

25/14807/F – PBSA and other uses, Albert Road, BS2 0XA.

Demolition of existing buildings and mixed-use redevelopment to provide new commercial floorspace (Use Class E), including a primary care facility and a retail foodstore. The development also includes purpose-built student accommodation (Sui Generis) with ancillary wellness zone, co-working centre, amenity, external sports provision, associated plant and cycle storage.

Location.

The site is in Albert Road immediately to the south of Avon Point PBSA at junction with Feeder Road. Two similar PBSA developments lie to the south with remaining industrial site in between these and the application site.

Proposed Uses.

By far the predominant use will be for purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) providing 492 units in 16,827sq m. 392 sq m is proposed for commercial/retail space with 611 sq m for healthcare. The NHS say proposed primary health care space is not viable without £293,000 capital contribution. Emerging Local Plan calls for mixed uses in the wider area and thousands of new homes with a mix of size, type and tenure. The proposal continues the predominance of PBSA west of Albert Road. As yet the mix of land uses is very limited and virtually no variety of size, type and tenure of accommodation is present. The concentration of student accommodation here and on the island site west of the river will do little to foster a vibrant community as called for in the draft masterplan for St Philip's Marsh. Students are short term residents generally absent for around twenty weeks a year.

Height and Massing.

The development comprises a square tower of 17 storeys and a curved block of 7 storeys. These building heights stand above mezzanine, upper and lower ground floors. The tower is set back from Albert Road with the lower block between tower and river curved broadly in line with river course. If the commercial site to south is redeveloped similarly, there will be a line of five towers from Feeder Road to the railway line. The verified visual montages show that together with the proposed dense cluster of tower blocks proposed for island site on opposite bank of Avon the proposal would form part of brutal and expansive cluster of high buildings. The verified visual montages show that these would further erode views of Totterdown escarpment and largely eliminate the open views looking south east from Bath Road roundabout. Views across city from Wells Road and Knowle Road would be severely compromised by totality of development as would those from Park Street, Totterdown and Paintworks. Approval of this application would increase the pressure for a similar development on the adjacent site to the south which would exacerbate the adverse impacts of this impending dense cluster of tall buildings.

Landscape and Place Making.

A greenway providing a cycle and pedestrian route beside river and parallel route on top of flood defence bund are proposed. These would link with other pedestrian and cycle routes emerging in the area. Although these features are attractive in themselves, they will be overshadowed by the proximity of tall buildings proposed on each side of the river which

could also adversely affect the microclimate. There would be a continuation of the proposed Albert Road boulevard on the site frontage.

Conclusion.

Precedents suggest that tall PBSA developments will be permitted on between Albert Road and the river from Feeder Road to the railway line to the south. However, there are grounds for objecting to the proposal.

- It would add to the domination by tall orthogonal buildings of the west side of Albert Road.
- It would contribute to a dense cluster of tall buildings emerging on both sides of the river in this area. This would have very harmful impacts on a number of long distance views particularly north towards the Totterdown escarpment and south from Bath Road and Totterdown towards the city.
- A monoculture of PBSA use is developing in this area notwithstanding the inclusion of some floorspace for commercial and healthcare uses in the proposal. It is early days in the redevelopment of St Philips Marsh but this concentration of PBSA needs to be carefully managed if aspirations for a vibrant community and a mix of housing sizes, types and tenures are to be realised.
- The riverside landscape and cycle/footpath proposals are welcome elements but the enjoyment of these could be compromised by the proximity of tall buildings.