

Kit,

I have now had the opportunity to have an initial read through the submitted Design and Access Statement in relation to the redevelopment proposal, and would provide the following preliminary observations and comment:

From an Urban Design perspective, I find the proposed development very difficult to support. The retention of the sport stadium facility within this location, as an integral part of the character and identity of the local neighbourhood, is to be welcomed from my perspective. I feel, however, that this benefit is wholly overshadowed by the scale, form and intensity of enabling development proposed. From an Urban Design perspective, I consider that the proposal raises four fundamental problems:

1. The creation of an inappropriate mix and intensity of development for such a backland location within the centre of a development block. This gives rise to a series of very 'public' activities, uses and elevations fronting onto the 'private' backs of adjoining development. The current and historic situation with the stadium obviously cannot be ignored in this regard, although I have concerns that this situation would be made significantly worse by the proposed development proposals. In addition to an enlarged stadium, the proposal would provide a considerable quantum of residential, leisure and commercial development which would be much better suited to a location where it could front, address and be directly accessed from the public realm. This is very much the approach advocated in all recognised urban design best practice literature. An inspection of the aerial images of similar 'urban' stadia provided in Section 4.3 of the Design and Access Statement appears to reveal that they all relate, at least in part, to the public realm. I consider this matter to be the root of my other concerns below.
2. The visual impact of the proposed development. Based upon the submitted visual impact images, I would wholly disagree with the author's statement that 'the development will have very little or no adverse visual impact.' This is clearly not the case, especially in those receptor views identified at Lockleaze, Muller Road and the residential streets to the immediate south of the site. In these views, the development appears as a monolithic and relentless mass, wholly dominating the surrounding townscape. Whilst this might be justifiable for a building that clearly reads as a civic stadium, I am of the opinion that the building's scale, form and appearance are now being primarily dictated by the enabling development wrapped around the outside (perhaps understandably in 'honest' architectural fashion). In this regard, the development appears in long and short distance views as an incongruous city centre scaled mixed use building sat uncomfortably within a predominantly two storey suburban context. I'm not convinced that people arriving in Bristol for the first time would see the building in long distance views and immediately know that it was a sports stadium. I also find it hard to draw comparison with the consented design for the north stand redevelopment, whose form, design and roofscape were far more appropriate and better articulated.
3. The detrimental impact of the proposed building upon neighbouring residential amenity. Overshadowing and the shear overbearing impact of the building's scale/proximity appear to be the critical issues here, particularly in relation to the residential streets to the south of the site and the Persimmon Homes development currently under construction.
4. The poor quality living and working environment for the proposed enabling development. Because of the constrained backland nature of the site, future occupants would have a very poor outlook onto a narrow parking strip and into the back gardens of neighbouring dwellings. There also appears to be a lack of any form of outdoor amenity space to serve either the residential or commercial components.

Notwithstanding the above fundamental concerns with regard to the proposed development, I am mindful of the Council's corporate commitment towards assisting the Football Club in its achievement of an improved facility at the Memorial Ground. In that context, I would be willing to work with yourself and the appointed designers in exploring potential mitigation measures. These might include:

1. Reducing the height and bulk of the building where the overbearing visual and amenity impacts are worst; this would appear to relate primarily to the southern part of the development.
2. Related to point 1, breaking up the massing of the building to appear less monolithic and to better articulate its profile and roofscape.

3. Looking at the design and treatment of the building elevations with a view to breaking up the perceived bulk of the building, better emphasising vertical sub-division and creating modular elements of a human scale.

4. Enhancing the landscape treatment of the space around the building.

Finally, In consideration of the sub-regional significance of the development proposal, I would suggest that it be presented to the South West Design Review Panel. I am aware that the Panel has meetings programmed for 14th November and 12th December. I can discuss the necessary procedure with yourself and the appointed Designers, although we should consider requesting that the proposal be added to the Panel Agenda as soon as possible.

I trust that the above comments are self-explanatory and in order.

Mike.....

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