

# Development Control A Committee Supplementary Information



**Date:** Wednesday, 28 November 2018

**Time:** 2.00 pm

**Venue:** The Council Chamber - City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

## Distribution:

**Councillors:** Donald Alexander (Chair), Chris Windows (Vice-Chair), Clive Stevens, Fabian Breckels, Tony Carey, Stephen Clarke, Mike Davies, Margaret Hickman, Olly Mead and Afzal Shah

**Copies to:** Claudette Campbell (Democratic Services Officer), Gary Collins, Paul Chick, Andrew Cross, Lewis Cook, Natalie Queffurus and Jeremy Livitt

**Issued by:** Claudette Campbell , Democratic Services

City Hall, Bristol, BS1 5TR

Tel: 0117 922 2342

E-mail: [democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk)

**Date:** Tuesday, 20 November 2018



# Supplementary Agenda

a) 18/01890/F - The Bell, Prewett Street

(Pages 3 - 11)



## 18/01890/F: Prewett Street

### Supplementary Report: Assessment against Urban Living SPD

Following the main committee report, this paper has been prepared to assess the scheme against the Urban Living SPD which was adopted on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

The SPD sets out a series of questions to be addressed in considering the merits of a development scheme.

The applicants have made reference to the SPD in its draft stage and the former SPD1 (Tall Buildings), and their comments are reported here, where relevant to the question being considered.

#### Question 1.1: Has the scheme adopted an approach to urban intensification which is broadly consistent with its setting?

The applicants have referred to the issue posed in the former SPD1 (Tall Buildings) which refers to the relationship to context, including typography, built form and skyline. On this point the applicants state that the development promotes a strong street frontage and state that the main building ranges from 6 storeys to 12 storeys, and that this sits within an immediate context of 4 storey buildings (Corinthian Court and Magdalena Court) and 10 to 13 storey buildings (Proctor House and Broughton House)

With regard to the skyline, the applicants state that the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application concludes that the effect on silhouette and overall roof form presents a suitable feature for the site's location.

In response, the proposed building is located at one of the highest points in the immediate area and would appear as a very bulky, overly large building at odds with the pattern of development in the area. It would dwarf the adjacent 4 storey buildings and it should be noted that the 13 storey Broughton House is located some distance to the south at a lower level. Proctor House and Broughton House are also much narrower, slender buildings whereas the proposal would appear from the street elevations as a large square block, out of context with its surroundings.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted with the application is flawed as the images are shown using a 28mm wide angle lens, when a 50mm lens should have been used. Using a wide angled lens reduces the visual impact as the building appears more distant and smaller than it would in reality. (A revised LVIA using a 50mm lens was requested but not submitted.)

Question 1.2: Does the scheme contribute towards creating a vibrant and equitable neighbourhood? (walkable, compact, green, accessible, mixed and balanced)

The SPD sets out a range of issues to consider as follows:

Applicants need to undertake consultation with the local community, to establish local aspirations, and research to understand local need. There was community consultation, but it is not clear how much this influenced the design of the scheme. In terms of research the applicants advised that there was a shortage of sports facilities in the area but this has not been corroborated by the Council's Sports Development Team.

Create walkable neighbourhoods which would support local shops. The east west footpath has been retained (this was highlighted as important in community consultation) and a new convenience store would be provided.

Create mixed and balanced neighbourhoods. The proposal would introduce owner occupied apartments which would help to mix the tenures in the area. However, the scheme does not provide any 3 bedroom family apartments so it fails to provide a mix of housing.

Vertically mix compatible uses: this has been achieved in the scheme by locating residential use above commercial and community uses.

Higher density residential developments need to incorporate a variety of accommodation to meet the needs of families, elderly, co-living and those with specific accessibility needs, as well as young professionals to help create stable communities where people want to live over the long term.

The scheme fails to provide a variety of accommodation as it consists entirely of one and two bedroom flats.

