

BRISTOL URBAN DESIGN FORUM

Bristol Urban Design Forum

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For the attention of Mr David Rhodes

25 August 2015

Dear Mr Rhodes

**Re: Bristol Urban Design Forum - Design Review on Tuesday 11 August 2015
Review No. 07/15: Bedminster Green (Masterplan for areas surrounding St Catherine's
Place including Malago Road, Dalby Avenue, Stafford Street and Little Paradise)**

Thank you for giving us the early opportunity to review the Development Framework for this ambitious and potentially far-reaching plan. The Panel particularly welcomed the comprehensive approach to the wider area affected by the proposals, and also commended the extent of the consultation that has been undertaken to reach this stage. The clear presentation material provided in advance was also of help to Panel members. We were pleased to note that the initiative has been enabled by the approval for the St Catherine's Place project, which had previously been supported by the BUDF.

Pedestrian, vehicle and cycle routes

Your presentation dealt in some depth with the strategic pedestrian, vehicle and cycle routes. In principle we support the provision of an integrated transport hub; while we recognise possible concerns of traders in East Street about removal of bus stops, we recognise that this could improve the environment, and ameliorate the hard environment of the street and poor air quality caused by current density of bus traffic.

We agreed that the reduction of vehicle traffic under the rail bridge is vital to improving safe pedestrian access to Windmill Hill, but suggested that you also exploit the potential of a new link under Bedminster Station to provide a more attractive pedestrian route.

The south-north pedestrian links appear to work at a diagrammatic level, but care will be required to ensure legibility and attractiveness of routes at ground level, especially at the potentially unattractive rear of the existing properties.

We recommend that your future proposals pay particular attention to the increased crossing of Malago Road generated by residential development, and in particular by the high density development on Plot 1.

Opening up the Malago

We thought that the idea of opening up the historic Malago River was desirable as a means of both extending the habitat corridor and adding to the amenity of Bedminster. However the proposal is more convincing at the north-east end of the site, where it contributes to the residential accommodation, and we suggest that it should also be visible across the Green itself.

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The success of this measure will however depend on the quality of the space between the railway embankment and Plot 1 and its visibility from the Malago Road frontage; here the proposed density of accommodation and narrow width of residual green space could be problematic, creating an unsupervised space by restricting clear sight-lines and overshadowing the waterway.

‘Strengthening the Spine’

We support your ambition for a more urban form of development, creating a sense of enclosure to Malago Road, and consider this to be an important element of the remaking of Bedminster.

The more developed proposals for Plot 3 appear to represent a better basis for creating a viable environment for family housing. However, while we recognise that the massing shown is indicative, we did question the ‘raw’ and overbearing nature of some of the built form. In particular, the proposed scale of the buildings proposed for Plot 1 caused us some concern; your massing model suggests that it will be difficult to achieve minimum standards of daylight and sunlight or privacy in some of the flats. We also questioned the high concentration of one and two bed units and the consequent implications for creating a stable and sustainable community.

We suggest that greater consideration should be given to achieving an appropriate scale and mix, and that particular attention is paid both to the use of the ground floor and the quality and function of the external spaces around the blocks themselves. Here the relationship with the existing landscape, site levels and the mature trees along the railway boundary will also require a sensitive approach.

The Panel was also concerned that the part of the development associated with the access to Bedminster station obstructs the distant views enjoyed by residents of the lower slopes of Windmill Hill.

While recognising the preliminary nature of the scheme, there were similar concerns about the scale of some of the buildings in Plot 4 and their impact on neighbouring buildings; here the design should take greater account of the proximity of the adjacent sheltered housing at St Catherine’s Court.

Community Green Space

We were enthusiastic about the concept of connecting and upgrading the existing green spaces; in this respect the introduction of the landscaped area above the new underground car park is a potentially attractive feature that also complements the setting of the Church Lane.

We have already mentioned our concerns about the quality of the space between Plot 1 and the railway embankment, where its success and usability will depend on its links to spaces beyond. In general, given the height of the proposed residential blocks, considerable attention will need to be given to the microclimate and the wind generated by the tall buildings.

Your proposals illustrate a high density of development immediately adjacent to Bedminster Green, where the mass of buildings will need to be handled with sensitivity to preserve its mature character. An imaginative landscape solution is required in this important part of the public realm in order to balance the demands of public transport and heavy pedestrian flows.

Community Energy Centre

You have situated this in a key location at the gateway to the Bedminster Green and the City itself and we encouraged you to exploit the full potential of the structure to create an appropriate landmark.

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The Panel considers that the Development Framework to be a sound basis for further discussions with the interested parties, landowners and in particular with Bristol City Council. While recognising the need to generate the value necessary to fund the proposed infrastructure measures, we would also urge you to look closely at the quality as well as the quantity of the homes that the plan provides, in order to ensure that this new community is socially stable and sustainable. This is potentially one of the most significant contributions to urban renewal in Bristol in recent years and the BUDF would welcome the opportunity to review the scheme again as it progresses.

Yours sincerely

John Waldron
Chair, Bristol Urban Design Forum Design Review Panel

cc: Bristol City Council Planning
BUDF website