

Trees on the Green

WHaM conveyed residents concerns about potential felling of mature trees on the Green and asked if the trees could be protected. The Mayor stated that the trees are currently protected as they are on Council-owned land and added:

"Urbis have a time limited exclusivity agreement with the Council to explore development options in the Bedminster Green area. This agreement does not give Urbis any permission to fell existing trees and I am very keen to protect trees in the city.

Development proposals for the area will be considered against a range of local planning policies, including DM17 which seeks to integrate important existing trees in new developments. Such consideration will be through the submission of a planning application which will be the subject of full public consultation. Any trees that are agreed to be lost have to be adequately compensated for by new planting set out by the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard."

- [Read Bristol City Council's Tree Management Policy 2016 \(PDF\)](#).

Housing density

WHaM asked why an initial figure of 650 homes in the Bedminster Green development appeared to have mushroomed to over 800 units. The Mayor replied:

"Urbis currently have a pre-application submission lodged with the Council which proposes approximately 855 homes. This high-level submission requires further detailed work in order to assess whether this reflects the true development capacity of the area.

The precise number of homes provided will only be established once Urbis make a planning application, which will be subject to full public consultation. As Local Planning Authority, the desire to produce a significant number of additional homes will have to be considered alongside other local planning policies including environmental considerations and the capacity of local infrastructure."

Affordable housing, social housing and 'viability assessments'

Several WHaM members asked if 'social' housing would be included in Bedminster Green; however the Mayor's answers consistently referred to 'affordable housing':

"The Council, when disposing of its land, will require the developer to provide at least 30% affordable housing on that land. Outside of the Council's land, in terms of the parts of the development area that are privately owned, these will be subjected to the Council's planning policies which are to seek up to 30% affordable housing negotiated through the Council's planning policies ... we are meeting with citywide developers regularly to ensure that they work towards our aims on affordable housing."

Some background is useful to put this answer in context – it's not a pretty picture. 'Affordable housing' is for people whose needs are not met by the housing market; it includes housing which is available for "affordable rent, social rent, intermediate rent, shared ownership and affordable home ownership". In May 2016 the Government also

classified 'Starter Homes' as 'affordable housing'. These homes can sell for up to £250,000 (outside London) – so not exactly what most people would consider affordable.

The story doesn't end there either: central Government planning policy allows developers to avoid providing any affordable housing (as in the proposed St Catherine's development). As the Mayor puts it:

"Our planning policy is overridden by government planning policy which says that if a developer can demonstrate (using a calculation which is very much in the developer's favour) that affordable housing is not viable within a scheme, then the local authority's policy is overridden."

Healthcare

We asked about proposed healthcare facilities in Bedminster Green, the Mayor replied:

"I understand that Urbis are in discussions with a health practice and I am informed that the current proposals are for an 8,500 sq ft health facility. I also understand that there are proposals for a dental practice within the same building."

Urbis and the Council

Several questions referred to the Council's relationship with developer Urbis. The Mayor's answers emphasise that the Council is not leading the Bedminster Green project and that it has not yet agreed to sell the land it owns to Urbis.

"Urbis have a fixed term (18 month) exclusivity arrangement with the Council to develop a framework for the area, following an approach by Urbis to acquire various parcels of land that the Council owns.

The Council didn't provide a specific brief for this work; however, the need to provide a policy compliant level of affordable housing (30%) on the Council's land has been made clear to Urbis, along with the need to comply with the Council's other local plan policies.

Because the Council is not leading on the delivery of development in this area, the Council has not carried out local consultation but it has made the requirements of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement clear to Urbis."

Employment

We asked about current and prospective employment within the Bedminster Green development area. The Mayor replied:

"The current and proposed employment within the Bedminster Green area has been assessed by Urbis using standard employment assessment tables to inform the proposed planning application. On this basis, Urbis calculate that 137 people are currently employed within the area. This includes an allowance of 35 people being employed in the vacant properties.

On the same assessment basis, it is estimated that a total of 335 jobs will be provided in the proposed scheme. This employment is expected to be split 129 retail, 124 offices, 7 within the proposed energy centre and 75 in the medical centre.”

Green space and clean air

We asked about safeguarding green space in Bedminster Green. The Mayor replied:

“The Council has planning policies (BCS9 and DM17) which state that development which would result in the loss of open space which is locally important for recreation, leisure and community use, townscape and visual amenity will not normally be permitted, unless the proposed loss is required to achieve other policy aims and that suitable mitigation or replacement open space is provided. These policies will be a major consideration when the Council examines the development proposals in its role as local planning authority.”

We also made a statement on our concerns about clean air.

- [Listen to WHaM's statement on clean air issues](#) (20:57-21:12)

Bedminster Green planning applications

The Council will be assessing any planning applications against the Bristol Local Plan - and the Mayor states that they will be “doing our best to secure development right for the local community”. He also states:

“This scheme is still at the pre-application stage. Whilst I am fully committed to maximising the number of homes delivered in the city, I expect to see quality development that is responsive to the local area.

Any proposals being put forward by Urbis will be subject to further scrutiny by the Council in its role as local planning authority, which will consider issues such as the scale and density of the development and will apply the relevant local plan policies. Any decision on any forthcoming planning application will be made by the Council’s Development Control Committee, following public consultation.”