



an independent force for a better Bristol

16th November 2017

4 Glass Warf, Avon Street (ND9) - 17/04889/F- the Society's revised response to the public consultation on proposals to build new offices

The development

The scheme would create a new 203,000ft² office on land bounded by Avon Street, Oxford Street, Anvil Street and Pugs Lane. The other side of Anvil Street is residential (The Dings) and the other side of Pugs Lane is a hotel.

Summary

The Society thanks the developers and Carter Jonas for the opportunity to see the current version of the plans and their time to explain these plans. The Society's original response supported the views of the Old Market Community Association. The OMCA object to the scheme, which conflicts with the planning advice of the area masterplan, adopted in 2003. Specifically, the scheme would overbear and overshadow the Dings development on the north side of Anvil Street and would compromise the amenities of its residents. The Society's original submission remains its principal response. However, if the Council accepts the height and mass of the current scheme the Society wishes to make several positive suggestions.

Uses

The proposals fall within TMEZ; a commercial use is policy compliant.

Mass height

The Society understands that the 2002 masterplan requirement for 500 residential units in the area has been achieved. The height is 8 stories across all sides. Whilst the masterplan is still a material consideration, the Society agrees that 203,000 ft² of office space cannot be achieved within the 2003 planning advice.

Design

The Society's principal interest is the impact of development on the public realm. The impression that this building would give to pedestrians would be of a huge dominant slab built to the back of the pavement, on two sides. The Society suggests that the street elevations are too cellular, we would welcome a breakdown to give greater rhythm and articulation. Design efforts to articulate the elevations would be welcome. Colour variation and / or break in the linearity of the horizontal 'fins' would assist. We suggest also some visual link, perhaps by means of colour or texture, to the proposed bridge over Avon Street to the adjacent building. Alternatively, this could be achieved by manipulation of the level of the 'fins' on the buildings.

The Society acknowledges that the design, through setting back the higher floors on the north and green terracing attempts to reduce impact of the building on the Dings. At street level the Society suggests that to complement the slight kink in the north elevation there could be further attempts to reduce the building's perceived bulk if Anvil Street is treated as shared space with build outs to create space for planting and to slow traffic.

The elevation that faces the railway is the critical aspect of this building. The Society suggests that there should be a visual link to connect the building to its neighbour 3 Glass Wharf. Buildings with outstanding architecture and materials should frame this important gateway to the city.

The roof should contribute towards local character and distinctiveness. If this building incorporates a solar array there are many designs that could incorporate PV panels that would add interest to the roofscape. The roof of this building will be an important element of the view towards the city from the train.

The Society is cautious about green walls because of the future management demands that they create. A building in Bristol which makes use of green walls is the recently-built University of Bristol Life Sciences building. We suggest that the architects and designers might learn some useful ideas of what to do and not do by critically reviewing this building.

Materials

The Society supports the use of modern materials in modern buildings and supports the proposed materials (aluminium horizontal frames, composite stone panels, sheet glass) and the restricted colour palette.

Access and the streetscape

The green areas and green walls on three sides are welcome. The success of this scheme will depend on the quality of maintenance of the new public realm planting and urban landscape. Serious effort needs to be made to ensure that the landscaping, which is north-facing on The Dings elevation - is well planned and sustainable.