

# University of Bristol Fry Building

## *November 2013 Consultation - Summary Feedback Report*

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Consultation activities</b>	<b>2</b>
University Community Forum	
Key Stakeholders	
Near neighbours/wider public	
University community	
<b>Feedback</b>	<b>6</b>
Key stakeholder written responses	
Other written responses	
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>8</b>

## Introduction

The University of Bristol is bringing forward development proposals to refurbish and improve the Fry Building in order to provide a new home for the School of Mathematics. The Fry Building currently houses the University's School of Biological Sciences which in 2014 will relocate to the new Life Sciences Building, currently under construction on St Michael's Hill.

The Fry Building is located on a triangular site between Woodland Road and University Road with the Wills Memorial Tower to the south. It is Grade II listed and lies within the Tyndall's Park Conservation Area.

The emerging proposals focus on the refurbishment of the main listed buildings, some demolition of the more modern poor quality additions and the possibility of some new extensions to create a major focal point and begin to form links to adjacent University buildings and Tyndall Avenue. The proposals also take account of some of the key aspirations in the Supplementary Planning Guidance 11 and masterplan for the University precinct which was adopted by the City Council in 2006.

Following early discussions with the Council, the University and its design and planning team would like to share these initial proposals with key stakeholders and the community before working up a more detailed scheme and submitting a planning application in spring 2014.

## Consultation activities

### University Community Forum

The Bursar and Director of Estates holds quarterly meetings with amenity groups and representatives from across the University Estate. This provides an opportunity to discuss current and forthcoming projects of interest which has included advance briefings on the Fry Building.

At the meeting held on 10 April the Bursar reported that the University was undertaking a financial review and looking at options for refurbishing this important Grade II listed building. The key issues are to create a better and more prominent entrance and make improvements to outside areas with the majority of work involving internal changes. It was agreed that a further briefing would be made to the group in due course.

At the meeting held on 31 July the bursar presented concept sketches and an overview of proposed development which was being led by Wilkinson Eyre Architects. (See *Appendix A for minute of meeting and copy of the presentation*).

He explained that the redevelopment of Fry Building has been carefully considered within the context of UoB precinct masterplan. The University has the long term ambition to open up more routes within the precinct.

He highlighted the benefits of the project in terms of providing a new home for the School of Mathematics, with a new entrance and landscaping from Woodland Road and scope in the future to open up a more public route through to the Wills Building. The project would involve removing the clutter of the old buildings/stores and retaining the better buildings and providing significant public realm improvements. Aiming for BREEAM very good with a projected 18 month design phase and likely costs of around £23 – 28M subject to a decision by the University to commit. He confirmed that pre-application consultation would take place in autumn 2013.

## **November Consultation Activities:**

### **Key stakeholders**

A list of key stakeholders was drawn up which included the local ward councillors, officers from Bristol City Council, English Heritage, service providers including Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Avon Fire and Rescue, First Bristol and key local amenity groups and others with an interest in the site including Bristol Civic Society, High Kingsdown Residents Association and Kingsdown Conservation Group. (*for the full list of invited key stakeholders see Appendix B*)

Key stakeholders were invited to attend a key stakeholder consultation session (*Appendix C*) on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013 from 1pm – 3pm with an optional walking tour for anyone who wanted to see the site in more detail prior to the workshop session. Key stakeholders were also notified of the following public session, and following stand alone exhibition should they be unable to attend the workshop.

### *Attendance*

From the database of 52 individuals a total of 10 people attended the key stakeholder workshop and/or walking tour. Attendees included representatives of Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Bristol Civic Society, Bristol Grammar School, Business West Transport & Planning Group, Clifton & Hotwells Amenities Society (CHIS), Christmas Steps Arts Quarter, Kingsdown Conservation Group and the University School of Mathematics.

English Heritage were unable to send a representative to the session but requested follow up information regarding the proposals and were sent a site location map for background reference.

### *Proceedings*

On display was an exhibition which consisted of 12 panels (see *Appendix D*) describing the following:

Board 1 - Welcome

Board 2 - The Masterplan

Board 3 – The Site

Board 4 - Heritage  
Board 5 – Site Analysis  
Board 6- Ground Floor  
Board 7 – Lower Ground Floor  
Board 8 – Sections/Elevations  
Board 9 - Landscape  
Board 10 - Sustainability  
Board 11 – The Team  
Board 12 –Planning Policy

On hand to talk to attendees at both the key stakeholder session and the following public exhibition was a rota of the following members of the project team:

- Patrick Finch – University of Bristol
- John Wormald – Capita Symonds (public session)
- Jeremy Bladon – CSJ Planning
- Julie Marie Laming – CSJ Planning
- Tony Musson – Wilkinson Eyre Architects
- Stafford Critchlow – Wilkinson Eyre Architects
- Rebecca Woodhams – Wilkinson Eyre Architects
- Michele Lavelle – 4DLD
- Avril Baker – Avril Baker Consultancy

Dr Nick Whiteley and Clare Williams from the School of Mathematics were also present

*Proceedings: (For notes of the session see Appendix E)*

After those on the walking tour had returned all attendees had a chance to browse the exhibition before taking their seats for the presentation/discussion session.

