

Public Forum -Addendum

D C Committee A

2pm 9 August 2023



1. **Members of the Development Control Committee A**

Councillors: Richard Eddy (Chair), Phillipa Hulme (Vice-Chair), John Geater (Jon Hucker substituting for John Geater), Fi Hance, Tom Hathway, Farah Hussain (Steve Pearce substituting for Farah Hussain), Chris Jackson, Ed Plowden and Andrew Varney



Statement Number	Attending to speak	Name
22/01221/F - St Christophers School Westbury Park Bristol BS6 7JE		
63		Zoe Eastwood
64		Phil Gittins
65		Mariella Morgan
66		David Haves
67	Yes	Jeff Bishop – Westbury Park Community Association



Statement for Development Control Committee A, August 9th 2023
Application 22/01221/F – St Christophers School
From Zoe Eastwood, concerned resident.

Will this development help solve Bristol's Housing crisis as the Applicant claims?

The average price of a property in Bristol last year was £398,000; for a flat it was £228,000. The applicant's viability report indicates anticipated average sale prices on the St Christopher's site, for a 1-to-2-bedroom unit will be from £601,000 up to £880,000, with the top priced units reaching £920,000.

The report indicates the average cost of a property on the St Christopher's site is approx. £739,000. This is more than 3 times the average cost of a Bristol flat and 86% higher than the average cost of a Bristol property. As well as the purchase price the retired resident would have to fund the site's minimum weekly care requirement, plus a service charge anticipated (based on comparable developments) to be upward of £700 per month.

In order to fund the service and care charges, on top of the purchase price, a buyer would need to sell a property worth around £1,000,000. Very few Bristolians will be able to afford to live in this luxury development. The applicants obviously share this concern; in their proposed Planning Agreement they suggest that property sales should be restricted to Bristol City residents for **only 3 months** from release.

The applicant's viability study calculates sales based on 24 units being sold off plan then unit sales at a rate of 2 per month. Therefore, on the applicant's own evidence (assuming for the purposes of this calculation that the report is accurate) they anticipate selling only 30 units to Bristolians, but based on the above figures, I believe it is likely to be much lower than this.

At the time of writing, within a few hundred meters of the development there are 3 retirement flats for sale £350,000 to £475,000 at Carfax Court- for residents aged 55 and above (£4103 approx. service charge p.a.) and 4 properties for sale at The Vincent, (Later living apartments for people over 60 – each with a secure parking space) priced between £375,000 to £1.25 million, some of which have not sold since that development was opened in July 2020. There are also supported living flats available at Abbeyfields on Redland Road.

There are 18 extra care properties for sale at St Monica's Trust, some just a stroll across the Downs and over 20 retirement properties for sale at numerous price points within a mile or so of St Christophers, for example at Falladon Court and Amelia Lodge, Henleaze. The market for retirement living in this area already appears saturated.

In summary:

- **Most Bristolians will not be able to afford the St Christophers properties**
- **Most of the properties on the site will be sold to the elderly from more affluent parts of the country, or remain unsold for years**
- **This development will put additional strain on our City's resources, not least health care providers.**
- **Whilst this type of retirement living will line the pockets of these greedy developers for many decades to come, the locality is already saturated with a variety of homes for the elderly.**

There is therefore no real prospect of this development making any positive impact on our City's housing crisis, and certainly no prospect that it will help release affordable family homes in Bristol; in fact, the development will add to the strain on our City's resources.

LACK OF GENUINE PUBLIC BENEFIT - from Phil Gittins, Civil Servant, Westbury Park

Despite the developers' claims, the local community and Bristol will not benefit from this development anywhere near enough to justify the damage to the environment and heritage on this site.

The developers boast about "consulting with the local community". And they can point to some meetings, events and (very biased) surveys. They can tick the boxes they need to tick for this application. But in reality their efforts have been superficial, even cynical. And despite everything we - and you, the council - have tried to tell the developers over the last two years, they have not listened.

Our community wants this special piece of land to be used well. We know that affordable housing is desperately needed. We know the closure of St Christopher's school created even greater demand for SEND provision. And we hoped that this project would produce something that was genuinely wonderful - something that would recognise Bristol's values, meet the city's needs, protect the site's heritage, build on its SEND legacy and respect the environment.

