

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Development Control B Committee

15 April 2021 at 6.00 pm



Members Present:-

Councillors: Tom Brook (Chair), Richard Eddy (Vice-Chair), Lesley Alexander, Fi Hance, Chris Jackson, Olly Mead, Nicola Bowden-Jones and Sultan Khan

Officers in Attendance:-

Gary Collins, Laurence Fallon, Matthew Cockburn, Paul Chick and David MacFadyen

1. Welcome, Introduction and Safety Information

All parties were welcomed to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Stephen Clarke sent apologies

Cllr Mike Davies sent his apologies, Cllr Fabian Breckels is substituting.

3. Declarations of Interest

None received.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17th March 2021

RESOLVED the minutes of the previous meeting on 17 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

5. Appeals

The Head of Development Management introduced the report bringing the following to Committee's attention:

- Item 10 on p.13 relates to the former police dog and horse training ground. Committee granted an application to move Baltic Wharf Caravan Club to that location. Due to potential flooding issues, the application had to be referred to the Secretary of State, who has called it in. There will be an enquiry from 20 July 2021, and we will need to field witnesses to defend that decision.

ACTION GC to send an update email to RE about item 57 (Dancey Mead).



6. Enforcement

The Head of Development Management reported that 3 new notices had been served since the last meeting. There were no questions from committee.

7. Practice Notes - Information Item

This report was NOTED.

There was agreement at a recent Development Control leads meeting to add practice notes as standing items on DC meetings to make sure all members are up to speed on the relevant legislation. This particular update relates to space standards and climate change and sustainability.

8. Public Forum

Members of the Committee received Public Forum Statements in advance of the meeting. The Statements were heard before the application they related to and were taken fully into consideration by the Committee prior to reaching a decision.

9. Planning and Development

The Committee considered the following Planning Applications.

9.a. 20/04474/F We The Curious, Millennium Square

An Amendment Sheet was provided to the Committee in advance of the meeting, detailing changes since the publication of the original report.

The Planning Officer summarised the application as follows:

- a. The proposed location contains lots of existing attractions and listed buildings, including the We the Curious science museum, cathedral, cathedral school and central library.
- b. The committee was shown the existing elevation of the We the Curious building alongside the Planetarium, and then with the addition of the Arc. The capsule rests on the roof of the WtC building. Total height of the Arc is 79m. The cabin floor is 67m from ground level. Base is 3m diameter. 42 people are carried in the capsule for 20-minute session including boarding and offloading. There will be a guide on board to describe points of interest. It will operate for a maximum of 18 hours per day. It will be in the air for 60% of the run time and be at its highest point for half of that. It is expected to draw around 250k visitors per year.
- c. Some views have been raised from the Bristol Walking Alliance and the Bristol Civic Society about the impact of the Arc base on traffic flow and the fulcrum going overhead distracting people in Millennium Square. It could inhibit use of the fountains, pools and there may be insufficient



space for cyclists and pedestrians in the pinch point between Millennium Square and Anchor Square.

- d. The Arc will be visible from College Green over the Cathedral, impacting on the skyline. It would also appear above the Cathedral School and the historic gatehouse. It will be visible from most parts of the harbourside. Planning within the harbourside has a general principle of keeping views of the cathedral unobstructed.
- e. There have been 35 responses. 32 in support and 3 against. Points in support are tourism, economy, employment, raising Bristol's profile and education. Points against are the impact on the square, harm to the skyline, bulky design, exclusivity of use and similar views being available elsewhere.
- f. There were mixed views on the design. In itself, it is a high-quality design but very different to the existing context. Therefore, there is not a conclusive stance on design. There is harm to heritage assets, but this is classed as 'less than substantial harm' so should be weighed against the public benefit. It is the view of Historic England that the public benefit does not mitigate harm to the existing heritage assets.
- g. In terms of education, there will be a guide on the Arc talking about the history of Bristol. 10% of profits would go to a social innovation programme to improve access to the Arc for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This would work out to 1% free tickets of the projected 250k annual total. The economic benefit will be significant. National policy is that great weight must be given to heritage asset protection, in this case the Cathedral, other grade II* and grade II listed buildings, and harm to the character and appearance of 3 conservation areas (College Green, City and Docks and Queen Square).

Questions for Clarification:

- h. When Millennium Square was being proposed, what weight was given to heritage assets then? MS is now a mix of old and new, with the planetarium, fountains, aquarium and WtC all in modern style. Officers accept there have been a lot of changes to the area. WtC received awards for the roof extension as it was sensitive to the style of the existing building.
- a. There was a discussion about the new University Library, which had similar arguments about heritage assets. The library does have an impact on heritage, but the public benefit outweighs this. Heritage assets in this case are more significant, Bristol Grammar School versus Bristol Cathedral. Heritage harm vs public benefit is a subjective decision and committee will have their own view. Members should not make comparisons with the library.
- b. Conditions have not been agreed yet, officers would have to wait for the outcome of this committee. If approved, committee would delegate to officers to agree the conditions, including s.106 funds.
- c. The only issue raised by BCC legal is the percentage profit to charity and the suitable vehicle for that (legal agreement or planning condition). 3000 social tickets per annum is only an estimate, we cannot be certain how many people this will attract. WtC already has an outreach programme so the Arc would likely be an extension of that. It is difficult to predict tourist numbers over the next couple of years considering Covid. If the Arc is unsuccessful it can be removed relatively easily.



- d. There have been some questions about potential noise, however Pollution Control officers have determined this will not be significant.

