

THE ST. CHRISTOPHER'S SITE : WPCA PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Background

The planning principles presented in this note have been drawn up by the Westbury Park Community Association (WPCA) which was set up in the late 1980s with a number of objectives including the safeguarding and improvement of the physical and environmental character of Westbury Park.

Over the years the Association has made representations on many planning proposals with the focus in recent years being very much on the St. Christopher's site. Between 2021 and 2023 the WPCA played a significant part in opposing the assisted living scheme proposed by FORE and Amicala – primarily on the grounds that the scheme represented a massive overdevelopment of the site.

Following the City Council's refusal of the FORE / Amicala planning application in August 2023 the owner of the site (St. Christopher's Propco Ltd) went into administration in October 2024. Expressions of interest from potential developers were invited by property agents Savills on behalf of the Official Receiver and the site was eventually sold to Square Bay in March 2026. Square Bay and their development partners, Acorn Property Group, have produced a masterplan which includes retention and restoration of Grace House and the lodges at the front of the site and the construction of 40 new houses on the rear land.

The Purpose of this Note

This purpose of this note is to set out the planning principles that the WPCA believe should guide the development of the St. Christopher's site.

The planning principles listed below are based on a previous list of principles agreed jointly in 2021 by the WPCA and the St. Christopher's Action Network (SCAN), and informed further by the views set out in the report to the City Council's Development Control Committee that recommended refusal of the FORE/ Amicala scheme in 2023.

This statement of principles has been given to Square Bay and Acorn Property Group so that they are aware of what would and would not be acceptable to the local community when formulating development proposals.

The statement will also be shared with Bristol City Council so that the Council are briefed on local community views when evaluating development proposals that are formally or informally submitted for their consideration.

Disclaimer

WPCA does not claim to fully represent all sections of the community on all issues relating to the development of the St. Christopher's site. On some issues there may well be differently held views due to localised circumstances and interests.

The St. Christopher's Site

Comprising approximately two hectares (c.five acres) of mainly green open space and incorporating prominent Victorian lodges, a listed 1960s building and mature trees, the St. Christopher's site is a much valued part of Westbury Park and the Downs Conservation Area.

The site is bounded on three sides by mainly two-storey cottages and houses (Royal Albert Road, Bayswater Avenue, The Glen and Belvedere Road), while the fourth side (Westbury

Park) is occupied by the mainly two-storey Victorian lodges, five of which lie within the development site and border the extensive Durdham Downs public open space.

The site was previously occupied by St. Christopher's School which supported children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The School closed in 2020.

1 General Principles

(i) Development proposals must comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and Bristol City Council Local Plan policies in place at the time.

(ii) Development must be fully sensitive to the local townscape and contribute positively to the character of the Westbury Park area.

(iii) The site must be recognised as comprising two distinct parts: the frontage lodges and their gardens, and the rear back land area. Treatment of these two parts must reflect this in all respects.

2 Existing Buildings

(i) Grace House, a grade II listed building, must be retained and enhanced, within a suitable setting .

(ii) The five Victorian lodges fronting the site must be retained and sympathetically refurbished and the front gardens and boundary structures retained. These buildings are not listed but make a vital contribution to the character of the Downs Conservation Area, particularly as they can be clearly viewed from distance across Durdham Downs.

(iii) Other buildings on the site, mainly from post 1970, might be capable of being incorporated into a new development but are not considered to be of sufficient merit to warrant retention.

3 The Design, Height, Scale and Siting of New Buildings

(i) The site is located in the Downs Conservation Area and so it is essential that the rear land is developed in a manner that respects the rich character of the area in terms of design: use of materials, height, scale, massing, shape and form .

(ii) The rear land must be developed in a way that respects the scale and architectural character of the adjacent streets which largely comprise two storey houses.

(iii) Any new buildings on the rear land must safeguard the privacy of neighbouring properties. A distance of at least 21 metres must be maintained between habitable rooms and a distance of at least 12 metres between new buildings and the rear boundaries of existing properties - more where adjacent properties are lower. Any new build near the perimeter of the site should be subservient in height (no more than two storey) and scale to existing properties.

(iv) The height, scale and massing of any new buildings in the north part of the site must respect Grace House and its setting.

(v) Appropriate distances must be maintained between new buildings and the lodges fronting the site (including Hyde Lodge which lies outside the development site).

(vi) New buildings must be sited at distances from each other that avoid overbearing and overshadowing, and all residential buildings must be able to receive acceptable levels of daylight.

(vii) Any residential development of the site must comply with Bristol City Council's affordable housing requirements.

4 Green Space and the Safeguarding of Trees

(i) A substantial area of green space should be retained so as to maintain the open nature of the site and to ensure that any development protects and enhances biodiversity.

(ii) All significant trees must be retained, both in the front gardens of the lodges and on the backland, especially to retain the 'copse' feeling of the area to the north east of the site. Replacements must be provided if there is no other option but to remove any major trees and this is agreed by a Bristol City Council Tree Officer.

5 Climate Change

Any development must demonstrate that it is in line with Bristol's One City Climate Strategy and meets the requirements of all Bristol policies current at the time relating to climate change which lists measures including high standards of energy efficiency in buildings and the use of renewable and low carbon energy supply systems.

6 Vehicular Access

In the interests of road safety, and in recognition of the fact that there is a primary school nearby, there must be no vehicular access to the site from Bayswater Avenue. WPCA will oppose any vehicular access to the site from The Glen if it can be demonstrated that this would increase the level of traffic movement and road safety risks in The Glen to a level that is deemed unacceptable by Bristol City Council's Transport Development Management Team (DMT).

7 Parking

The development must provide sufficient parking spaces for residents, visitors and others (e.g. staff who may be employed on the site) so as to avoid any overspill parking onto surrounding streets which are already at full parking capacity.

8 Asset of Community Value / Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Proposals must respect the ACV status of the site if this status is still recognised by Bristol City Council and include proposals that benefit children with special educational needs and disabilities.

9 Community Engagement

Proposals must be developed in association with the local community (including representative bodies SCAN and the WPCA), following the standards set in Bristol City Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

JB / KC on behalf of Westbury Park Community Association

23rd April 2026