The presentation opened with a welcome by Patrick Finch the University's Bursar and Director of Estates and an introduction to the members of the project team present. Jeremy Bladon from CSJ Planning then set the planning context after which Stafford Critchlow from Wilkinson Eyre Architects ran through a power point of the proposals as shown on the accompanying exhibition panels.

The floor was then opened up to questions and answers with members of the team.

*Key discussion points:*

- Future use of the Arrowsmith Tower
- Desire line through the Wills Building and scope to improve connections through Fry Building
- Retaining/reusing key features e.g. oak panelling, coffered ceilings and reuse of Porters Lodge as Student Society Office
- Issue of students cutting across from the Grammar School and design of the apex and access in relation to existing crossing points
- Removal of the boundary wall and further piercings in relation to the nature of the landscaping area
- Nature of planting in the landscaped area
- Design of the top of the atrium and how it joins with existing building
- Capacity of the building and scope for future expansion

Informal discussions then continued around the exhibition boards during which the following additional points were raised verbally to team members:

- Ensuring adequate space to dispose of IT waste
- Phasing of works and how this will affect Zone IT
- Future consideration of opening up the access route between Fry Building and Earth Sciences off Woodland Road and to Geographical Sciences leading onto University Road
- Benefit if retaining the boundary wall as it will also act as a retaining wall
- Importance of the atrium being a useful and usable space that serves a function and not just an architectural feature
- General support for having permeability through Wills Memorial Building to Tyndall Avenue Position of entrances to minimise the risk of students cutting through the Grammar School forecourt

After the workshop session a follow up mailing was sent to all key stakeholders with a link to the University website to view/download the exhibition material and comment form.

### **Near neighbours and the wider public**

There are very few residents in the immediate vicinity of the building and many properties are owned and/or occupied by the University with the Grammar School another key stakeholder. A catchment area was notified to the Council's Planning team. This included over 100 addresses in Elmdale Road, University Road and Woodland Road.

An invitation was mailed out to these local residents and businesses inviting them to attend the consultation on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November from 3.00pm – 7.00pm when members of the University and project team were on hand to discuss the proposals.

Recipients were also advised that the stand-alone exhibition would remain on public view in the entrance foyer of 1-9 Old Park Hill until Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November and that the exhibition material was available to view online on the Estates pages of the University website at [www.bris.ac.uk/estates/projects/fry](http://www.bris.ac.uk/estates/projects/fry) (see *Appendix F*) with an option to view or download the exhibition boards and a comment form.

### *Attendance:*

No members of the public came to the exhibition during the Thursday staffed public session which was however attended by 2 members of University staff.

The exhibition remained on public display in the foyer of the building until 22 November and was viewed by people visiting the building. During this period a further 7 people signed in of whom 1 described themselves as a representative of Bristol Civic Society and 6 as University staff members.

### **University community:**

To engage with University staff and students and promote awareness of the project and the consultation a message was sent out on 6 November 2013 with details of the consultation exhibition in 1-9 Old Park Hill and the link to the project information on the University website (see *Appendix G*). In addition representatives from the School of Mathematics have been actively working with the design team as part of an ongoing users group.

## Feedback

Generally feedback from both key stakeholders and staff/public has been very supportive. This was expressed through discussions with the team at the consultation sessions and from the small number of written responses.

### **Key stakeholder written responses:**

Written responses have been received from the Civic Society and a member of the Christmas Steps Arts Quarter.

#### ***Civic Society***

The Society is generally supportive of the proposals. Key issues and comments are as follows (*see Appendix H for full response*)

##### *Demolition*

The proposed demolitions of the later extensions and associated services were considered to be a substantial conservation gain. The proposal to break through the north east elevation to create a new entrance and remove windows in the south west elevation to gain access to the new atrium was also supported.

##### *Landscaping*

The removal of the car park and tarmac was considered to be a major conservation gain. The creation of a court in front of the new entrance will open up the front and dignify the Fry Building.

The Society 'resists the temptation' to automatically support the retention of the existing boundary wall to Woodland Road. It considers this a magnificent opportunity to create a new 'space' between the Fry Building and Woodland Road and that all options should be considered and given equal weight. It suggests that the whole area, including Woodland Road, should be considered a single space closed by the Fry Building elevation.

