

nash  
partnership



MCARTHUR'S  
YARD  
— BRISTOL —



RTPI SOUTH WEST AWARDS FOR  
PLANNING EXCELLENCE 2018

**NASH PARTNERSHIP AWARDS SUBMISSION**

EXCELLENCE DURING THE PLANNING DECISION PROCESS

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT'S KEY FEATURES

Sitting vacant for the last 20 years, this significant harbourside site in Bristol's historic docks is one of the only plots in the area to remain undeveloped. Despite a number of attempts at redevelopment by others, none of the proposed schemes has been successful, which makes this a particularly challenging site.

The 0.5 ha site lies to the south of the SS Great Britain and was last occupied in the 1990s by an arts community. Originally built as a malthouse in 1896, the large four-storey building would have been a prominent feature on the Bristol skyline. It is surrounded by a range of historic buildings and structures in an area of distinctive character.

Given its location and size, it represents a significant opportunity to bring an underutilised site in central Bristol back into use and complete the regeneration of Bristol's harbourside.

As the regional capital of the South West, Bristol has a significant unmet need for housing. With a population forecast to grow by 23% by 2039 (higher than the UK average of 17%), the draft West of England Joint Spatial Plan plans to meet need by delivering 33,500 homes in the city to this point. However, according to the Council's recent Urban Living SPD, based on current levels of delivery there will be a deficit of 12,000 up to 2036. There is also the need to provide workspace within the centre if the city is to maintain its success as the regional economic capital.

Our client (Housing Association The Guinness Partnership's development arm) was chosen as the preferred bidder by the site owners in 2016, subject to achieving planning permission. Guinness's objectives have always been to bring forward a landmark housing-led development that will bring the site back into productive use. The ambition has been to create a development that responds to the site's harbourside location in this unique corner of Bristol. This includes a mix of high quality, much-needed homes (both for sale and shared ownership), with commercial floorspace at ground floor level.

From the start, the intention has always been to take a collaborative approach to the development. This was

helped in the early stages by drawing up a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with Bristol City Council, through which we were able to build a shared understanding of our client's vision for the development and the Council's objectives and ambitions.

The spirit of collaboration has continued to date through extensive consultation with key stakeholders. This included meetings with Council officers as well as meetings and presentations for local groups, the community and businesses. Feedback from these events has informed the planning and design of the development

Challenges included balancing the views of different stakeholders, developing a viable proposal after so many schemes had failed, making the case for wholesale redevelopment, when this involves the demolition of a locally-listed building.

Final proposals included the demolition of the existing warehouse and associated buildings and structures, and the redevelopment to provide a mixed use of 147 residential units, workspace and a café with ancillary gallery space (use classes C3, B1 and A3). Associated car parking, servicing, landscaping works and provision of utilities and other supporting infrastructures are also included within the application.

The full application was approved in May 2018 and the development is now on site. By working closely with our client, the Council and the community, Nash Partnership has gained permission for a mix of uses that will deliver a viable development, which others have struggled to achieve in the last 20 years. It is a scheme which will contribute appropriately to the life and evolving character of the wider harbourside area while improving the local economy.



CREATING A NEW LANDMARK BUILDING - VIEW FROM GAS FERRY ROAD

## CRITERIA

### Planning content and skills

#### High quality of professional planning work in devising solutions to key issues, barriers and problems.

In light of the policy context and our discussions with the Council as part of the PPA process, we identified a number of key policy issues pertinent to our application. These included the principle of demolishing the existing building, the perceived loss of existing employment floorspace, the proposed mix of uses, plus the height/scale/massing of proposals and the impact on the surrounding heritage assets. Other issues included environmental impacts, such as transport, ecology, and trees.

Constraints of the local context included the potential impact on the setting of the SS Great Britain, listed buildings and views. The contaminated nature of the existing site was also an issue, plus any noise/air pollution created by activities from the neighbouring boatyard.

How did we overcome these issues? By building trust with the Council and key stakeholders, integrating design teams, creating an environment in which problems are shared and solutions developed in partnership. We started with a long-list of key issues to be addressed, and sought to address each either sequentially or in parallel as the design evolved. The Council was a willing partner in this process.