Question 1.3: Does the scheme respond positively to either the existing context, or in areas undergoing significant change (e.g. areas with a neighbourhood plan or masterplan), an emerging context?

In responding to the existing context, the SPD states that a thorough context appraisal of the neighbourhood should be undertaken, with a focus on the immediate streets and spaces adjoining the scheme. The context appraisal should then be used to inform the emerging proposals. The SPD also refers to the need to undertake an analysis of whether there are any views into and from the site that merit a design response.

As set out in the City Design comments and the Key Issues concerning design and the impact on heritage assets, the design does not respond positively to its existing context, being over-large and incongruous with the urban grain of its surroundings.

For the reason stated in answer to Q1.1, the visual impact assessment is flawed and underplays the visual impact the development would have on views of St Mary Redcliffe, harming its setting.

The SPD also refers among other matters, to assessing the potential of any designated and non-designated heritage assets for their retention; and the desirability of including existing trees into the overall design and layout, setting buildings back to allow for growth. The scheme fails to respond to both these matters; there is no assessment of the Bell public house (non-designated asset) for its possible retention, and the proposals result in immediate and probable future loss of many important trees that contribute to the character of the green parkland setting of the Redcliffe Estate.

Question 1.4: Does the scheme provide people-friendly streets and spaces?

The SPD refers to the need for a high quality public realm where the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport are given priority, as is the need to create connections that are attractive, well lit, overlooked and safe. The need for a comfortable scale of enclosure and regular building entrances to provide activity and visual interest is also mentioned.

On the corner of Prewett Street and Somerset Street, the main building ‘hems in’ the public realm due to its height and massing, creating a pedestrian unfriendly environment. The scheme also does not provide a sufficiently wide pavement (see Transport Development Management comments in the main committee report). The building does not provide a positive interface to either frontage. The retail frontage on Somerset would deliver at least some activity to the public realm, however on Prewett Street more than half of its façade is effectively a blank wall at pedestrian level.

The east-west pedestrian route from Proctor House to Somerset Street and the north-south pedestrian route parallel to the children’s playground are not offered an attractive or engaging frontage. Given the height of the ground floor windows, the proposed scheme effectively results in an extended blank façade along these two routes.

The sports / community building fails to achieve adequate activity and interest at ground floor level. The building includes a largely blank elevation, and the discrete entrances to the hall and residential block above are understated, providing little visual interest.

The proximity of the main building to the sports / community building would create an uncomfortable scale of enclosure along the east-west pedestrian route, as the distance between the buildings would be just 5 metres.

Question 1.5: Does the scheme deliver a comfortable micro-climate for its occupants, neighbours and passers by?

The SPD refers to the need to take advantage of sunlight and reduce overshadowing, and providing a fair and equitable share of sunlight and daylight between existing occupants in

neighbouring buildings and future occupants of the scheme. It also refers to lowering heights along the south side to allow for sunlight / daylight penetration and, among other matters, to adopt a shallow plan to allow for natural lighting.

The main building steps down on its south elevation to allow light into the central courtyard and the flats fronting onto the space. However, the height of the building on its north and east elevations (12 storeys) overshadows the adjoining 4 storey buildings, Corinthian Court and Magdalena Court and this would cause an unacceptable loss of sunlight and daylight.

The design of the building is not shallow plan, and many of the apartments would be single aspect that would not create an attractive living environment for the future occupiers.

Question 1.6: Has access, car parking and servicing been efficiently and creatively integrated into the scheme?

The proposed scheme is car free which is considered acceptable. The development proposes a car club scheme which is recommended in the SPD; however, it fails to provide 6 disabled parking spaces which are required. Servicing and loading arrangements are not considered acceptable, and the cycle parking provision for the apartments would consist entirely of two tier stacking units which again is not acceptable (for further details please see Transport Development Management comments and Key Issue J in the main committee report).

