**12/05590/ERES Western Riverside Development Area, Midland Road, Twerton, Bath, Bath And North East Somerset**

Approval of reserved matters with regard to outline application 06/01733/EOUT for the erection of three and four storey buildings comprising 26 houses and apartments and 1 commercial unit (A3 cafe/restaurant), vehicular access to Victoria Bridge Road, parking and landscaping.

**COMMENT**

The Trust requested an extension to the deadline for comments on the 19 February 2013. This request has not yet been acknowledged or confirmed, therefore we are submitting these holding headline comments with anticipation of submitting further detailed comments following a review of the application by our architecture and planning committee on the 12th March.

Overall, the Trust welcomes the design scheme, which we recognised had approach its context creatively and sensitively.

The Trust feels that the standard of the design scheme presented was of a marked improvement upon the designs which have previously been presented for this and other parts of the development site. In particular we welcome terraced form, rather than apartment blocks. We hope that this sets a benchmark for the remainder of the development, and that similar quality of urban design, architecture and landscaping can be achieved whilst respecting the surroundings and context of Western Riverside.

The Trust remains concerned about how these design proposals will relate and interact with the emerging design scheme at the Homebase site. Owing to the differing timescales of the respective projects, we feel it more likely that Crest’s proposals will lead Sainsbury’s design process. We consider that there is scope for these proposals to be better reflected at their site.

**Massing, Grain and Architecture**

The Trust welcomes the proposed urban design and architecture of this second phase development. It is evident that appropriate efforts have been made to create a development which is cohesive, and more importantly responds sensitively to its context. We particularly welcome the gaps in the northern crescent of the site, which will allow light to permeate across the river and riverside path, as well as creating views and visual interest. The Trust is also receptive to the proposed reinterpretation of the Georgian house typology, which is broadly felt to successfully express this style in a contemporary fashion.

**Roof**

The articulation of the roof is particularly welcomed as a superior alternative to a flat roof. During our pre application discussions with Crest Nicholson and Alison Brooks about the design scheme it was made clear that the houses were being designed with a view to them appearing as a sculptural entity. While we do not oppose this approach in principle, we do disagree that this necessitates that the roof be constructed in a material that either disguises its purpose or seeks homogeneity with the Bath Stone proposed for the facades. It seemed that ceramic was the preferred material of choice for the roof and that it would be coloured and patinated to mimic the surface of Bath Stone. Alternative, non-porous limestones, such as Whitbed Portland stone were also discussed as an alternative to the use of ceramic or Bath Stone.

The Trust firstly disagrees with the approach that in order to unify the roof with the facades it is necessary to homogenise the colour. While in principle, conceptualising the building as a sculpture is not something we disagree with, a homogenous approach is not in keeping with the traditional vernacular of Bath, and particularly the Georgian terrace typology this design draws upon.

We have serious doubts as to whether a ceramic Bath stone coloured cladding will achieve the desired effect in homogenising the roof with the Bath Stone facades. Bath Stone is a highly organic and dynamic material with a texture and appearance which changes considerably with age, weathering and climate conditions. Even if ceramic is given a ‘Bath Stone’ treatment to its finish it will remain much more inert as a material, which will ultimately betray the difference between the facades and the roof. Ceramic is also thought to be a difficult material to use in the cladding of the buildings, and we again suggest contacting the Holborne regarding the difficulties they have experienced in using ceramic for their extension. We remain similarly dubious about the use of Whitbed Portland stone as a structurally feasible alternative.

We welcome the suggestion made during our pre application discussion that on-site testing of materials would be conducted to appraise the weathering effects of different materials, which we consider to be important if unconventional materials are proposed. We welcomed the opportunity to observe this testing and any selections of materials but as yet we have not seen any details of materials or details to demonstrate how the decision on the roofing material is being reached.

**We do not consider that this application can be properly assessed without precise details, and samples of the stone coloured cladding material and other roofing materials. Samples of materials and justification for the suitability of use should be submitted for consideration and public consultation prior to the determination of this planning application.**

A further concern relates to the idea of a ‘sculptural unity’ related to guttering and rainwater goods, and particularly ensuring that these could function and be cleared effectively without disturbing the building. Drawings within this application include a detail a concealed parapet–type junction between the roof and wall. Whilst is appropriately concealed, it cuts across the concept of a unified whole.

Lastly we suggest that consideration be given to ensuring that subsequent occupants do not disturb the visual aesthetics of the design with unsympathetic additions such as solar PVs. If these houses are not to be run off the CPH plant for the site, then consideration should be given to concealed integral solar tiles, or integrated panels within the roof. Otherwise a consistent approach will need to be secured through the enforcement of an article 4 direction or by Condition upon the planning application.