

Redevelopment of 25 Redcliffe Street through to Thomas Street to provide 136 apartment and retail space

The Society welcomes this major application to redevelop a derelict site that will demolish several buildings of little architectural quality between Redcliffe Street and Thomas Street. It is unfortunate that there will not be joint development with the Carlisle Group who own the adjoining site. A joint venture would benefit both parties and produce a better result for the public realm. The Society has no concerns about the proposed demolition, the change of use or the Redcliffe Street elevation, which will be five floors tall. However, the Society has objected to the Council about the impact of the scheme on the sensitive streetscape of the St. Thomas Street, which has a historic finer grain. The scheme will be next to the Grade II listed Wool Hall and St. Thomas the Martyr Church. The scheme retains No. 14 St Thomas Street, a former warehouse and an unlisted building of merit. The St. Thomas Street elevation would be taller than no. 14 and the Wool Hall. To protect the significance of no. 14 and the Wool Hall the new buildings must not exceed their height. Unless the developer changes this elevation, the scheme will harm the character of the conservation area.

The Society

In particular, we are concerned that the height of the central blocks will shade many of the apartments and adversely affect the amenity of the inner courtyards. It is also not clear what the impact of the taller central buildings would be on the tower of St Thomas the Martyr when viewed from the south. Sections indicate that they would diminish its significance and that would be unacceptable. The Society welcomes the replacement of the wooden panels originally shown in buildings fronting St Thomas Street. The proposed redevelopment contains a major residential element. The Society urges the Council to ensure that the mix of unit sizes and the proportion of affordable units complies with Council policies.

We remain of the view that the site would be better redeveloped in conjunction with the adjoining Carlisle site. However, we have considerable concerns relating to the height and mass of the proposed buildings. In particular, the elevation to St Thomas Street shows buildings exceeding the height of No14 and the Wool Hall. The height of neither of these buildings should be exceeded in order to protect their significance and preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area. We are concerned that the height of the central blocks will shade many of the apartments and adversely affect the amenity of the inner courtyards. It is also not clear what the impact of the taller central buildings would be on the tower of St Thomas when viewed from the south. Sections indicate that they would diminish its significance and that would be unacceptable. The Society welcomes the replacement of the wooden panels originally shown in buildings fronting St Thomas Street. The proposed redevelopment contains a major residential element. The Society urges the Council to ensure that the mix of unit sizes and the proportion of affordable units complies with Council policies.

The proposed step-back to the north of No.14 is insufficient; the remainder of the elevation would dominate and overbear the retained warehouse. A taller building that surrounded No. 14 would diminish its significance. The higher floors of the Saint Thomas Street side of the development should be set back behind the cut-off line viewed from the opposite side of the street. The Society supports the statement in the Council’s letter of the 2nd July that:

“The disposition of the height scale and massing from five to eight storeys from views along Thomas Street (view22) appears overly dominant, fails to integrate the building of merit and rises uncharacteristically behind the frontage harming the setting of listed building and character of the Redcliff Conservation area..... The heights previously approved as part of application 08/04916/P are much further along St Thomas and hence the proposal should respond to immediate context.”

The Society notes that the Council has asked for images of middle distance views of the site and for shadowing diagrammes.

Design.

The Society considers that the design of both street elevations and the internal elevations acceptable.

Materials

The materials proposed for the exterior are acceptable. However, the Society does not support the use of wooden panels in the Saint Thomas Street elevation. Wooden cladding is rarely compatible with the design expectations within a conservation area and wood cladding will soon appear dated. Material used elsewhere in the development should replace the proposed wood with advantage.

Public realm

The Society supports the Council initiative to promote the development of a new footpath from Redcliffe Street to Saint Thomas Street. The proposed public use of the Redcliffe Street to Saint Thomas Street entrance will improve the Council’s ability to require the completion of the footpath when the neighbouring site is developed.

Matters left unconsidered by this response

The Society has not commented on the following matters, which the Council will consider against its planning policies.

- Vulnerability to flooding.
- Views along Redcliffe Street to Saint Thomas Street, which are dependent on further evidence.
- Whether the mix of units and affordable units offered is policy compliant.
- Space standards
- The level of amenity at ground floor level, which includes shading and the animation that can be achieved, which both depend on further evidence and work.