By exploring these issues thoroughly during the design process and seeking guidance from relevant policies and publications, our planning team was able to address them one by one in our application.

We adopted a collaborative approach with the Council and local community from the outset, in accordance with the Council's Bristol Planning Protocol. To create a more robust development proposal, build support and ensure the views of the wider community were understood, we undertook an extensive series of meetings and consultation events. This included a programme of meetings with Council officers and members, two public consultation events, and a series of meetings and presentations to various stakeholders – both local and statutory.

### The clear impact that planners have made to the success of the project.

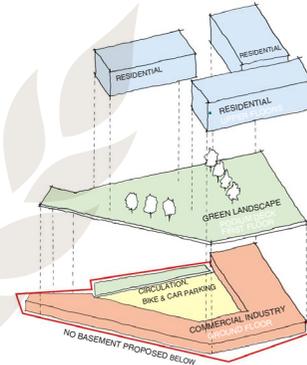
Our planners have been instrumental throughout. Aside from the expected planning input, their involvement has included coordinating a range of technical inputs, managing competing agendas, keeping focused and isolating the key issues and mapping out a course to address them. They have also been key in ensuring responses to these issues are evidence-based, thoroughly researched and explained in a clear, logical fashion that is easy to understand. Our team has also led the entire engagement and consultation process, the results of which have been central to the project's success.

### Evidence of quality in design and place making.

The development will reflect sound urban design principles. It includes a landmark corner to act as a marker on the quayside walkway that passes the site, aiding legibility, with 'active' office and café uses at ground floor level with residential uses above at higher level. The spaces will generate on-street activity, with people

coming and going from the intensively used office and café/ restaurant spaces, particularly during the day, balanced by the more intensive use of the residential uses at night. This will provide 'natural surveillance' throughout the day, thereby creating a safer, more vibrant and interesting public realm. The development features a small amount of car provision for the office and residential uses and to avoid having unsightly car parking and servicing areas along a reinvigorated public realm, the design team have proposed a single point of access into the site with the car parking / servicing areas located in the centre of site that is surrounded by the commercial accommodation that face directly onto the public realm and thus hidden from view. The car parking features a podium deck above at first floor level, which forms a 'green heart' landscaped amenity space provision for the development that the residents use to access their flats and visually overlook.

The final plans ensure the tone of the development complements and enhances the rich local character and context of the site. The contemporary designs reflect a contextually sensitive proposal that maximises the use of the site and is sensitive to the location, taking into account the harbourside context, while ensuring that views from key locations within the city are maintained and enhanced for future generations. The integration of public art and enhanced public realm – namely the

