



an independent force for a better Bristol

The Society's statement in response to planning application –12/03121/PREAPP St Matthias Campus Fishponds. Redevelopment of site for up to 300 No. residential dwellings, to include conversion of listed buildings, demolition of non-listed buildings, erection of new build residential dwellings, with associated infrastructure, parking, open space and landscaping.

May 2014

1. SUMMARY

The Society does not support the redevelopment of the site as shown in the pre-application. The Society commends the re-use of the main Campus buildings as an educational institution, to re-house the Rudolf Steiner school, for which they are ideally suited, and supports any alterations to the fabric of the listed buildings needed to render them compatible with modern uses. The Society does not support the demolition of the unlisted buildings, and strongly objects to building on greenfield land and encroachment onto public open space which is advocated by the applicants.

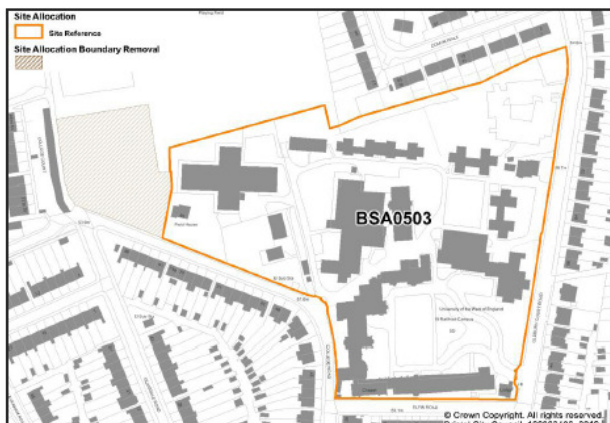
The reasons for our objections are set out below

2. PLANNING HISTORY

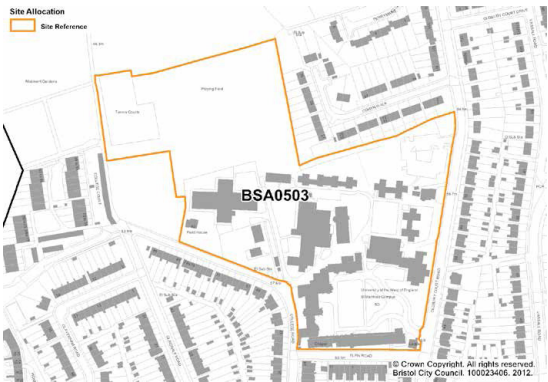
The campus was originally a church-owned college for the training of school-mistresses. The Grade II listed Gothic Revival main building was built in 1853. The site was subsequently acquired by UWE for various humanities subjects. UWE now wishes to close the site and relocate on the main campus, selling the site to Barratt Developments for housing. The listed buildings are to be retained as a school.

Planning policy for the site (as set out in Site Application and Development Management policies BSA0503) has gone through several iterations:

In March 2012 the site covered 3.8 hectares with this boundary. The estimated number of homes was 100, and the development area did not include any of the playing fields



In March 2013 the boundary of the site had grown to 5.6 hectares, and included the former playing fields of the college and an estimated potential of 300 homes



By March 2014 the site proposed for redevelopment had expanded once again, beyond the boundary of the site shown in BSA0503(above). The pre-application (below) shows a development that encroaches onto what may be regarded as the Oldbury Court public open space.



3. CHANGE OF USE

The Society supports the general policy for the site, which is for mixed-use, housing, business and residential use. This includes the retention of the listed buildings, and the unlisted buildings of merit, and the improvement of their setting, taking into account the neighbouring Conservation area, and being informed of historic and ecological considerations.

4. BASIS OF THE SOCIETY’S OBJECTIONS

4.1 Demolition of unlisted buildings

Although the buildings in the immediate vicinity of the main 1853 building are to be retained, almost everything else is to be demolished. These include:

- The Library
- Assembly Hall, Drama Studios and gym
- Elsa Nunn student residence
- Bishop Monk Student residence
- Canon Kitson residence

The Library is a substantial modern building of some merit. Likewise, the three residential blocks are all modern buildings. The insatiable demand for student accommodation at the two Universities has led to an almost goldrush-like race to provide new-build student quarters and convert existing buildings. It therefore seems particularly perverse to demolish buildings which are already capable of making a high quality contribution to meeting this demand. No case has been presented for demolishing the halls on the grounds that they are not viable.

4.2 Quality of design

The Society shares the Conservation Advisory panel's concern about design quality

Policy BCS21 requires *“New development in Bristol will deliver high quality urban design. Development in Bristol will be expected to contribute positively to an area's character and identity, creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness.”*

The applicant has a history of providing large scale, high volume suburban developments of a standardised design. The proposals show a high density development that pays little regard to the collegiate character of the neighbouring site.

4.3 Building on Greenfield site

In general, Bristol Core Strategy requires the location of new housing to be on previously developed sites or on land which does not need to be retained as part of the city's green infrastructure / open space provision.

Part of the site – the playing fields – has never been built on and therefore does not meet with this stipulation while brownfield sites continue to be available. It is debatable whether the playing fields are part of the city's green infrastructure since they have not available to the public, but development on them is a form of urban sprawl which should be resisted.

4.4 Encroachment on public open space

The Society notes that the northern boundary of the site where it abuts the Oldbury Court registered historic park is in dispute and may be the subject of complex legal arguments¹.

What is not in doubt is that the land north of the playing fields (that is, extending beyond the building line of Perrymans Close to the east of the site) has never been built on and is visually part of the Oldbury Court estate.

The Society urges the Council to resist any calls to permit building on this land on grounds of 'viability' of the entire project. Such development is clearly on a public open space and Conservation area and not supportable.

5. PROPOSAL

The Society recommends that the Council refuse the current application in its present form.

In particular:

1. The existing halls of residence and buildings of merit should be retained
2. Encroachment onto the public open space must be prevented.

¹ See document by GVA Grimley on behalf of applicants
http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/planning_and_building_regulations/planning_policy/local_development_framework/SAE86%20PS14-2%20-%20UWE%20and%20Barratt%20Homes%20-%20Statement.pdf