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October 2016

**Unit B & C Dean Street St Pauls - 16/03483/PREAPP** - *demolition of existing building and construction of six storey building comprising 53 residential dwellings and 172 sqm of commercial floor space.*

### **Summary**

The Society supports the redevelopment of the site, in principle. Unfortunately, the Society cannot support this proposal, which would be an over-scaled development that would harm historic character and legibility of the area. The Society agrees with the Conservation Recommendation made in respect of the pending planning application to redevelop 13-19 Dean Street - 16/02249/F on the opposite side of Dean Street. *'The degree of harm posed by the development is not outbalanced by the public benefit of the less-than-policy-compliant affordable homes offering.'*

### **Change of use**

The Society shares the Council's concern about the loss of employment space. The argument that the proposal would support the development of the applicants' businesses elsewhere in the city does not fall within the generally accepted definition of 'enabling development'. The definition is generally confined to development that would enhance some aspect within the boundary of the development site.

### **Demolition**

The current buildings are a neutral feature within the immediately adjacent conservation area. The Society would support the demolition of the current buildings if the replacement building enhances the immediately adjacent conservation area. The increased height and mass of the replacement building would harm the adjacent conservation area.

### **Height, mass and design**

Paragraph 4.1 the St. Paul's Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) states, *"This Conservation Area represents one of the best surviving examples of formal Georgian town planning in Bristol. It has the highest proportion of listed buildings of any of the city's conservation areas (almost 70%) and the only Grade I listed square in Bristol, the Conservation Area is of national significance."*

Any proposal should take into account the character of its context. This site is bounded by Dean Street and Wilder Street, which are service streets to the side of the architectural centrepiece, Portland Square. Dean Street, when viewed from the junction with Wilder

Street, leads up to and is subservient to Portland Square. The architectural context of the site is not the more distant developments of Godwin House and BS2 Loft Pods but the domestic setting of Wilder Street. BS2 Loft Pods would not be visually relevant at street level in Dean Street or Wilder Street. The proposed building would be built to the back of the pavement in both the secondary streets. The block would be double the height of the current buildings and would dominate the narrow secondary streets.

The Society was surprised by the grant of permission 14/01593/F for a building of the permitted height and mass, which takes Godwin House as its reference and ignores the context of the domestic scale of nearer properties. Without repeating them, the Society agrees with reasons that the Conservation Recommendation gives to support its conclusion in the 13-19 Dean Street - 16/02249/F planning application. *'The proposal fails to conform to policies that protect local character and distinctiveness'*. The Society adds these further comment.

Whilst the site lies beyond the boundary of the conservation area the west side of Dean Street falls within it. For the purpose urban design, both sides of Dean Street form a single townscape. The Council should not repeat past planning mistakes. Figure 44 of the CACA shows York House; an example of a not to be repeated mistake. The mass of York House contrasts brutally with the adjoining Grade II, listed Georgian terrace. Paragraph 7.2.16, describes the character area's most successful modern buildings. The three-storey plus mansard developments of St Paul Street and Pritchard Street are both examples of developments that represent the development management policy set out in the CACA. The Society could support a street elevation that is three floors tall, including the ground floor. It would not object to a fourth floor that is substantially set back. There should be no projections above the top floor to house plant. The roof should add interest to the skyline."

### **Conclusion**

The Society regrets that it cannot support this proposal, which represents a lost opportunity and should be refused. The height, mass and design fails adequately to reflect the local historic or visual context. The scheme would not safeguard or enhance the immediately adjacent Conservation Area or the setting of the nearby listed and unlisted buildings due to its dominant scale. The mass and height of the scheme does not acknowledge the hierarchy between principal streets around Portland square, and the subsidiary and service lanes behind it. Because of the height of the street elevations the stepped outline is no more than a token. There is no recognition of the scale, massing and hierarchy of the historic development within the immediately adjacent Conservation Area. The scheme would cause a moderate-to high degree of harm to the special character of the immediately adjacent Conservation Area. The site has a prominent corner location at the boundary of the 18th century development of Portland Square and its dependent streets and the more modest 19th century housing development north from Wilder Street. The proposed scheme fails to address the transition in the massing to the later 19th century townscape. The scheme does not make a positive contribution to the city and fails to enhance the character of local distinctiveness of the adjacent conservation area.



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