Discussion Notes:

- e. RE commented that members and officers will sometimes disagree on applications and this is one such case. Modern stylish structures can complement the existing buildings. RE intends to move for approval subject to officer conditions being agreed.
- f. FB agreed with RE and believed the importance of the view to the cathedral from the harbour was being overstated. The harbour has several modern structures such as the serpentine bridge which complements the area. The Dean of the Cathedral supports this application, which is significant. Bristol will need economic boosts when coming out of Covid restrictions. Would ask officers to consider out of sight storage at night for the Arc as a condition.
- g. FH thought this was a challenging application for officers but intends to approve. There have been applications with considerably bigger impact on the skyline approved recently. FH was not convinced the economic arguments were as strong as presented.
- h. LA intended to approve the application, saying Bristol was often behind the curve in respect of modern developments.
- i. OM said he was unlikely to use it personally but recognised the appeal it would have. It is important to have tourist attractions in central Bristol, but he agreed with FH that it would not be as popular as projected. OM was encouraged by the support of the Cathedral Trust and that the Arc can be removed if it is not successful.
- j. CJ was interested in the public statements, with many positive submissions from leaders in the area, and one negative statement about noise, which officers have refuted. CJ was convinced the benefit outweighs harm.
- k. SK thanked officers for their detailed work on this application. He also thought benefit outweighed harm and was reassured by the community support, including the cathedral. He thought it would be an asset for the future and complemented existing assets.

No Councillor moved to vote to refuse the application as per the officers' recommendation.

Cllr Richard Eddy proposed, seconded by Cllr Fabian Breckels, to approve the application based on the public benefits of heritage, design, education and economy outweighing the harm to heritage assets, and to delegate conditions to officers.

RESOLVED: (8 For / 0 Against / 0 Abstain) that the application be approved and delegated to officers.

9.b. 19/03660/F Astry Close, Lawrence Weston

The Planning Officer summarised the application as follows:

- a. There is a lot to commend the application, officers regret that they are recommending refusal. There has been a lot of effort to negotiate to make this workable, but there has been no attempt to compromise by the developer over the past 18 months.



- b. Local people are in support and have a valid view on the application, but so does the planning authority. When a planning officer goes through scheme, they look at quality of design, what would it provide, would it realistically work?
- c. In 2012 the site had 16 houses in 8 pairs in precast concrete, which have been demolished and cleared. The site has been vacant for a long period. It is a challenging site due to the steep gradient.
- d. 36 dwellings are proposed, with 32 houses and 4 flats. All are classed as affordable. There is a good mix of semi-detached, terrace and flats. Construction is grey brick. All properties have private gardens. There are 48 parking spaces and 23 trees. The properties are supplied with air source heat pumps and solar panels. There is a substantial split level on the site with a large retaining wall. A public realm “heart space” is proposed between two rows of terraces in the centre of the development.
- e. There are 19 support statements, including the ward councillors. The Council’s City Design and Landscape teams have objected. The estate has green verges to provide an attractive open and airy environment. The local plan says they should be retained. DM17 policy is not to develop an open space with visual amenity. This application will be building on a verge, which is a major reason for referral to committee. The Development of 5 terraced properties on Goodring Hill would be beyond the existing building lines.
- f. Houses in the middle and far end of the site have 90-degree angles causing proximity issues, the change in height also compounds this. There is 4m height difference between houses. The spacing between facing windows is only 11m. Recommendations are 18m spacing, with some leeway for dense inner-city areas, but this cannot be justified in a suburban location. The short distance between properties will impact on residents.
- g. The gardens are small as is the proposed ‘heart space’. The terraces in the heart space face each other with a 9m spacing. This is not a high-quality shared space. It includes steps, which present access issues. Public use of the space is likely to be a nuisance to residents in the central terraces.
- h. Officers recommend refusal. We accept there are positives and commend the community engagement, but this development falls short of several fundamental planning principles.

Questions for Clarification:

- i. The area plan is a statutory document. The dispute is between BCC and the development forum. Community led engagement should be given weight, but committee should also be mindful of the policies and the creation of a quality living environment. We have granted high density developments in the past but not something with this level of overlooking and lack of shared space. It is up to the committee to balance arguments to see if there is enough benefit for the community to outweigh officer concerns. Any policy in the statutory development plan should be given primacy, but officers understand this is a difficult balance.
- j. The view of local community is that the verges are not being used positively even if the plan deems them attractive. The plan was also developed with the local community.
- k. There is a major oak tree on the development which members would seek to retain as a condition should the application be approved.

Discussion Notes:

- l. FH felt conflicted. The people who have spoken in favour of this are very high integrity. The design is not ideal and has some significant drawbacks. There are complaints about council policy being too restrictive.
- m. RE intended to support the application. He understood it is a hard balancing act, but there is a



significant amount of public benefit from the development and it has support from the local community and ward councillors.

- n. CJ agreed that the application was a good example of working with the local community and that the benefit outweighs the harm.
- o. FB intended to support the application, acknowledging the large amount of work that officers had put into the case. The heart space could have been bigger and the other verge used for a playground. If residents find the verges to be a nuisance, we should listen to them. The houses themselves are designed well. People in the houses facing the heart space will know what that implies in terms of noise.
- p. OM thought the local plan was positive and forward looking. Other more objectionable schemes have been approved at this committee. The design of houses is good, there are some access issues. He agreed the oak tree should be protected.
- q. SK intended to support the application based on the local community understanding their own needs.

No Councillor moved to vote to refuse the application as per the officers' recommendation.

Cllr Richard Eddy proposed, seconded by Cllr Chris Jackson, to approve the application and to delegate conditions to officers. One of these conditions should be the protection of the oak tree.

RESOLVED: (8 For / 0 Against / 0 Abstain) that the application be approved and delegated to officers.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

CHAIR _____

