

Planning Report for FoBRA Committee Meeting 14 March 2019

Outline Proposals for Development of a 'Stadium for Bath' on the Rec

On 18 February, after eight drafts, FoBRA published its comments on Bath Rugby's outline (pre-application) proposals for the development of a 'Stadium for Bath' and in submitted these to stakeholders including the Leader of the Council, Chairman of the Development Management Committee, Chairman and Manager of World Heritage Site Advisory Board, the chief executives of Bath Preservation Trust, Bath Rugby, Bath Recreation Trust, the owner of Bath Rugby and TARA. These comments can be sighted at the 'Papers' tab of the FoBRA website. In summary, while supporting Bath Rugby's objectives, FoBRA's members have concerns about the size of the proposed stadium, as well as the 700 space car park underneath, legal, ownership, environment, shopping and other issues. This paper will be used in further discussion with interested parties, and in preparing a response to the expected Planning Application when this is submitted. It should be noted that FoBRA has taken no position on ownership matters, merely adding an informative annex to the paper.

Chivers House, Windsor Bridge Road (18/03797/FUL)

Members will recall the planning application to build a 199-room PBSA was withdrawn in May 2018, and it was reported at a previous meeting that the developers had submitted a new application to develop 95 dwellings in two separate buildings on the site instead, but without any provision for affordable housing (AH), contrary to B&NES's Core Strategy. The developers stated that a viability assessment would be provided to the Council under separate cover to demonstrate the exceptional costs of developing the site makes it unviable to provide any AH. However, the Viability Assessors have stated recently that in their opinion of the level of affordable housing that the scheme could viably accommodate in between 18% and 25%.

Historic England and other objectors are concerned that the over dominance and accumulation of tall buildings in this area would have a detrimental impact on views and the experience of the wider World Heritage Site. They have continued to advise that, when considered alongside the previous planning permissions given in this area, although the potential for harm to the wider historic environment is considered to be less than substantial, to approve the application would be to risk setting a precedent for continual height increase that will impact negatively on views across the World Heritage Site and out from the Conservation Area. DMC decision still pending.

Bath City Football Club – Redevelopment of Twerton Park - Consultation

Bath City Football Club's multi-million-pound investment is proposed to include new shops, a refurbished High Street and improved public space. The scheme will allegedly also bring new and improved facilities to Twerton including a new community hub, a gym, an all-weather 3G pitch and a new grandstand for Bath City FC. Purpose Built Student Accommodation, Affordable Housing for local people and co-living apartments for keyworkers and young professionals in the city are also part of the proposals.

The PSC generally welcomes this development as it appears to represent the only viable opportunity to keep the club in this location but with reservations. The design is good, though some of the drawings made it clear they are indicative only at this stage. However arguably, what Twerton really needs is more housing of the general and affordable kind rather than more PBSA as there is a lot of PBSA development in the vicinity already.

If it is considered that FoBRA should make a response to this consultation, we would challenge the viability argument. We are particularly critical of the questionnaire which is contrived (very much like the cable car questionnaire) as a tick-box exercise offering no real options for objecting in principle to the student housing (asking e.g. only whether restricting students' ability to bring a car to the city is a good or bad thing!). This view was expressed to one of the proposed developer's representatives who said they would also be

analysing the additional comments over the page, but our somewhat cynical point is that they will use the ticked boxes to present statistically a high level of support. We believe it was a marketing exercise, not a professional consultation.

Proposed Development of Hartwell's Garage, Newbridge - Consultation

A plan is in the pipeline to build 105 flats and 186 student bedrooms at the site of Hartwell's car showroom on Newbridge Road. Discussions between the developers and B&NES "to agree a sustainable new future for the site" have been ongoing since 2014, and the developers aim to submit an outline planning application this spring. The plans are expected to include:

- 105 one and two bedroom apartments
- 186 student bedrooms
- coffee shop
- segregated pedestrian and cycle path by extending the Bristol to Bath railway path
- 114 on-site residential parking spaces, plus four disabled parking bays, four motorcycle bays and a car club space
- new landscaping, trees and courtyards

The developer's spokesman suggested that this development was significant to Bath, allowing them to provide much-needed housing for the city, whilst also supporting the two universities with their student population. However, Bath Preservation Trust has commented, *"In our view the student accommodation element is unacceptable given the saturation of this type of accommodation in Bath already and we questioned whether the provision of small rental apartments accords with local policies on appropriate housing mix, type and tenure, especially given this is a mixed neighbourhood with a need for family housing. We also had concerns regarding heights and design."*

The PSC respects the Trust's view but, perhaps, if there is a demand for more PBSA, rather than more HMO, then the DMC may find it difficult to reject an application unless there is empirical evidence that Bath has reached saturation point and there is no need for more PBSA. However, it is entirely legitimate for BPT to raise the point about the need for PBSA having already being met by numerous developments especially along the Lower Bristol Road (on the bus route between the two Universities and the city). Additionally, there is increasing support for the emerging 2016-36 Local Plan policy that recognises this and the need for the universities to cater for their growth in student numbers on their own land, i.e. to consume their own smoke. The emerging Local Plan policy should carry increasing weight as time goes on and hopefully sufficiently by the time of any appeal being heard, so B&NES Planners and DMC should be encouraged to use it now. In terms of what types of housing are appropriate in this location, a mix of houses and flats would seem more likely to meet the current need. Members views would be welcome.

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