Question 2.1: Does the scheme make building entrances welcoming, attractive and easy to use?

There is one entrance point to each of the two buildings, with the main building having its entrance on the corner of Prewett Street and Somerset Street. It is considered there should be more than one entrance to provide more animation and interest.

In response the applicants state that although there is only one entrance, the building has two internal cores and as such each core effectively serves a limited number of 6-7 apartments.

Question 2.2: Are the scheme's internal spaces convivial, comfortable and user-friendly?

Due to the depth of the proposed footprint and its shape, the internal layout and circulation gives little opportunity to achieve natural light or ventilation within the proposed cores and circulation areas; the corridors giving access to the apartments are all internal.

The applicants have responded to this point, stating that natural daylight is introduced to the cores at a number of levels by means of glazed doors.

Question 2.3: Does the scheme provide sufficient outdoor space?

The scheme provides a large number of balconies and roof terraces for its occupants, as well as a courtyard. There is no family accommodation in the development and no gardens are provided.

Question 2.4: Does the scheme create attractive, well designed and maintained outdoor spaces?

This question concerns private rather than public spaces. The SPD advises that this should have a clear purpose, be safe, easy to manage, overlooked by surrounding development and designed to take advantage of sunlight. The proposed courtyard in the main building is acceptable in these respects.

Similarly, the balconies and roof terraces are considered to be of practical shape and utility, although on the north elevation they would receive minimal sunlight. They are designed and orientated to ensure seclusion from neighbouring premises.

Question 2.5: Does the scheme creatively integrate children's play?

The scheme does not provide family accommodation and is unlikely to accommodate many children. However, as part of the proposals, the applicants intend to work with the local community to reinvigorate the existing play area alongside the development, providing new equipment. This initiative is welcomed.

Question 2.6: Are internal layouts ergonomic and adaptable?

All the proposed accommodation meets the nationally described space standards. The internal shape and layout of the units are also considered suitably functional

Question 2.7: Does the scheme safeguard privacy and minimise noise transfer between homes?

The arrangement of habitable rooms facing the internal courtyard is 'tight' and would not provide a high degree of privacy. Although the distance between opposing windows is reasonable (approximately 20m), the elevations are perpendicular to each other with some window separation distances being much less than this at the corners of the building. Given the height and configuration of the building, any noise breakout from windows will be clearly audible.

The habitable rooms are configured in vertical and horizontal arrangements to minimise noise disturbance between apartments.

Some of the balcony spaces, particularly on the Somerset Street façade facing Corinthian Court, would cause overlooking of existing dwellings.

The apartments at ground floor level are raised above street level which improves their level of privacy.

Question 2.8: Does the scheme maximise opportunities for natural illumination of internal space; avoiding single aspect homes?

The SPD comments that maximising opportunities to provide dual aspect units improves access to natural light, choice of views and cross ventilation through units providing greater capacity to address overheating. It further states that north facing single aspect dwellings should be avoided.

A total of 130 of the 176 apartments in the main building would be single aspect. On each level, 5 of the 7 units on the north elevation would be single aspect. This would create a poor living environment and is unacceptable.

Question 3.1: Is the tall building well located?

The SPD states that the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that the site is appropriate for a tall building, which involves a thorough context and urban design analysis.

Other points made are that:

- The impact of tall buildings in sensitive locations should be given particular consideration, and this includes conservation areas, listed buildings and their settings.
- The capacity of an area to accommodate a tall building is heavily influenced by an area's underlying character, at the scale of the city, neighbourhood and street.
- Larger sites (2ha and over) offer greater potential for taller buildings.
- Tall buildings will be encouraged where they can be integrated into a wider development block, with lower level buildings assisting the transition in scale from the tall building down to the surrounding context.
- Tall buildings will generally be discouraged on physically constrained sites within existing built up areas, where a tall building is likely to have a negative impact on daylight and sunlight penetration into the habitable rooms of existing buildings, or onto well used parts of the public realm.

