

Strategy and Resources

Policy Committee

Supplementary Information



Date: Monday, 16 June 2025

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: The Council Chamber - City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

6. Public Forum

Up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item.

(Pages 3 - 10)

Members of the public who plan to attend a public meeting at City Hall are advised that you will be required to sign in when you arrive. Please note that you will be issued with a visitor pass which you will need to display at all times.

Please also note:

Questions

1. Written public questions must be received by 5.00 pm, at least 3 clear working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that questions must be received at the latest by **5.00 pm on Tuesday 10 June**. Public Questions should be submitted via our webform: www.bristol.gov.uk/publicforum
2. Any individual can submit up to 3 written questions.
3. Written replies to questions will be available on the Council's website at least one hour before the meeting.
4. At the meeting, questioners will be permitted to ask up to 2 oral supplementary questions.



Statements

1. Written statements must be received at latest by 12.00 noon, at least 2 working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that statements must be received at the latest by **12.00 noon on Thursday 12 June**. Public Statements should be submitted via our webform: www.bristol.gov.uk/publicforum
2. Statements, provided they are no more than 1,000 words in length, will be circulated to all committee members and will be published on the Council's website at least one hour before the meeting.

When submitting a question or statement please indicate whether you are planning to attend the meeting to present your statement or ask your question.

Issued by: , Policy Committee Team

E-mail: policycommittees@bristol.gov.uk

Date: Monday, 16 June 2025



Strategy and Resources Policy Committee

16 June 2025

Public Forum



Public forum questions have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

Q1, Q2 & Q3. Martin Rands: Goram Homes - Baltic Wharf

Q4. Jen Smith: Legal action and social media

Q5. Jen Smith: Council complaints process

Q6. Jen Smith: Use of data to inform Send decisions

Q7 & Q8. Professor John Tarlton: Goram Homes - Baltic Wharf

Q9. Jill Tarlton: Goram Homes - Baltic Wharf

Q10. Ann Hughes Devereaux: Goram Homes - Baltic Wharf

Public forum statements have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

1. Suzanne Audrey: Democratic engagement and public consultations

Please note: The views and information contained within public statements are those of the individuals concerned and not of the Council.



PUBLIC QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS 1, 2 & 3 FROM MARTIN RANDS

Q1. Has the Baltic Wharf Caravan Club site been professionally valued?

Goram Homes is being lent £1.6 million to buy the Baltic Wharf Caravan Club site from the Harbour Authority. The Local Government Act 1972 mandates that public land is sold for the “best consideration reasonably obtainable” Has this land been professionally valued by a RICS surveyor? It seems highly unlikely, as the Caravan Club brought in pitch fees of £658,739 last year, so this would be an exceptional yield on the land, even operating as a campsite.

Response:

The Strategic Harbour Authority (SHA) will be receiving a capital receipt from Goram Homes that has been determined by an independent valuation based on its existing use and rental income. In March 2025 the external qualified RICS valuer reported their opinion of Best Consideration of the freehold interest in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. This will be paid in full at the point of disposal. Under rules relating to Harbour Authority finances, the disposal to Goram cannot see the SHA in a detrimental position financially, compared to receiving an ongoing income from the Caravan Club.

Q2. Have Committee members all read the latest Redloft financial viability report for Baltic Wharf?

Have all members of the Committee read the latest Redloft financial viability report, submitted as a planning amendment on 5th June 2025? Link here: <https://pa.bristol.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=SXC71SDNKH00> This report spells out the substantial financial risks of this development, even with substantial Homes England grant funding.

Response:

This is a question that you will need to send directly to committee members for a response.

Q3. Has the Baltic Wharf Homes England grant been agreed, and is it big enough?

Has the Homes England grant been agreed, and is it so big as to minimise the risk of Hills Construction returning to the head of planning, to ask for a reduction in the 'affordable' element of the development? It would be a tragedy if the substantial number of harbourside trees are felled, for the project to fail to deliver the benefits that its planning permission was based on.

Response:

The affordable housing provider who will be working with Hill / Goram at Baltic Wharf is Sovereign Network Group. They are a Strategic Partner with Homes England and have a contracted grant programme to deliver an agreed number of affordable homes. Sovereign will also be looking to obtain

further grant funding from the Homes England Bridge funding and are therefore confident grant funding will be available for this project.

QUESTIONS 4, 5 & 6 FROM JEN SMITH

Q4. Legal Action and Social Media

How many legal cases or legal action taken by either members of the public or Bristol City Council between 2018 and 13 May 2025, has referenced Twitter AKA X, Twitter users, Twitter posts or social media posting? This is legal cases regarding anything and everything in any department of Bristol City Council? I was promised an updated answer would be sent to this question in the last Strategy and Resources Policy Committee but I have not received it yet.

Response:

The Chair agreed to provide a response with more clarity and check if any additional information is available.

The Council does not record whether individual legal cases or legal action have referenced Twitter AKA X, Twitter users, Twitter posts or social media posting and therefore does not hold this level of detail in order to be able to answer the question on how many have made these references.

