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The Society response to the pre-planning enquiry to develop land south of Morris Road Lockleaze - 16/06534/PREAPP.

The Society is grateful for the opportunity to comment at an early stage of the development of this area of land. Our remarks are based solely on study of the "Shaldon Road Community Housing DRAFT Pre-application Design and Access statement REF/7680" dated Dec 2016 as the pre-app was no longer available on the Council website at the time.

The proposal

It is proposed to build two and three storey flats and houses, giving 49 dwellings, each with private garden space and with an aspiration to have shared facilities. As the development will comprise 100% affordable units this means it will of course greatly exceed the requirements of policy BCS17. There will be a main access point off Morris Road leading to a wide shared surface forming the main road through the site for vehicles and pedestrians, with a further cycle and pedestrian entrance on the south-east side. Some land is to be set aside as woodland and communal gardens and around the edges to screen the development with trees. The site slopes down from north to south and in the Design Principles (S 8.0) the opportunities afforded by this gradient for landscaping have been considered.

Heights and mass

The proposed two and three storey houses appear to be a good compromise between the aims of higher density (BCS3), retaining green space (BCS9), and matching the character of buildings in the wider area while making the best use of a sloping site. We would not support buildings higher than three stories. We support the level of housing density proposed.

Design and Materials

We are pleased to note the thinking set out in S 8.2/8.3 regarding possible designs for the buildings; materials, shapes and colours, and the importance of using datum lines in the facades of adjacent buildings which relate closely to one another. Datum lines discreetly but effectively signal a sense of unity. They show that the architect has considered how to make a group of buildings that together are beautiful when viewed as a whole.

On the proposed materials, we make no specific comments at this stage, except to commend the work done on defining a wide possible palette and to urge the careful detail

choice of materials, building by building, to aim to give a harmonious whole to the development.

Spatial Planning and Public Space

The constrained nature of the site, bounded by existing houses and a railway line, as well as being on a slope, means that the designers have had to think hard about how to lay out the site and provide access. In our view, the designers have achieved a natural layout that we think will give changing and interesting views passing through the site along the main access road. There is a significant amount of public space in the form of communal gardens, a small area of allotments, and other areas of space that are intended for everyone's use. The two "common houses" are centrally located; sensible in our view. Having pedestrian and cycle access on the SE side opposite to the main entrance on Morris Road gives porosity and should encourage a through flow of cyclists and walkers, thus preventing the site being a cut off cul-de-sac.

We raise the question, looking at S 8.0 "Design Principles", of the meaning and value of so-called "semi-private outdoor space" as indicated on the planned layout. We ask whether space that is designated as being neither public nor private might end up as neither, as "disputed space", and thus of questionable benefit. However, the proposed public square area in front of the northern Common House appears to us to be a striking and valuable contribution to the public realm. It faces south, so in the summer this might be a popular place for games, picnics, barbecues and similar social activities. The landscaping of the site in a manner sympathetic to the slope and avoiding a detrimental impact on the existing surrounding houses we think is a strength of this proposal.

A matter that concerns the Society is the statement in paragraph 4 of the Design and Access Statement, "The management and maintenance of the development will be undertaken initially by United Communities but this will be gradually be taken over by the BCLT residents group once they have become established." There are many areas around the city where common amenity space has been allowed to degrade. The maintenance of common space is difficult for groups of householders to sustain. The model frequently adopted by developers is to set up a ground landlord company with power to charge a maintenance rent and an obligation to maintain the common parts. At the completion of the development the maintenance company shares are assigned to the individual house owners

Conclusion

The Society supports the principles that the Pre-application Design and Access statement sets out and welcomes this development as a valuable contribution to the city's stock of affordable housing and more widely to the urban fabric of Lockleaze and Bristol.