

WHaM response to Local Plan Review

As a local planning group based in South Bristol, WHaM has chosen to focus its response on the sections regarding South Bristol and the proposals for Central Bedminster and Parsons Green.

WHaM thought that the identification of South Bristol as a priority for regeneration was welcome as there are opportunities for development in the area. The call for supporting infrastructure is also welcome.

We feel that the entire document is led by the need to comply with new housing targets at the expense of other aspects of city living, such as employment areas, the creation of sustainable, balanced communities and the facilities required to support them.

That the city council should choose to designate areas as focal points for 'urban living' is also a good idea though perhaps the document itself could be clearer and stronger about what this means and not rely only on SPDs to define it.

The group was concerned that the regeneration of local light industrial premises to provide housing in the Bedminster Green area could result in the loss of local jobs and the diversity of employment uses that help maintain the social and economic resilience of Bedminster. We would be keen not to see the complete removal of all this potential employment space.

The document identifies "underused land to the east of the town centre" specifically within the Bedminster area. The land and its potential development has been a cause for concern of the group which is keen to see redevelopment and has produced its own Community Planning Brief setting out a vision for the area. Our document has been produced with extensive community involvement. It reflects community views, identifies existing problems and issues in the area and sets out guidelines for future developments around Bedminster Green.

We believe the area around Bedminster Station and Parson Street Station both require some regeneration, and this should be at a scale that respects context and works with the demographics and dynamics of the existing communities. It should be clear that Bedminster in its current form does not contain the infrastructure to be regarded as a city centre area.

New residents in the area would be welcome at a modest density level suitable for an urban setting but given the underused nature and the scale of the overall area, a masterplan should be produced to ensure that new development in the area produces a balanced and sustainable community.

This masterplan should be undertaken with engagement of stakeholders such as local residents, businesses and communities and form a supplementary planning document, dedicated to the Bedminster Green area in a similar form to those produced for Nelson Street, St Paul's, and Redcliffe.

We do not support the idea of density as the sole yardstick for additional scrutiny, there are other factors such as scale, massing, context, appropriateness, existing housing mix and sustainability all need to be given greater consideration.

We would also be keen to see the area of land between Whitehouse Street and Dalby Avenue turned into a soft landscaped space.

The document notes that there are opportunities for tall buildings in the area, WHaM strongly opposes the creation of tall buildings in the area on the grounds that:

- They will obscure the topography of Windmill Hill from views across the city
- There have historically been social issues around tall buildings and the landscapes that surround them, preventing them from building communities
- They also promote urban isolation because of the separation of upper floors from the urban realm
- The maintenance and renovation costs are more expensive for taller buildings by virtue of access to the envelope, making future regeneration difficult

As it stands WHaM does not support this document we feel it has insufficient regard for the existing community and will not guard the future social sustainability of Bedminster in its current form.