Q5. Council Complaints Process

Agenda Item 11 - Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 4 2024/25 - appendix paper talks about the escalation of complaints from Stage 1 to Stage 2. What is the average response time to stage 1 and stage 2 complaints? Because I submitted a stage 1 complaint on 22 April 2025 and am yet to receive any kind of response.

Response:

Our case management system does not report on the average number of days to respond to a case.

Q6. Use of Data to Inform Send Decisions

The same Agenda Item 11 Appendix paper says: 'Refresh our corporate data policy and strategy, and deliver tools to support improved use of data and insight for priority areas including SEND and Education. Work across all relevant council services to improve the quality accuracy and timeliness of our data to support more informed decision making across the organisation. A new Corporate Data Management, Analytics and Insight Policy was produced alongside the revised Digital Strategy, and this year there has been significant work to develop new tools to improve data and insight in SEND and Education. There is a project being initiated to build upon the findings of recent audits on data quality and corporate performance and this will be linked to new governance arrangements for oversight of Insight, Performance and Intelligence as part of the corporate governance review.' What work is taking

place to ensure council officers are not snooping on what parents are saying regarding Send online to ensure that the 'informed decision making' is not related to public opinion of the quality of the Send service?

Response:

There has been significant work in the council as part of the implementation of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2028 to develop new tools to improve the data and insight in our SEND service to inform our monitoring of performance and decision making.

We understand the importance of maintaining trust and transparency in our ways of working. We are not aware of any incidents of council officers' monitoring of online activity.

We are committed to ensuring that informed decision-making is based on accurate and objective information.

QUESTIONS 7 & 8 FROM PROFESSOR JOHN TARLTON

Q7. The developer is attempting to mislead the Council on the financial viability of the Baltic Wharf Development in order to secure concessions on the planning agreement.

At the DCCA meeting where planning permission for this development was granted (April 2024), the developer was fully aware of the dire financial viability report provided to them by Redloft. This report clearly stated that with 40% affordable homes, the development was projected to make a loss of £10,212,623. Objectors highlighted this issue at the DCCA meeting as well at a subsequent E&S committee meeting (29th July 2024), and were told by planning officers that the development was viable and this report was not a concern. The planning officer further stated that "The S106 planning agreement will secure the delivery of 40% affordable housing, without grant, from the developer".

Despite this projected loss of over £10million, the developer entered into s106 agreements and agreed to a raft of conditions on the planning approval, including condition 60.

The developer is now claiming that new information, in the form of another Redloft financial report published 5th June 2025, tells them that the financial situation has worsened, due to circumstances beyond their control, and as a result the development is no longer viable without the award of a grant, and that to facilitate this condition 60 needs to be amended.

In truth, the latest financial report is no worse than the one provided in May 2023, which was deemed by planning officers as being of no concern either at the April 2024 DCCA meeting or the subsequent E&S meeting. In fact, the latest report shows a slight improvement, in that the projected loss has fallen from £10,212,623 to £9,842,969, an improvement of £369,654.

For the developers to claim that this financial circumstance is in any way new, or that they were not aware of the very poor financial viability at the time of the planning meeting would be entirely untrue.

Similarly, any claim or suggestion that the current poor financial viability is due to circumstances arising since planning permission was granted is entirely false.

The developer has stated that to proceed with this project requires a grant from Homes England, despite previous assurances to the contrary. It cannot be permitted that the developer continues to misrepresent the financial circumstances in order to secure this grant, and therefore **should this development be put on hold pending a full and proper investigation of this issue?**

Response:

In determining the original planning application the committee were required to take account of the confirmation from the applicant that 40% affordable housing would be provided without public subsidy. This was secured through the completion of a s106 agreement as indicated in the committee report and published [here](#). Since the developer offered policy compliant levels of affordable housing independent scrutiny of the viability report was not required.

Now that an application has been made to vary the provision of the existing consent, to allow grant to be injected into the affordable housing, the Council will scrutinise the applicant's claim that they are no longer able to provide subsidy free affordable housing and officers will report their conclusions to the Development Control Committee in due course. The Committee will then determine the Section 73 application based on their consideration of the viability information. This process is consistent with the approach taken on any application where it is claimed that scheme viability challenges preclude the provision of the full policy level of subsidy free affordable housing.

Q8. There is a catalogue of serious irregularities and misrepresentations surrounding the Baltic Wharf which must be investigated before the development is allowed to commence.

The number of irregularities and misrepresentations surrounding the Baltic Wharf development continues to grow. These include:

- Securing a grant based on the site being “brownfield” when it is clearly and demonstrably a green field site.
- The misuse of brownfield grant funds to finance standard construction costs.
- The failure to satisfy conditions required when building on a Flood Zone 3 site.
- The surprising withdrawal of long-standing Environment Agency objections to the development following a payment to the agency of £30,000 by the developer.
- The promise to specify the sites of 162 trees within weeks of the April 2024 DCCA meeting, whilst a year on this has dropped to 37 tree sites.
- Misrepresentation of the financial circumstances of the development to secure concessions from the council.

You may soon be able to add to this list the misrepresentation of the financial circumstances of the development in order to secure a Homes England grant to subsidise affordable homes.