In addressing these points the applicants comment that the development would sit centrally within a cluster of existing tall residential buildings. The tall buildings framing the site include Proctor House and Broughton House both of which comprise high-density, post-war housing. The proposed development would significantly raise the quality of the cluster in providing modern, high quality units along with significant improvements to the landscape and public realm around the site.

In response, the main building would not sit centrally within a cluster of existing tall residential buildings. The building is adjoined on two sites by 4 storey buildings and in

addition to its inappropriate height in this context, it would appear as a deep, wide, tall tower, whereas the existing post-war tall buildings are narrow slab blocks with generous distances between them or are sited to avoid direct views between flats.

Locating the building on the highest part of the Redcliffe ridge exacerbates the scale of the building and increases its adverse impact on a number of key views, particularly with regard to its relationship with the Grade I listed St Mary Redcliffe Church. As originally designed, the post war Redcliffe Estate carefully sited tall buildings to respect the setting of St Mary Redcliffe Church and to ensure that important views of the Church were retained. The new development would sit across one of the viewing corridors of the Church that the original designers sought to celebrate.

With reference to the final point regarding existing amenity, as set out in Key Issue G of the committee report, a daylight and sunlight assessment report submitted with the application indicates that 56 dwellings within both Corinthian Court and Magdalena Court would experience a 'Major Adverse' impact which is defined as a situation where a large number of open spaces/windows are affected and the loss of skylight is substantially outside the widely accepted BRE (Building Research Establishment) guidelines.

Question 3.2: Does the scheme make a positive contribution to the long-range, mid-range and immediate views to it?

As stated above (see Question 1.1), the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application is fundamentally flawed and does not correctly depict the impact of the new building. Its impact will be much greater than shown in the photographs.

Question 3.3: Does the scheme demonstrate design excellence?

The design approach does not demonstrate excellence. The main building is inappropriately large and bulky. The attempts to reduce the visual scale of the building through the application of vertical and horizontal splits or the use of a variety of material treatments are considered to achieve little to alleviate the scale and negative impact of the proposal.

The applicants have commented that the building composition has 'base, middle and top' elements with a clear architectural rhythm, which establishes a relationship with the framed nature of post war blocks.

However, in response, designing a building with 'base, middle and top' elements does not automatically qualify as an adequate or appropriate design solution. The erratically stacked massing and arbitrarily scattered balconies on the principal facades create a chaotic appearance without the clear architectural rhythm suggested. These do little to break-up the monolithic scale and massing of the main building.

Further comments made are that the over-sailing towards the corner along Prewett Street is unjustified and on the upper floors the stepping down of the form does not result in a well-thought out and elegant sculptural design which the prominence of the building demands.

The applicants disagree and comment that the design creates a visually interesting junction at ground floor level and a connection to roof level via the vertical form of the balconies.

Question 3.4: Does the scheme ensure the safety of occupants and passers-by?

This question concerns fire safety issues and no comments are made on this issue.

Question 3.5: Does the scheme interfere with aviation, navigation or telecommunication, and how will it affect the solar energy generation on adjoining buildings?

No comments are made on these issues.

Question 3.6: Has the scheme's future servicing, maintenance and management been well considered?

No comments are made on this issue.

Question 3.7: Does the scheme create a pleasant, healthy environment for future occupants?

Concerns were initially raised about overheating but these have been resolved. The scheme provides roof terraces and balconies to allow occupants to enjoy the views afforded by the development.

Question 3.8: Is the scheme sustainably designed?

No comments are made on this issue. The Sustainable City Team raised no objections to the proposals.

Question 3.9: Will the scheme be neighbourly, both at the construction phase and following occupation?

No comments are made on this issue.

## SUMMARY

While in some respects the scheme is acceptable, there are many fundamental issues where the scheme is clearly unsatisfactory. These issues principally concern its context, setting and design as detailed above.

