

Planning Report for FoBRA Committee Meeting 18 July 2019

Bath Rugby Club's forthcoming application to redevelop the Rec – PERA Update

The PERA update paper dated 3 July 2019 has been circulated separately.

FoBRA objection to the application to redevelop of Bath City Football Club (19/02276/FUL)

On 31st March 2019 FoBRA submitted its observations to the consultation that the need for investment to safeguard the future of the club was recognised and the principle of a mixed use development, which would add to the vibrancy and range of local facilities was generally welcomed. However, the design at that early stage appeared good, though there were and still are concerns over the building heights in relation to nearby homes. The focus on and significant quantity of student housing raised questions, particularly as there would appear to be a much higher level of need for more general housing, including more affordable homes, in this area. Given the existence of much PBSA existence and increased development in the vicinity, there was and still is a danger of the permanent community being overwhelmed and the character of the area being lost.

The arguments seemed to boil down to a conflict with FoBRA's attempts to persuade the Council to put a lid on PBSA growth and encourage the universities to deliver on-site accommodation; and an environmental concern about the artificial 3G pitch. Ian Herve has submitted compelling evidence on the potential contamination issues to B&NES on 28th June 2019. We've asked why can't the development succeed with a natural pitch surface?

While both of these arguments are legitimate causes for FoBRA to raise objections, on the other hand, we were and are reluctant to try and scupper the only potential means of saving the club and regenerating the local village centre. However, the buzz is that the club loses c£100,000/pa, so we recognise that the future of the club is dependent principally on the investment in the development of 356 PBSA bed spaces. However, it should be noted that not only will these be largely vacant during the vacations, but if unfilled by students in term-time, no doubt the developers will advertise these for the AirBnB market, as other PBSAs have done. Is this what the local community wants? We should encourage the Council to explore with both universities and PBSA providers how to enforce the "no car" rules for students who clog up residential streets.

We argued that the AH viability argument should be fully appraised and alternative mixes of housing types tested. FoBRA noted, however, that with less than 5% of the 781 comments have voiced objections to this development, it is clear that club supporters have, unsurprisingly, rallied around this application! Planning Committee decision awaited.

Mulberry Park development by CURO: Revised Reserved Matters (RM) application ref 19/00497/ERES: Housing Heights and Screening

Despite objections from three ward councillors, Bath Preservation Trust (BPT), ICOMOS, Greenway Lane Area Residents' Forum, Widcombe Association, many neighbours, the Council's Landscape and Arboriculturalist departments and a request that this application be considered in committee, it was delegated to officers who approved the application and determined that level of harm to the WHS had been assessed to fall short of resulting in significant harm.

The Case Officer noted that some concern had been raised by the Council's Arboriculturalist and Landscape officers about the depth and longevity of this screening, both of whom considered that the tree belt along the northern boundary should be deepened and reinforced further. However, he opined that this development phase sat within the developable area as identified in the parameters of the outline planning permission and the advanced planting has been provided in accordance with that existing

permission. He concluded that this development would be almost entirely obscured by the existing tree line. Any visibility of the development through the existing tree line (rather than above the tree line) must be understood in the context of the additional advance planting which has been agreed and situated on the northern edge of the site. As this matures it will further screen the development from view points to the north

Planning Application 19/01854/OUT- Hartwells Garage Site Newbridge Road

On 29th May 2019, FoBRA submitted its objection to the subject outline planning application. We wholeheartedly supported the compelling written objections to the subject planning application submitted by not only the 275 members of the local community, most of whom live near Hartwells, but also importantly by the Council's Housing and Highways departments, BPT, Avon & Osborne Road RA, B&NES Allotment Association and two Ward Councillors.

Highways have "...some significant concerns regarding the submitted planning application...", primarily with parking, and Housing have rightly challenged the proposed insufficient affordable housing (AH) contribution of only 10%, contrary to B&NES Policy CP9 which requires 40% of AH. We shared these concerns and also observed that the developers were shamelessly non-compliant and hid behind the viability argument which needed to be independently and rigorously assessed.

Notwithstanding, we pointed out that the developer's Statement of Community Engagement was not only specious but it was also misleading and significantly understated the submitted evidence of concern by objectors to the proposed development. Its conclusions underemphasised and failed to reflect that 88% of respondents to their consultation objected to the proposal to include building 186 student bedrooms on the site. FoBRA also questioned the need for the provision of yet more PBSA in Bath where we believed there is over provision, with many new builds being unfilled by students and now being offered as AirBnB. We understood that both universities now recognised this problem and are endeavouring to build more student accommodation on campus and, indeed, current B&NES policy also seeks to steer additional university student bed spaces to campuses. Instead, much needed housing should be built on the site.

Finally, we opined that not only was the proposed development aesthetically displeasing but its height, mass and scale were quite out of character with the surrounding residential area. FoBRA recommended that the Planning Committee refused this application.

4 July 2019