



20/02523/FB - Land on south side of Bonnington Walk, Bristol

Bristol Tree Forum has commented on this application in detail already. Our comments are available here - [BTF Submissions](#).

Bristol City Council (BCC) is the applicant for this development. Because of this, Bristol Tree Forum would have expected the planning application to be in line with BCC's own planning policies. Sadly, this isn't the case, and the Council seems to have lost its way. It seems incapable of aligning the approach it takes to planning with its declaration of Climate & Ecological Emergencies and ignores the green infrastructure policies it adopted over the last decade. It also sabotages its promise to double tree canopy cover over the next 25 years.

What is the point of adopting green planning policies and declaring Climate & Ecological Emergencies if BCC does not set an example by complying with or acting on them?

BCS9 of the Core Strategy states that "Individual green assets should be retained wherever possible and integrated into new development". Clear felling nearly all the trees to the east of the cycle/footpath is the lazy option, when building houses around the existing trees could provide a far better development. Bristol Tree Forum can point to developments all over the country where existing trees are retained and the houses or office buildings benefit as a result. Flattening the site is 1970s thinking.

Bristol desperately needs new housing, but this should not come at the expense of removing so many existing trees. We have valued the trees using [CAVAT](#) at £4,674,918. This significant asset value (trees are assets which grow in value as they grow) would be retained if the development were built around the existing trees rather than felling them. It could be straightforwardly done.

In our experience, Arboricultural reports prepared in support of development applications often reject all those trees that are less than perfect - perfect trees are rarely found on most development sites. It seems to us that these reports are produced merely to support the developer's vision which usually involves removing all the trees on site so that they have a 'clean slate' upon which to set out their 'vision'. In our experience, replanting often fails or, if it does survive, produces meagre results, and take years to replace what is lost, assuming it ever does.

In contrast, existing trees continue to grow and are always important to the local community and to those who use these public spaces. They can't understand why the obvious is not done and the trees retained. Most urban trees have flaws of one kind or another which, of itself, can increase their wildlife and ecological value. Trees should not be removed merely because they are self-sown, may have fungal infections or because they are small or imperfect specimens.

If this development is allowed to progress, Bristol City Council will once again show that it is unable to adapt to a rapidly changing world, does not want to provide a nicer environment for the residents of this development and has failed to comply with its own planning policies.

We ask that the planning committee require that this development be resubmitted in line with BCC's existing policies. We would be happy to work with BCC to help achieve this.

Bristol Tree Forum 20 November 2020