



an independent force for a better Bristol

The Society's response to a pre-planning presentation of a scheme to redevelop 493/499 Bath Road Brislington

31st July 2017

Introduction

The Society is grateful to Sovereign's development team for the opportunity to meet them and to comment on the proposal. Public consultation is effective when it occurs early enough in the planning process to affect the final form of development. The Society welcomes the regeneration of this site, which has been a long-standing negative feature in the Bath Road. The Sites Allocation Development Plan Document includes this site

The scheme

The site on Bath Road opposite Arnos Court Park is largely cleared of building save for the derelict, Moderne-style factory building. The site covers an area of 7,200 m² on ground sloping gently down to the NW with views across Bath Road to Arnos Park and further over the city centre. Neighbouring buildings are mostly residential terraced houses with some larger Victorian semi-detached houses/villas.

Change of use

The Society supports the construction of higher-density housing in this area, which is well supplied with amenities and is close to the city centre.

Height and mass

The Society notes that the plan of the site has been revised. It appears that Block A has been split into two, forming a new block along a street parallel with and facing Block C, with a courtyard between Block A's two wings. The Society welcomes this revision if it introduces dual aspect units into the scheme. The four proposed new blocks are of varying heights and mass. Although the largest blocks will not easily be visible from Bath Road there is a strong argument that 7 storeys of Block C and the 5 storeys of the rear block A protrude on the skyline and are clearly visible in the CGI view from Arnos Court. The relevant criteria listed in SPD 1 - Tall Buildings are:

- i. The relationship to the local context – the surrounding buildings are all low-rise.
- ii. Topography - the rising site is not usually a suitable site for tall buildings.

- iii. Skyline – the development harms the view from the park, which is an important public amenity and in a conservation area.

These blocks should be reduced by 2 storeys and the flat roofs replaced by a design more in keeping with the surrounding residential area. The Society is particularly concerned about the height of the southern end of Block A.

Block A

The Society welcomes the improvement of the elevation on Bath Road, with gable ends and brick materials that are better informed by the adjoining late 19th century houses but objects to the height of the southern element of block A, which is too tall. This block unbalances and harms the continuity of the residential streetscape; it is intrusive. It draws attention to and exaggerates the impact of the height of Block A on the neighbouring traditional housing. The height should be reduced. The southern block should not exceed four floors above the ground floor.

Design and materials

The Society assumes that the detail of the design of Block A remains work in progress. The Society suggests that the detail should be informed by but not follow that of the dominant late 19th century surrounding architecture. For example, the window openings in the indicative design, which have a suitable proportion, should also be adequately recessed. The Society assumes that the ground floor would not be a dead elevation that concealed a car park at ground level. Front doors in the gabled terrace would animate the design and could provide the basis for designing the area between block A and the Bath Road. The development should include a green edge. Alternatively, the ground floor could contain commercial space, which could help animate the Bath Road frontage.

Within the courtyard area the Society encourages the architects to be bold and innovative with choice of materials, design of the elevations and detailing. The Society reserves judgement on final comment on the architectural detailing until details are provided. The Society strives to ensure that the quality of architecture is of the highest standards and welcomes liaison with developers in this respect prior to submission. This large site creates the opportunity the design led project; Junction 3 is an example.

The housing mix and internal space

The Society supports the Council's policies to ensure a mix of the tenure of accommodation and unit sizes and DM29, which states that new flats should be dual aspect wherever possible and specifically, that single aspect units are not appropriate on northern elevations.

The landscape

The Society supports the proposal for a large area of public amenity space in the centre of the site and the retention of mature trees. Within the courtyard area the Society suggests that there should be an obvious 'pocket park', a sheltered area where the residents could to interact. A new pedestrian route through the site to Sandy Road via Belmont Road to make the area more porous for pedestrians will be a substantial planning gain. The Society is pleased to note the location of the principal vehicle access will be at the rear of the site, away from the Bath Road.