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To whom it may concern

I am writing to you as Director of TREEspect CIC, Bristol resident and regular user of Hengrove Park.

As it stands Hengrove Park is an oasis of greenery and calm in what is other wise a heavily built up area consisting of sprawling housing estates, retail parks and industrial estates all surrounded by major roads with heavy traffic for up to 14 hours a day.

'Although new planting creates a comfortable sense of progress, the real gains are in preventing the loss of existing trees to development. Established trees are already in place and delivering benefits right where they are needed most, close to people, so it is intelligent to work around the best ones. The planning mechanisms exist to do this, yet incompetent planners and local politicians consistently fail to deliver sustainable development.'
Jeremy Barrell

Bearing the above comment in mind it would be ill advised and ignorant to expect that the newly planted trees within the Hengrove Park development can replace what is already there.

Tree groups and small copses earmarked for partial or full removal, despite their low categorisation in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment provide invaluable nesting sites for birds and habitat for small mammals, reptiles and Invertebrates. Conservational Arboriculture is an increasing form of tree management and trees as highlighted in the AIA as having broken branches and copious amounts of deadwood can in fact play a very important role in increasing bio diversity and should be valued and indeed encouraged as such and form part of any future management plans.. These invaluable ecological corridors and islands should be retained at all cost. I have not been able to find any ecological surveys on the planning portal and would implore one to be carried out prior to any planning application being approved as the loss of this valuable habitat cannot be replaced by mitigating planting. I have personally seen Woodpeckers, Buzzards, Kestrels, Owls and many more species of birds at Hengrove Park and at a time when our native bird and insect populations are in steep decline it is my view that these valuable pockets can with thoughtful long term management be substantially improved and utilised as valuable 'outdoor classrooms' to enable residents who use the site to gain a deeper understanding of and a connection to their environment whilst at the same time preserving invaluable habitat for a number of species in what is fundamentally a heavily populated and industrialised urban environment.

With regards to the prospective tree removals there appear to be a number of discrepancies and missing information and therefore exact sizes of trees and the numbers earmarked for removal are somewhat hazy and contradictory. It is my fear that due to the unclear and at times contradictory nature of the Tree Removal and Protection plan far more trees will be removed or damaged in the development stage than what is being proposed.

I shall refer you to a number of issues highlighted in the Arboricultural Officers comments on the planning portal a number of which are highlighted below.

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There are a number of woodland areas across the site, the groups that are significant to the proposal are:

G1 – a shelter belt leading from Hengrove Way and consisting of predominately white poplar at the northern end leading into mixed native broadleaf planting at the southern end. The tree protection plan identifies the whole group for removal to facilitate the development. This contradicts the Tree Removal and Retention Plan (Dwg P1124 A) discussed below.

Group 1 has been identified as a tree cluster to be thinned within the Tree Removal and Retention Plan (Dwg P1124 A), however considering the proposed new access road from Hengrove way and the buildings along this corridor it would appear the whole group will be removed and therefore replacement calculations need to be provided.

The original application advised 2842 replacements will be required or a pro rata financial contribution of £2,174,130 for off-site planting; the revised report states 1296 replacement trees will be required which equates to a £991,440 financial contribution for off-site planting. This is less than half of the original figures.

Given the issues raised by the Arboricultural Officer of which there are more in his/her report, not only highlighting the issues above but also questioning the tree planting plan (species selection etc) but also raising concerns about the future management of the tree planting plan I feel that as a priority these should be taken into consideration and acted upon before any decision is made.

I would also implore you to take on board the views of the Bristol Tree Forum regarding this development especially in regard the Forum's view that the BTRS calculations are flawed and as such tree replacement quantities are incorrect. This in my opinion is an issue which needs addressing as a priority. I have read the BTF's recent blog regarding their misgivings surrounding the proposed development and it raises a number of important issues which should be taken into account and acted upon prior to any decision being made.

A major concern is the long term management plans for the proposed site. Across Bristol you will find a large number of developments, from Supermarket car parks, private housing, office complexes to name a few that have incorporated elaborate tree planting schemes in their plans only to fail catastrophically when it comes the long term management of the trees as implemented as part of the planning consent. Indeed as I write this there are a worrying amount of newly planted trees under the stewardship of Metro Bus which are in serious decline or moribund despite

them being an obligation as part of the planning process. There are also large numbers in decline which were planted as part of the new Southern Link Road.

Hengrove Park is a large site which will be incorporating a large existing tree population as well as large numbers of newly planted trees. What guarantees are in place to ensure that the future of these trees are in good hands and will be able to thrive to enable them to provide all the benefits that they are there for? Hengrove Park is currently under the stewardship of Bristol City Council and already there are many trees in decline and in need of maintenance as pointed out in the Arb Officer's report. What assurances will be in place to ensure that future management of the development's tree stock will be sensitively managed and newly planted trees will be able to reach maturity?

At a time when wildlife is in serious decline as pointed out in the recent 'State of Nature' report and climate change is a real threat with calls to not only retain a healthy tree population but to increase it substantially it seems counter productive to remove large healthy populations of mature and semi mature trees to aid development. (I have been in Hengrove Park during the recent heavy rains and in many places there are huge amounts of surface water which will only increase given the projected tree removals.)

I am aware that increased housing stock is needed across the city but there are a number of existing brownfield sites that could be used but if sites such as Hengrove Park are handed over for development then existing tree populations especially tree groups and woodlands should be retained as a priority and the development design changed accordingly to ensure these valuable assets are conserved for the myriad of benefits to not only the human population but also for the valuable habitats they provide. We should be looking to retaining as many existing trees as possible and to increase bio diversity as opposed to decimating it, especially at a time when Bristol City Council has ambitious plans to double the City's tree canopy by 2050. With that in mind it would be counter productive and indeed ill advised to allow large numbers of trees with established canopies to be removed to aid development.

Regards

Sean Harding. Director TREEspect CIC

