



an independent force for a better Bristol

11th May 2018

The Society's response to the planning application to redevelop Taviner's Buildings Prewett Street – 18/01890/F

Proposal

The scheme would comprehensively redevelop and regenerate a current brownfield site adjoining Prewett Street and Somerset Street Redcliffe to construct 196 dwellings in a stepped building that would rise to 11 floors above the ground floor.

Summary

The Society recognises that this site is a negative feature and welcomes redevelopment in principle but very much regrets that it cannot support the current scheme. The Society acknowledges the changes to the design between the pre-application enquiry and the planning application, but the scheme's mass is unchanged. The proposed new apartment block would overbear and overshadow Magdalena Court to the northwest and Corinthian Court to the northeast to create a major planning conflict. To achieve a high density the Society would prefer a development on a broader footprint built over the centre of the site that was taller, but not much taller, than Corinthian Court and Magdalena Court.

Demolition

The Society would regret the loss of the Bell public house but recognises that the building is statutorily unprotected. The former Taviner's Building is without architectural merit.

Change of use

A residential led scheme would conform to current planning policy. This is a highly sustainable site close to the city centre and to Temple Meads station. A market rental scheme would increase the area's accommodation mix. The scheme offers to provide 20% affordable housing.

Mass and height

The critical planning question is whether the addition of new proposed number of new homes to the city's housing stock outweighs the harm that the building mass would cause to the amenities of the residents of Magdalena Court and Corinthian Court. The new building would stand across Somerset Street parallel to Corinthian Court (permission 1999). The developer has not included a sun shadow diagram with the planning application. The Society anticipates that the diagram would show that the new building would block the sunlight from the Somerset Street four-storey terrace for a significant part of the day during most of the year. The proximity of a new building of this mass and height would substantially harm the amenity of the Corinthian Court residents. Similar considerations apply to the harm that the new building would cause to the amenity of the residents of the four-storey Magdalena Court (permission 1999) to the northwest. Because of the impact on a substantial number of neighbours of dense recently-constructed flatted accommodation, the Society cannot support this application. The Society contrasts this proposal with the spatial planning of Proctor House and Broughton House. Both earlier tall buildings are sited at an angle to each other and with a greater intervening space. The current scheme would stand parallel to its neighbours on three sides and would block the east aspect of the residents on all 9 floors of Broughton House and vice versa. The Society anticipates that a sun shadow diagram of the 5 floors amenity block to the south of the development would cast a shadow over the children's playground and the community garden for significant periods each day. The Society is not convinced that the development would not harm view into the site or views of St. Mary Redcliffe.

Design

The developer says that U-shaped plan has the advantage of producing an open courtyard facing south that would connect with the wider landscape. This small open area would produce a minimal planning gain when considered in the context of the projected number of new residents and the mass of the surrounding new building. The Council must satisfy itself that the continuing site management is strong enough to ensure that this open space will not quickly degrade. The Society is also cautious about welcoming roof top gardens unless there is a robust maintenance plan.

The quality of the design does not justify the height and mass of the principal building which the asymmetrical silhouette fails to mitigate. In the public realm the building's mass would overpower the space within which it would stand. Another consequence of the design's inadequacy is that only the corner flats are double aspect. Many of these single aspect flats would face north. An objection to the design which carries weight will appear in the emerging Urban Living Planning Advice, which will provide best practice advice on the design of residential schemes with higher densities to ensure good quality accommodation. The Society expects that this best practice advice will include a presumption against single aspect units, which, as with this proposal, often provides a limited outlook. The best practice advice of the current Policy DM29 states that new flats should be dual aspect wherever possible and specifically that single aspect units are not appropriate on northern elevations. The Society assumes that windows onto the centre light well would illuminate the access corridors.

The development would provide a stock of one and two-bedroom flats in a 60/40 ratio. A review of the census data for the central wards shows that approximately 77% of the housing stock is 1 or 2 bed units. Policy BCAP3 seeks a greater number of 3 bed flatted units,

and as such it is felt that a higher proportion of three bed flats should be included within the scheme. The Society supports the Council's affordable housing policy.

Conclusion

The Council should not support this application for these reasons:

- The harmful impact that the development would cause to a substantial number of neighbours who occupy recently-constructed accommodation.
- The design fails to satisfy the Council's planning policy BCS21 – Quality Urban Design. The building mass would offer a majority of residents single aspect flats in a monoculture of small flatted accommodation.
- Harm to local and longer views particularly of St. Mary Redcliffe.
- The building would overshadow the outside amenity spaces which are vital for those who live in higher density dwellings.
- The unexplored possibility for the developer to achieve a high-density development with a broader footprint.