environment that would result from it and the poor mix of housing types, tenures and sizes.

Frome Gateway Context and other policies.

Globe House is located within the Frome Gateway area as defined in the Draft Revised Local Plan – Draft Policy DS5. This sets out the Council’s aspirations for the Frome Gateway. Although not adopted, the direction of travel is broadly supported by the Society. The overall aim of creating “a mixed and inclusive community with a diversity of land uses providing opportunities to live, work, take leisure and access services” is, in any case, a sound approach to regeneration. Enhanced connectivity with surrounding areas including accessible pedestrian routes along the River Frome are also aspirations relevant to this proposal. The site is not included in the Policies Map of the Bristol Central Area Plan (BCAP) element of the Local Plan. The policies of the BCAP encourage mixed uses, however. BCAP 1 expects new developments to contribute to the mix of uses in the wider area. It seeks a mix of new homes, employment and other uses appropriate to the area. The site is identified in the Old Market Quarter Neighbourhood Development Plan as ES1. This seeks, among other things, sensitive restoration of existing buildings, new building of appropriate height and scale in the context, employment uses at ground floor level, some outdoor amenity space and on-site residential parking at one space for every two dwellings.

The Proposal.

The current application retains the brick façade of Globe House which then forms the front elevation of Block A of the new development. This would be a four storey residential block including a mansard roof. This block extends along Vestry Street with three storeys referred to as Block C. Block B to the north continues at four storeys on the street frontage but rises to 6 storeys behind before dropping again to four storeys. Blocks A and C are entirely residential. Block B provides office space at ground level but residential on the upper floors. A total of 71 predominantly 1 and 2 bed flats would be provided plus 349 square metres of office space. It is basically a car-free development with some provision made for mobility impaired people and visitors to the office space. A total of 124 cycle parking spaces are included. Other aspects of the proposal are set out below.

Demolition and Principle of Redevelopment.

The Society welcomes the principle of redeveloping this site and has no objection to the proposed demolition which retains the façade of Globe House.

Height, Massing and Scale.

The height of the central element of Block B is reduced from 7 to 6 storeys. This is an improvement but the Society considers that a further storey should be removed to achieve an outcome more appropriate to the character of the area. It is also important that the benchmark for height in this redevelopment area is set at a suitable level. With the exception of the sixth storey, the massing and scale of the development would be acceptable for this location but the Society has concerns about the density of development and resultant living conditions set out below.

Design.

The Society remains concerned that the proposed Block B elevation to Eugene Street has a horizontal emphasis. This façade clashes with the verticality of the retained Globe House façade whereas it should complement it. The horizontal character of the front elevation seems

strange when the other elevations of Block B have a vertical emphasis. We welcome the design approach to Globe House and extension eastwards in Vestry Street.

Land Uses.

The provision of new dwellings is welcome but the Society considers that an opportunity has been missed to create a more policy compliant diversity of land uses for residential, commercial and recreational purposes. Although the ground floor of Block B is allocated for office use, the Society supports the view of the Old Market Community Association that more flexible commercial space should be provided including the ground floor of Globe House. Not only would this increase the potential for more varied commercial and employment opportunities, it would also contribute to a more vibrant street scene. Eugene Street, Little Anne Street and Vestry Streets have the potential to become interesting places to shop, stop and browse as the area regenerates.

Mix of Residential Accommodation.

The application proposes 71 dwellings, 38 one bed, 30 two bed and 3 three bed. Within this, 14 affordable units are included, nine one bed dwellings and five two bed. The tenure split of the remaining dwellings is unspecified. In addition to comments about living conditions in the following paragraph, the Society is concerned that the overwhelming preponderance of one and two bed flats would limit the contribution the development could make to the diversity of this area.

Living Conditions and Amenity Space.

There has been only a small reduction in the number of dwellings and so the density of the development remains very high. Yet, there is still only a small amount of outdoor amenity space at ground level for the 71 dwellings. The outdoor space would be considerably shaded by the development. Some external terrace space is provided at fourth floor level in Block B. Balconies are provided for some but by no means all of the apartments. Many of the flats are single aspect dwellings. As a result of these factors, the Society remains unconvinced that the living conditions for many of the residents would be satisfactory.

Parking and Connectivity.

The Society supports the drive to discourage car use particularly in the city centre and is, therefore, content with the very limited off-street parking provided. Limited provision is made for visitor parking and, within the site, there are two spaces for drivers with impaired mobility and one car club space. There are 116 cycle parking spaces. We consider this acceptable in view of the proximity to bus routes and retail/service facilities. Bristol Temple Meads, Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road railway stations are also within reasonable walking distance. The requirement for on-site parking in the Old Market Neighbourhood Development Plan no longer seems appropriate. On-street parking will need to be carefully managed, however.

The protection of a pedestrian route to potential future development in James Street is supported as is the ambition for a route to the River Frome and beyond. Development in Vestry Street is also positioned to avoid impeding a future pedestrian connection to the adjoining site. Suitable agreements to protect these routes should be sought by the Council.