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Comments by Bristol Civic Society on the Mead Street Development Brief – second public consultation - July 2022

Summary

Whilst the Society supports the principle of the redevelopment of this central brownfield site and agrees with the green aspects of the proposals and the suitability of the site for employment in artisan making, creative, business and professional services, it is concerned about the design, height and liveability of the buildings and the impact they will have on the surrounding area and beyond.

Density such as that proposed is only acceptable if it is liveable at ground level. This area is hemmed in on three sides by hostile environments – busy roads and a railway embankment. Whilst we accept the argument in principle that this site should get the high density of a city centre location because of its closeness to Temple Meads station, we cannot think of another city centre site which is so constrained in this way. Taking the traffic out of York Road would solve this, but that is not going to happen.

We note that this Development Brief has been produced quickly in the face of current planning applications. The Brief will provide some useful guidance to ensure the area is well-planned, but we fear that it will not provide adequate protection against overdevelopment.

Our concerns about height, scale and massing:

| Extract from Development Brief | BCS comment |
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| Views 1-8 set out a number of viewpoints towards or within the regeneration area which should be considered when developing detailed design proposals. (p22) | The views do not include views to/from the Totterdown escarpment |
| The height and massing of proposed development should consider the impact on views from the wider area to key landmarks (p49) | <p>We support the inclusion of a statement on impact on views, but “consider the impact” is vague. And the “key landmarks” do not include the Totterdown escarpment.</p> <p>It seems unlikely that the brief as worded will “guarantee” anything except glimpses of the Pylle Hill escarpment. The tall buildings will also push themselves into city-scale views from north Bristol.</p> |
| Optimising density: The Mead Street Regeneration Area has been | “a typical optimal density of 200 units/ha” is high density. We fear that developers will push |

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| <p>identified by the Council as an area of growth and regeneration with potential for around 1500 new homes and 9000m2 of employment space.</p> <p>Bristol City Council's Urban Living SPD does not set an upper limit to density. The Mead Street Regeneration Area with its highly accessible location, has a focus for urban living with a typical optimal density of 200 units/ha (p49)</p> | <p>the upper limits of density towards the upper 200s, and the result will be more dense than say the existing Wapping Wharf development. Is this an acceptable residential environment in this area ?</p> |
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Other concerns:

| Extract from Development Brief | BCS comment |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Housing mix | We can find nothing in the document about housing mix |

What we support

We broadly support the four **Key Principles** listed in the Mead Street Development Brief Summary (May 2022) as there is little with which one can disagree:

1. Deliver new homes and work spaces that people are proud of and that represent the local community.
2. Provide better sustainable travel routes.
3. Create high-quality public places and support a low-carbon neighbourhood.
4. Create high-quality green space.

The current **Concept Masterplan** shows some positive features in the proposals for the site, including green infrastructure and public spaces, an active travel corridor through the development for pedestrians and cyclists and an ecological corridor along the railway boundary, and the Society would agree that, due to the proximity of Temple Meads Station and good local bus routes, the site lends itself to low provision for private motor vehicles.

The Society also notes that some other concerns expressed by respondents to the previous consultation have been considered by those involved in the latest proposals, including the need for primary school places for the children of families living on the site and the greater accessibility of Langton Street Bridge - though these lie outside the scope of this development. Public concern about the impact on residents of noise from heavy traffic on the A4 and York Road seems to have led to the focus for employment now being at the noisier east end of the site and an intention to retain Fowlers motorcycle store.

We support the following specific references in the full Brief:

| Extract from Development Brief | BCS comment |
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| Co-location of residential and employment space is desirable to create a mixed use neighbourhood and development proposals are encouraged to adopt innovative ways of combining uses. (p43) | Support |

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| <p>In key locations detailed development proposals will be required to deliver active frontages and contribute positively to the character of the street (p46)</p> | <p>Support</p> |
| <p>All development sites are expected to contribute a proportion of the overall employment space, in line with the recommendations on growth sectors and spatial provision. (p47)</p> | <p>Support</p> |
| <p>The Mead Street Regeneration Area should incorporate: A public open green space in a central location of not less than 5500m2. It should be publicly accessible and incorporate public children’s play space. Around 2.3ha of public open space across the regeneration area. This includes the central open space and also other areas of public realm such as the pedestrian links, play space, and pocket parks. (p54)</p> | <p>Support</p> |
| <p><u>Public services:</u> The provision of public services such as school places and healthcare capacity are outside the scope of this development brief.(p7) There are primary and secondary schools, GP surgeries, local shopping areas, public transport routes, parks and many employment opportunities in close proximity to the Mead Street Regeneration Area. (p9) The increased population resulting from new development may put pressure on the local services and facilities such as schools, healthcare and public open space. In the Mead Street area there is currently primary school capacity to accommodate the likely increase in children resulting from the proposed Mead Street regeneration. There are limited secondary school places in the area and this could be addressed in various ways, including the possible delivery of a new secondary school at Silverthorne Lane or through the potential allocation of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). (p73)</p> | <p>The provision of schools has been considered to some extent, even if outside the scope of the brief.</p> |
| <p><u>Infrastructure:</u> Each development will be expected to contribute, as appropriate, funds towards the provision of both strategic and local infrastructure which includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway works to Mead Street including widened footways, cycle track and green infrastructure. • New pedestrian links from Mead Street to St Luke’s Road. • A new pedestrian and cycle crossing across St Luke’s Road. • Children’s play area improvements in Victoria Park. • Accessibility improvements to Langton Street Bridge. (p72) | <p>Support.</p> <p>We think Langton Street Bridge will become a major pedestrian desire line for anyone heading north and not heading for Temple Meads</p> |

Presentation of consultation material

Regarding the homes and workspaces which will form the major component of the site, the Mead Street Development Consultation Survey (May 2022) says (p2) that: “Detailed designs, including

the height parameters, locations and appearances of new buildings, lie outside the scope of the brief and will be determined through detailed planning applications as individual sites within Mead Street come forward.”

We are disappointed that the displays at the public event on 22 and 23 June, and the Summary and Survey documents which were available to those attending, provided so little information on Height, Scale & Massing. The information on pages 49-53 of the full brief could easily have been made available at the public event and in the Summary and Survey so that people could comment on the likely visual impact of the development on the surrounding area as well as on the liveability of the general proposals.

These are primary concerns for many local people and the consultation should have made clear that the potential provision of 1500 new homes and spaces for 500 jobs on this site will require high-density buildings, including some of heights that will block views from across the city to the iconic Totterdown escarpment.