

RESPONSE TO PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF FORMER PEUGEOT SITE

22/01295/PREAPP.

The Proposal.

The preapp is for redevelopment of the site for c 412 homes, c 1027 sq m of communal amenity space, 635 sq m of flexible Class E commercial space, and associated infrastructure, plant, elevated ground floor car parking, highway and pedestrian access and public realm works.

Summary.

Although Bristol Civic Society supports the principle of redeveloping this site, we object strongly to a number of aspects of the proposal. Set out below are the Society's objections and concerns relating to land uses, height, massing, scale, design, quality of living environment and public realm plus early reactions to access, parking, climate change and sustainability issues. We are particularly concerned about:

The proposed building heights, which we feel are intrinsically inappropriate and inconsistent with policies;

The intensity of development and its impact on the quality of life;

The proximity of many flats to the poor air quality and noise adjacent to the major roads;

The high number of single aspect flats, many of which are north facing.

A more equitable balance between residential and commercial uses would enable a development to comply more closely with the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone Spatial Framework (TQEZ SF) and avoid residential accommodation adjacent to the major roads.

Land Uses.

The TQEZ SF supports BCAP 35 which seeks sites to be developed as part of the growth and regeneration of the area as an employment led, mixed use quarter of the city centre. Fig 3, the TQEZ Development Prospectus, identifies the greater part of the Dandara site as a mixed use development parcel where residential comprises up to 60% of the total floorspace. Although the PREAPP proposal includes 635 sq m of flexible commercial space, it is an overwhelmingly residential development. The Society is concerned about the loss of employment opportunities in central and inner Bristol and we have concerns about the suitability of this site for residential development set out in the section below on Quality of Living Environment. At the very least, in order to adhere better to the TQEZ SF a more even distribution of residential and commercial uses is necessary. In particular, we suggest use of the land adjacent to Clarence Road and, especially, to Temple gate for commercial purposes. This would avoid future residents being exposed to noise and poor air quality as well as adhering better to the TQEZ SF.

Height, Massing and Scale.

The Society is particularly concerned about the heights of buildings particularly the 20 storey tower block but 10 and 11 storey blocks are also proposed. Fig 2 of TQEZ SF identifies the

site for medium rise 5-8 storey development, a height which the Society considers more suited to the site. We are not convinced of the need for a tall landmark building here and feel that the gateway function would be better fulfilled with well-designed lower rise building which respected the nearby Grade I Brunel and station buildings.

A number of blocks of varying height are proposed but the massing is, nonetheless, intense and from some viewpoints will be read as a very solid wall of development.

In terms of scale, the proposal largely exceeds the predominant scale of this part of Clarence Road and Temple Gate although the height does step down toward the lower rise buildings immediately to the west. The Society appreciates that the site immediately to the north is ripe for redevelopment but we are not assuming that the scale for that development should be the same. The TQEZ SF again indicates a medium rise 5-8 storey development for that site although it does show potential for a focal building.

Even allowing for intensification of use as advocated by the Urban Living SPD, the proposal is still a step change towards much higher and more intensive buildings. The SPD, in any case states, referring to such areas as Temple Quarter,

“Development in these areas is being guided by adopted and emerging spatial frameworks which set out a clear three-dimensional vision for these areas.”

In summary, the Society feels that the proposed development is far too intensive for the site.

Impact on Views.

We understand that the developers are seeking to agree viewpoints with the Council. We look forward to the verified views that these will yield. The Society considers St Mary Redcliffe, the Temple Meads and Brunel buildings and the Totterdown escarpment are sensitive features to be addressed in an analysis of views.

Design.

Achieving well-designed and beautiful buildings is enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Society appreciates that work continues on the design of proposals for this site but we have a number of profound reservations concerning the design as it stands in addition to the issues we have raised on height, massing and scale. These comments relate to external features of the buildings. We find the heavy emphasis on orthogonal blocks oppressive and would welcome greater variety in building shapes. The ground floor elevations at street level show some variation in approach which is welcome but the Society considers that more variety in the elevational treatment of the upper floors must be considered. There are large areas of repetitive balconies and some elevations with little or no relief to the pattern of fenestration.

There is a potential to create a stunning development to welcome people travelling towards central Bristol and we feel that this opportunity has been missed.

Quality of Living Environment.

Noise and poor air quality are particular concerns for this site especially for the elevations to Clarence Road and Temple Gate. Although improvements in the air quality and noise environments can be expected, we don't know how quickly and to what extent these will be

achieved. The Society, as mentioned above, has doubts about the suitability of this site for residential use and, in particular, remains to be convinced that air quality and noise issues will not be harmful to the living environment of residents adjacent to the main roads. As noted above we believe land adjoining Clarence Road and Temple Gate would better suit commercial rather than residential development.

Almost half the apartments would be single aspect flats as it stands. Many of these face north which will result in limited sunlight for residents. The Society suggests a greater emphasis on dual aspect apartments would improve living conditions and, in particular, a reduction in the number of north facing single aspect flats.

The development of over 400 apartments will almost certainly bring an additional 1000 residents to this area. The Society would like to see an analysis of shopping, medical and educational facilities within reasonable walking distance of the development. We are not convinced that home deliveries are the solution to shopping needs and that dependence on them could increase the isolation of residents.

Mix of Tenures and Unit Sizes.

The Society supports the Council's drive to increase the number of affordable dwellings and would urge the developer to produce a policy compliant scheme.

Over 90% of the proposed apartments would have one or two bedrooms. 58% would be for one or two persons. We feel that a greater variety of unit sizes could help to achieve a more balanced community here.

Public Realm.

We support the provision of active street frontages and look forward to seeing more detailed proposals regarding these. Similarly, we welcome the concept of greening the street frontages with planting subject to further details. Many of the flats have balconies but the Society considers that those fronting the main roads, particularly Temple Gate, will not be pleasant to use. An open space at first floor level is proposed. We would like to see a shadow analysis of this as it is surrounded by high buildings. Public realm proposals should contribute to the sense of community and development of contacts among residents in this large development and we will be considering this aspect in greater detail as the development design progresses. Overall, the Society does not consider the public realm elements are sufficient to ensure a good quality of life and doubts whether this can be achieved with the density of development proposed.

Access and Parking.

The site is very well located for public transport facilities. Car parking provision need not be substantial but cycle parking and storage facilities need to be at least policy compliant.

We would support increased permeability of the site for pedestrians and cyclists.

Climate Change and Sustainability Issues.

We expect the development of this site to be suitable for zero carbon living in a changing climate and in line with the City Council's ambition for the city to be carbon neutral by 2030 which Bristol Civic Society strongly supports.