The overwhelming sense we have is that these developers just don't "get it". They don't understand this community or Bristol. And what they SAY about any possible benefits does not reflect the reality of this scheme:

- What's the point in saying you are "opening up St Christophers to the community" - if it would be impractical in reality with elderly people living there - some of them likely to be vulnerable with dementia. Will the gates really be open?
- What's the point in offering a bit of space in the "Urban Village Hall", when there are already more accessible facilities available in the school and 2 churches on the neighbouring roads?
- What's the point in opening a cafe on site when there are plenty of local cafes that depend on our support to survive.
- We question claims of sustainability when there are so many trees being chopped down & wildlife threatened.
- We question whether the NHS will really see savings when you are putting so many elderly people into one area. We believe our social and health services and will be more pressured.
- We question whether this is tackling Bristol's housing crisis when the developers are targeting a saturated luxury housing market and avoiding any affordable housing obligation.
- We question how committed these developers are to looking after our elderly when there are deep concerns about build quality and the planning officer's assessment is that the flats would be an "unacceptable living environment for future occupiers".

Let's remember - all these empty promises, with **no guarantees**, can be just as easily withdrawn as they are made when they just don't work practically or financially.

We believe a smaller, less intensive scheme would actually bring more public benefit in so many ways. Grace House could still be preserved and not suffer permanent heritage damage with less overspill parking, our roads would be clearer and safer, and by retaining the precious trees, our environment and wildlife would be richer.

Overdevelopment is not a benefit. Trashing our heritage is not a benefit. Cutting down mature trees is not a benefit. Overspilling cars onto our roads, causing safety issues is not a benefit. Taking away SEND is not a benefit.

Please understand what really matters to our community. Councillors, we ask you to reject these plans.

Dear committee member,

I have been told we have previously had the wrong email address so please forgive me if you have already read this.

The development planned is in a conservation area that should be respected, the buildings are far too high, they will detract from the lovely villa frontage.

The number of parking places are totally inadequate and will result in overspill onto an already congested area.

The removal of many mature trees at this time of our planet's emergency is a disaster.

Last but no means least is the woeful lack of SEND facilities in the city and here is a ready made respite home and SEND designed building which are urgently needed being totally ignored by the planners.

Yours faithfully,

Mariella Morgan

We are grateful to the Council's Planning Officers for identifying and justifying at least two fundamental areas for the refusal of the above Application. We would like though to comment further on the issue of road safety particularly as it is severely impacted by the availability of parking in the area as we remain unsure as to whether the criticality of this issue has been fully appreciated and reflected in the latest report for the Development Control Committee A on August 9th, 2023.

A road safety survey undertaken by an accredited independent market research company in April 2022 concluded that 81% of the people surveyed in the Bayswater Park area adjoining the site stated that parking issues had a dangerous impact on road safety in the area and 63% of respondents said they'd witnessed accidents or near misses. I witnessed one such accident close to our house in April last year – approximately 25 metres from the Daisychain Children's Day Nursery - where the impact of the collision was such that the road had to be closed while a damaged vehicle was removed. Successive and extensive parking surveys undertaken by residents groups have demonstrated that there is currently no spare capacity. Any further traffic generated by additional development and traffic will exacerbate the already unsafe situation with drivers finding it necessary to park their cars irresponsibly and in dangerous locations. Cars are already parked occupying part of narrow pavements blocking safe pedestrian access for mothers with buggies, wheelchairs and schoolchildren. Too often in our view such concerns when they relate to parked vehicles are dismissed as 'nimbyism'. The roads in the area around the St Christopher's site contain a primary school, five nurseries and pre-schools, three nursing homes and two assisted living facilities, and many key workers park here during the day and night as use of their own vehicles is the only cost-effective and timely way to get to and from their place of work.

A fellow resident commented publicly in the consultation exercise:- 'As I live opposite the school, I watch children ducking between cars every day – it is only a matter of time'. Speeding is very prevalent in our street with commuters and tradespeople using it as a 'cut through/ rat run'. The 20 mph speed limit is often ignored - with estimated vehicle speeds often c 30 mph and sometimes well in excess of that. As the street is straight with vehicles parked both sides there is no parking place for a Speed Reduction unit to capture speeding traffic. Drivers know they can speed with impunity.

