

Community's statement of planning principles for the development of the St. Christopher's School site, Westbury Park, Bristol BS6 7JE.

Purpose of this statement

This formal submission to Bristol City Council is intended to inform decision-making at the pre-application stage of the planning process relating to this site. Two residents' groups have collaborated in the preparation of this statement: 1) The Westbury Park Community Association (WPCA, representing the Westbury Park community as a whole) and 2) The St. Christopher's Action Network (SCAN, a local action group set up to achieve sensitive and appropriate development of the site).

Our stance in relation to the St. Christopher's site

The St. Christopher's School site, which comprises approximately five acres of mainly green open space, with many mature trees, is located in Westbury Park. This area of Bristol has a very attractive townscape, one that stems from the long history of the area, and much of Westbury Park, including the site, is included in the Downs Conservation Area. The site itself is bounded on three sides by mainly 2-storey cottages and houses (Royal Albert Road, Bayswater Avenue, The Glen and Belvedere Road), while the fourth side (Westbury Park) is occupied by mainly 2-storey Victorian villas, which lie within the development site. The villas are, themselves, adjacent to the extensive Durdham Downs public open space.

In our view, if this site is developed in an appropriate way, meaning one that is fully sensitive to the local townscape and the existing, high-quality architecture of the area, the development can add to and improve the quality of life of people living in Westbury Park, as well as provide attractive homes for the new residents. Such a positive outcome can only be achieved if the following planning principles are used to evaluate any proposals that might be made for the development of this site.

Community-based planning principles for the development

In line with the agreed Bristol One City Plan, which seeks to create a 'fair, healthy and a sustainable city', and in line with Bristol City Council's established planning policies for the area, notably Local Plan Core Strategy Policies BC20 and BCS21, Development Management Policy DM26 and the Conservation Area status of the site, the community of Westbury Park ask Bristol City Council to apply the following six planning principles when they: 1) Offer planning guidance to any developer who may bring forward interim proposals for the St. Christopher's School site, and 2) Evaluate any scheme that may be formally submitted as a planning application:

- 1) Adhere to design principles that recognise the two distinct parts of the site.*

The site must be recognised as comprising two distinct parts: 1) The Victorian villas located on Westbury Park, and 2) The rear land behind the villas. The villas must be sympathetically refurbished and converted to provide residential accommodation, and the front gardens and boundary structures retained. The remainder of the site, the rear land, should be developed in a way that reflects the scale and character of adjacent streets (largely 2-storey cottages and terraced housing). Design and materials of any new buildings should respect the historic character of the surrounding vernacular architecture, all of which is in the Downs Conservation Area.

2) Avoid adverse impacts from additional car parking on surrounding streets.

The development must not result in an increase in car users (made up of residents, cleaning and maintenance staff, care and medical staff, community centre workers, delivery vans and visitors) impacting the neighbourhood around the site. Road safety must be prioritised, and adequate on-site parking must be provided, as well as easy access to all parts of the site for emergency vehicles.

3) Avoid adverse impacts on properties adjacent to the site.

The aspect of any new building must safeguard the privacy of neighbouring properties, minimise visual impact, and should not deprive existing properties of light. Any buildings near the perimeter of the site should not be higher than 2 storeys, nor be located within 20 meters of adjacent property curtilages, and there should be no buildings above 3 storeys anywhere on the site.

4) Respond to the current global climate and ecological emergencies.

Any development must be in line with Bristol's One City Climate Strategy (2020) and Bristol's One City Ecological Emergency Strategy (2020). It should bring about a net gain for biodiversity. Many, if not all, mature trees should be retained. In order to protect the ecology of the site, a substantial area of green space should be retained.

5) The site should not be overdeveloped.

To enable delivery of the principles listed above the site must be developed in a way that is subservient in height, scale, mass and form to the close proximity properties in Royal Albert Road, Bayswater Avenue, The Glen and Belvedere Road. This means limiting the number of new dwelling units to ensure the development respects and maintains the distinctive character of the area.

6) Site access and road safety.

In the interests of public safety, and in recognition of the fact that there is a children's nursery adjacent to the corner of the site and a primary school nearby, there should be no new vehicular access to the site from either Bayswater Avenue or The Glen. Any development must not generate further traffic and parking pressures on narrow local roads where there are already serious road safety concerns.

Conclusion

Any scheme that does not adhere to these six planning principles should be rejected.

Sources

Bristol One City Plan. March 2021. More: <https://www.bristolonecity.com>

Bristol One City Climate Strategy (2020)

Bristol One City Ecological Emergency Strategy (2020)

Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy – Adopted June 2011

Bristol Local Plan – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies – July 2014

Bristol Local Plan - The Downs Conservation Area Enhancement Statement – 1993.

Westbury Park Character Assessment and Design Statement – Westbury Park Community Association, 2014