

Comments on the proposed Ensleigh Primary School as presented in pre-application consultations in July 2015.

BPT appreciates the early opportunity to engage with the development process and we hope that the following comments are constructive as proposals are developed further.

Overall site masterplan

The Trust feels that in general there is a disconnect between the layout of this site and the layout and pattern of the Bloor Homes schemes which have been permitted. We regret that the school proposals have not been included in the overall masterplan for the site. Inevitably this will mean that tensions and issues may arise over the differing priorities of the two developers, and this may impact on the success of the school development and the way it integrates with its surroundings, physically and logistically. We encourage a collaborative and communicative approach.

Access and roads

We note that there does not appear to be direct access to the school, and that school traffic will have to navigate the smaller roads of the overall development. We would encourage further engagement with Bloor Homes on this issue so that a school access plan can be submitted with the outline planning application.

Solar panels

We understand that part of the school roofs will be mounted with solar panels. Whilst we are in principle supportive of low carbon energy measures, we would comment that any type of reflective addition to the roofs should always be considered bearing in mind long views from important listed buildings such as Beckford's Tower, but also from the surrounding countryside, and their impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This does mean that frameless pv panels would be more acceptable than obtrusive framed panels.

Design

From initial view of the design elements of the school, we feel that whilst the building is rather bland and utilitarian, we understand that the primary concern is for appropriate learning spaces that are safe and modern. Whilst there is little local character to refer to (beyond some rural cottages on Granville Road), there is a wider character area in upper Lansdown and Upper Weston that could be reviewed as part of the design process. We would always encourage the incorporation of local character into the design of any building, to ensure that it is embedded within and refers to the local landscape and does not dominate or jar with it. In all cases we would expect to see the local palette of materials and colours within the design. In this case the Trust would suggest that a more traditional blend of materials, such as the use of rubble stone walls, would reference the semi-rural location and enliven the bland facades of the buildings.

We would also suggest that 'green' planted roofs be incorporated into the design of the roofs, this would be particularly appropriate given the setting of the school in the landscape (which contributes to the setting of Beckfords Tower and significance of the Bath World Heritage Site) and the large amount of roofscape.

Lighting

We note that initial lighting plans include directional lighting within the playgrounds and car parking and that due to a bat foraging zone there is no lighting planned for the boundaries of the site. We welcome this and would comment that the Trust is always concerned about the damaging cumulative effect of lighting on the World Heritage City, and particularly so in visible hill top locations such as this. In addition we would recommend a full lighting plan that includes detailed specifications (and impact analysis) for the proposed lighting should be included in the full planning application.

Views Study

We would encourage a study of the views to and from the site, in order to gain a full understanding of the proposed building within its overall context. In particular we are concerned about the views to and from Beckford's Tower and we ask that particular regard be taken of this issue.

Please note that the comments do not represent our final position regarding the development of the site. We reserve our formal comments to such time that we have considered a planning application submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The application is unlikely to be supported by BPT in its current form and we urge you to address our concerns.