The present Council Officers report - to be considered at the Development Control Committee on the 9th August - does recognise in part that the current road safety and parking situation is unsafe and potentially dangerous and that further development could exacerbate the present situation. However, we are concerned as to why the initial Traffic Development Management's recommendations (22nd March 2023) have not been substantially re-stated and re-enforced. What was stated then was 'Whilst Transport Development Management (TDM) considers the site to be suitable for residential use, the amount of off street parking proposed (*and emergency access*) is unacceptable. Until these issues are addressed TDM must continue to recommend that the application be refused '.

A nearby recently completed development, The Vincent provides 65 retirement apartments with assisted living and communal facilities. With it they provided 66 car parking spaces for 65 flats. Compare that to the totally unrealistic and impractical number of car places proposed for St Christopher's also planned as an upmarket residential development - 64 car parking places for 112 accommodation units. In addition where are the on-site staff, tradespeople, and visitors going to park? Start making some realistic assumptions and plans on parking provision and you might begin to establish a base line for a suitable, low-density sympathetic to the environment, development.

TDM's current position is stated as ' the surrounding area would not be able to cope with any overspill parking and the application must be refused unless a scheme of area-wide parking measures can be implemented to ensure that residents, staff and visitors of the proposed development would not be eligible to park on surrounding streets'. We would like to see this as a binding condition and unless and

Statement in relation to Application No. 22/01221/F St Christophers School BS6 7JE – David Haves & Yvonne Barratt, 34 Bayswater Ave, BS6 7NT

until such a plan is agreed funded and in place, this should be a fundamental reason for the Application being refused - on the grounds of parking provision and road safety - at this stage.

**PLANNING APPLICATION 22/01221/F: ST. CHRISTOPHER'S SITE
STATEMENT FROM THE WESTBURY PARK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (WPCA)**

People in our community were very sorry when the St. Christopher's School finally closed and also concerned about the reduction in SEN provision within Bristol. We initially supported – in principle - the proposals for an 'Extended Care' facility on the site, allowing local people (and others) to downsize without leaving an area they love, and potentially creating a scheme open to all and including facilities for our community.

We were also pleased with the early commitment by the developers to a programme of community engagement. However, that pleasure very soon dissipated at the first community workshops when the early designs were revealed, showing what was unanimously agreed to be massive overdevelopment. Annoyance then slowly turned to frustration as more events were held but the basic design did not change at all, despite the endless negative comments made. After the application was first submitted further changes were made but they were all very minor, doing nothing to address the fundamental issue of significant overdevelopment. We, as the WPCA, and many of our members, therefore submitted a large number of often highly detailed objections to the application.

We were therefore extremely pleased to read the officer's report which, to a striking degree, echoed almost all of our and our community's objections. We – and that report – noted:

- the insensitivity to local character, in a Conservation Area, in terms of layout, quantity of development and design;
- the number of new buildings, their inappropriate heights and how much of the site they would take up;
- their damaging proximity to the listed Grace House (a five storey building less than 12 metres away) and to neighbours (also well below standard distances),
- the considerable loss of important trees, including prejudice to a very important veteran tree;
- the lack of genuine open space, the small spaces being no more than what is left after locating five large buildings and
- the lack of serious recovery of the lost SEN provision, an issue for the city as a whole.

There are two exceptions to our otherwise strong support for the officers' conclusions:

1. While it is stated that "*the application must be refused unless a scheme of area-wide parking measures can be implemented*", the suggested delegation to officers to determine a scheme simply pushes the overspill parking issue into the future with no guarantee that, even with a planning agreement in place, a wider area parking scheme would either be implemented or enforced.
2. We are also disappointed that no social housing is included in the proposed development as a consequence of the marginal decision to categorise the development as use class C2 rather than use class C3.

No doubt for viability reasons, the designs from the first sketches to what was finally submitted include an amount of development that self-evidently could never have secured permission on such an important site with so many significant constraints significantly reducing the developable area. The cosmetic changes that were made over time never addressed the core question of the basic amount of development.

In conclusion Westbury Park Community Association welcome and fully support the conclusions set out in the Committee report and the recommendation to refuse the application on the stated grounds.