##### *New entrance*

The Society suggests that equal consideration should be given to a design of a new entrance that reproduces the historic detail and the building materials of the original building.

#### ***Christmas Steps Arts Quarter***

Hamilton Caswell from the CSAQ Planning Group provided his personal feedback on the design of the public realm/landscaping and provided an alternative layout for the approach path to the new entrance for the architects to consider (*see Appendix I*).

His feedback follows discussion on this aspect during the workshop session. He suggests that his alternative approach could have the following advantages:

- It keeps the student flow further away from Grammar School and its car park in University Road, as requested by school's Bursar
- It sits on the straight, direct alignment of the new entrance and leads to the safety of the pedestrian crossing rather than onto the busy five-way road junction.
- The straight, traditional "University-like" lines of the Fry Building architecture seem to call out for a formal straight paved path as in Oxford and Cambridge quadrangles.



- The Fry Building's new entrance would be more visible and obvious from Senate House and *vice versa*, giving a more legible desire-line between the two, further emphasised by a pair of gateposts in the boundary wall.
- The garden area (former botanical garden) would be more enclosed and tranquil as a result.

### **Conservation Advisory Panel**

The pre-application submission was considered by the Panel at their meeting on 19 November (see *Appendix J for minutes of meeting*).

The Panel supported the initial proposals and looked forward to seeing more details. In particular members wished to see an imaginative design for the new garden integrated as part of the overall design for Tyndall Place.

### **Other written responses:**

Attendees to the exhibition and viewers on line were invited to give feedback via a comment form (see *Appendix K*). The requested return date for responses in order to be included in this report was 22 November though any later submissions would still be passed on to the project team for consideration as part of the ongoing design process.

A total of 5 forms have been received. 3 were from members of the School of Mathematics 1 of who said they were also a local resident. 2 more described themselves as local residents with 1 saying they were also connected to the University.

*Q1. In response to the opening question which asked respondees what they like or support about the proposals:*

2 people supported the approach to modifying such an historic building and retaining its character.

A representative from the School of Maths highlighted the importance in terms of enhancing the School to prospective students/parents and staff and providing better facilities for teaching.

Another staff member supported 'bringing back thoroughfare between BIO + GEO'.

*Q2. Asked about any queries or concerns raised by the proposals*

1 person flagged up the need for adequate bins storage and was also concerned about any breach of walls which they consider need to be retained for safety and their Grade II listing.

There were 2 comments about car parking with one mentioning potential loss of parking the other asking 'where would people park?'

1 person was keen to see the improvements on existing Maths facilities, including 'open access computers, wireless in open areas, study and teaching spaces and plenty of power sockets for personal laptops too'.

Another was concerned that the very well thought through architectural solution and future experience of staff and students might be compromised by future budget cuts.

Q3. When asked what constraints or issues people might be aware of there was just one comment that 'the crossing next to the old Baptist College is inadequate for the intended flow of pedestrians.'

Q4. *In response to any further comments or suggestions there were three responses:*  
1 person was keen that the local community should be kept abreast of progress.

The Student IT Experience Manager, whose remit includes IT in study spaces, was keen for the team to get in touch.

Another staff member commented that: 'the planned roof terrace and common space would be a truly special element improving the quality of this space enormously'.

## Response to consultation feedback and next steps

The team will consider all feedback and issues raised as the design process continues. In particular the team will review the design and layout of the landscaping and entrance plaza with respect to access and movement of students in the vicinity.

In tandem with this first round of consultation a pre-application enquiry has been submitted to Bristol City Council and dialogue with Council officers will continue. As the scheme progresses members of the project team will also continue liaison with Council officers and other consultees as appropriate.

In particular given the historic importance of the building further engagement with English Heritage and the Council's conservation officer will also continue.

The team will also be presenting to the Bristol Urban Design Forum on 9 December.

By February 2014 more detailed proposals will be available for a follow up round of public consultation after which an application is due to be submitted in March/April.

## Appendices

- Appendix A** - University Community Forum note of meeting on 31.7.13
- Appendix B** - Key Stakeholder invitees
- Appendix C** - Key Stakeholder and Public invitation letters
- Appendix D** - Consultation exhibition
- Appendix E** - Notes of Key Stakeholder session
- Appendix F** - Web pages from Estates section of the University website
- Appendix G** - University update to staff and students
- Appendix H** - Written response from Bristol Civic Society
- Appendix I** - Written response from Hamilton Caswell, Christmas Steps Arts Quarter
- Appendix J** - Minute from the Conservation Advisory Panel meeting on 19.11.13
- Appendix K** - Comment form