In order to mitigate potential legal consequences, **should this catalogue of irregularities and misrepresentations be fully investigated before the development is allowed to proceed, with all of the destruction to this valuable site that this would entail.**

Response:

The site is correctly identified as a brownfield site as has been explained in several previous answers to public forum questions.

The Council correctly bid for the Brownfield Land Release Funding and MHCLG confirmed that the site meets the required brownfield land criteria, through both current and historic use. The cited, and costed, items included in the bid have been correctly identified as abnormal costs not typically associated with delivery.

Goram Homes Ltd (GHL) is the Council's fully owned Housing Company; the planning application was submitted jointly by Hill Group and GHL and scrutinised in accordance with legal and policy requirements. The council is satisfied that the Baltic Wharf proposal has correctly fulfilled all requisite processes and requirements in obtaining the existing planning consent (including the provision of the correct amount of replacement trees and contribution to the strategic flood defence solution as secured by the [s106 agreement](#)). An application to vary this consent to allow the RP to inject grant funding into the affordable housing will be determined by the relevant committee in due course.

QUESTION 9 FROM JILL TARLTON

Promises made in securing planning approval for the Baltic Wharf development must be honoured.

The two main pillars upon which planning approval of the development at Baltic Wharf was granted were the promises to deliver 40% affordable homes and precise identification of 162 replacement tree sites within 1 mile of the development. Both of these are now in doubt. The affordable homes, contrary to planning officer assurances, now requires additional financing through an as yet unsecured grant, and over a year later of the 162 promised tree sites, only 37 have actually been identified in the s106 agreement. Can the Local Planning Authority assure the public that the development will not commence until these two crucial issues are fully resolved, and the respective promises fully secured?

Response:

Whether planning consent should be granted for the development of the site with a varied affordable housing delivery approach is for the relevant committee to decide in determining the current Section 73 planning application. The application is currently being assessed by officers and will be presented to the Development Control Committee for determination by them, in due course.

It is important to be aware that Local Planning Authorities are obliged to determine planning applications submitted to them, on their merits and in accordance with Local and National planning policies and legislation. Whilst the original planning permission cannot be implemented with less than 40% subsidy free affordable housing, there is nothing to prevent applicants seeking to gain a new planning permission that varies the original planning permission, via a Section 73 application.

As far as the tree planting element of the question is concerned, funding for the provision of 162 trees has been secured in the [Section 106 Agreement](#), and if a Section 73 planning permission were to be granted the funding for tree planting would be carried forward to the Section 106 Agreement for this permission. Identifying locations for tree planting, particularly on-street tree planting where tree pits are required is a resource intensive activity for the Council, as it requires extensive survey work to ascertain what services and utilities may be located below ground that would render a potential site undeliverable.

Until such time as the development commences and the tree planting monies are received, the process of identifying suitable deliverable locations for tree planting to be funded from the tree planting monies would not be prioritised due to the limitations on staff resources. However, once the monies are received (as secured by the s106), officers will liaise with Area Committees 3, 4 and 7, who have the responsibility for approving tree planting locations in the vicinity of Baltic Wharf. Surveys will then be undertaken to identify the remaining sites from the currently very high number of potential locations identified and the trees planted accordingly.

QUESTION 10 FROM ANN HUGHES DEVEREAUX

Delivery of the promised affordable homes on the Baltic Wharf site is in doubt.

Assurances of the provision of 40% affordable homes on the Baltic Wharf site, required by planning policy, were pivotal in the granting of planning permission. Can the Planning Officer categorically assure the committee that these affordable homes will be delivered on the Baltic Wharf development site, and therefore that if such on-site delivery becomes impossible that the development will not then proceed?

Response:

As per the response to Q8, whether planning consent should be granted for the development of the site with a varied affordable housing delivery approach is for the relevant committee to decide in determining the current Section 73 planning application. The application is currently being assessed by officers and will be presented to the Development Control Committee for determination by them, in due course.

It is important to be aware that Local Planning Authorities are obliged to determine planning applications submitted to them, on their merits and in accordance with Local and National planning policies and legislation. Whilst the original planning permission cannot be implemented with less than 40% subsidy free affordable housing, there is nothing to prevent applicants seeking to gain a new planning permission that varies the original planning permission, via a Section 73 application.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

STATEMENT 1 – Suzanne Audrey

Democratic engagement and public consultations

The Strategy and Resources Policy Committee has responsibility for democratic engagement. Public consultation is an important part of democratic engagement and, therefore, a matter for this committee.

Unfortunately, there have been some problems with Bristol City Council public consultations in recent years (notable examples are Western Harbour and East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood). Some of these problems seem to relate to the ways in which the views of the public are taken into consideration when they are not in line with the preferred option of officers and/or members.

I was not permitted to make a statement or ask questions at this committee meeting about the public engagement report for the South Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood. The report seems to have been made available to Arup (to start developing a suite of interventions) but not to the public.

Under the circumstances, it would be helpful to know what aspects of democratic engagement the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee is responsible for, what has been learned from recent mistakes in public consultations, and how any lessons learned are influencing current and future public consultations.