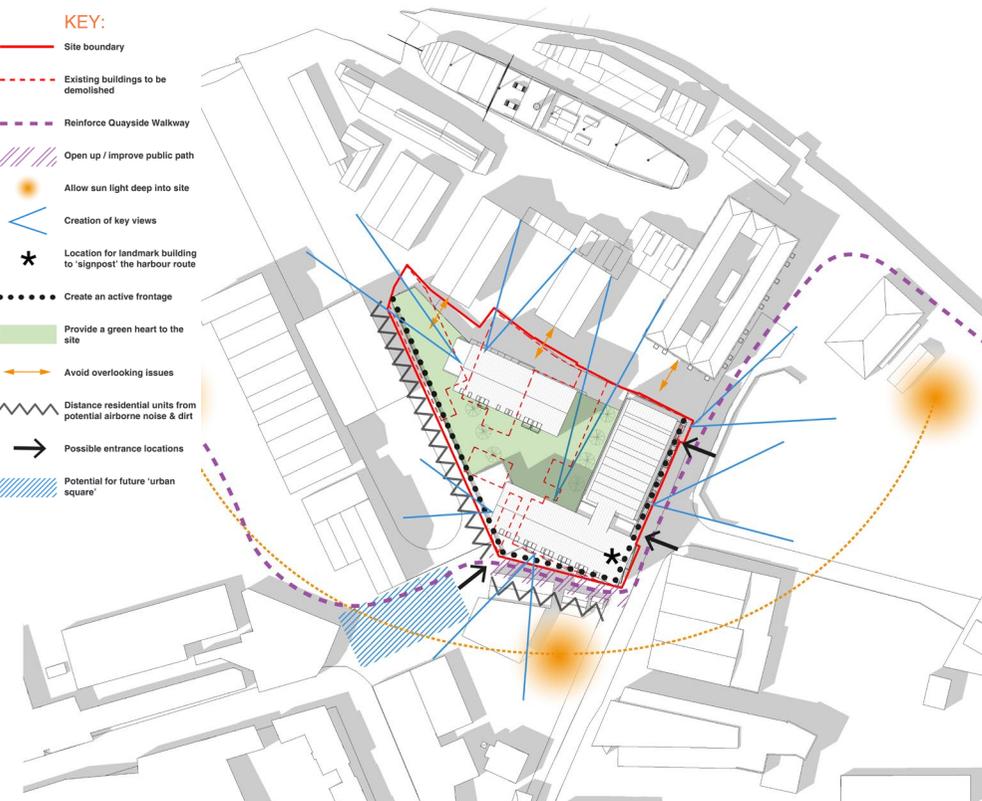


strengthening and re-establishment of the often forgotten existing quayside walkway that runs to the south of the site via the architectural proposals (i.e. creating 'landmark' designs with new public art to mark the existence of the quayside walkway) - plus the active use at ground floor will help to provide a robust and notable piece of townscape for what is a pivotal harbourside site.

### Strong or effective leadership from a planner or planners.

Planners have led the process on both sides – client and Council – and the collaborative nature of our working relationship has enabled difficult issues to be resolved. An example includes the issue of affordable housing provision and viability, which is a hot topic in Bristol. Through discussions with the Council, we were able to assess and respond to their position on affordable housing while understanding the fit with other policy issues. We also worked closely with the Quantity Surveyor, the Client and the Council to ensure the scheme's viability while providing much-needed affordable housing for the city.

- KEY:**
- Site boundary
  - Existing buildings to be demolished
  - Reinforce Quayside Walkway
  - Open up / Improve public path
  - Allow sun light deep into site
  - Creation of key views
  - Location for landmark building to 'signpost' the harbour route
  - Create an active frontage
  - Provide a green heart to the site
  - Avoid overlooking issues
  - Distance residential units from potential airborne noise & dirt
  - Possible entrance locations
  - Potential for future 'urban square'



## Sustainable Development

### Positive short, medium and long term public benefits arising from the project.

In the short term, the public will benefit from the regeneration of a long-derelict site and local job creation during the construction phase. Medium-term benefits include the creation of an integrated, mixed-tenure, mixed use development providing flexible office and workshop space, potentially co-working space for start-ups and a café/ gallery space. The development will provide a destination on what is currently an unwelcoming part of the harbourside walkway, which will leave a long-term legacy for the local community.

### A balance of economic, social and environmental objectives.

Ensuring a development that balances economic, social and environmental objectives has been central to our work. To this end, a Sustainability Strategy was prepared to show that - at the planning stage - Guinness Partnership and the design team had considered sustainability principles and how these could

be implemented into the development. Likewise, an Economic Assessment and statement was produced to highlight the main considerations for this area. And similarly, social factors including housing need were taken into account. By formally outlining our objectives and addressing these three pillars in the early stages, the proposals will ultimately deliver a balance between environmental, social and economic objectives.

### Indication of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The project supports the following SDGs:

7 (energy); 8 (work/ economic growth), 9 (industry, innovation, infrastructure), 11 (cities), 12 (consumption/ production patterns), 13 (climate change)

## Community engagement

### Positive and constructive engagement with local residents and businesses in the design and delivery of the project.

The Guinness Partnership has been committed to an inclusive, collaborative approach from the outset. To this end the team has ensured that local residents and the wider community were invited to give feedback on the proposals, helping to shape the designs and evolving detailed planning work before an application was submitted. The key principles implemented throughout the community engagement process were:

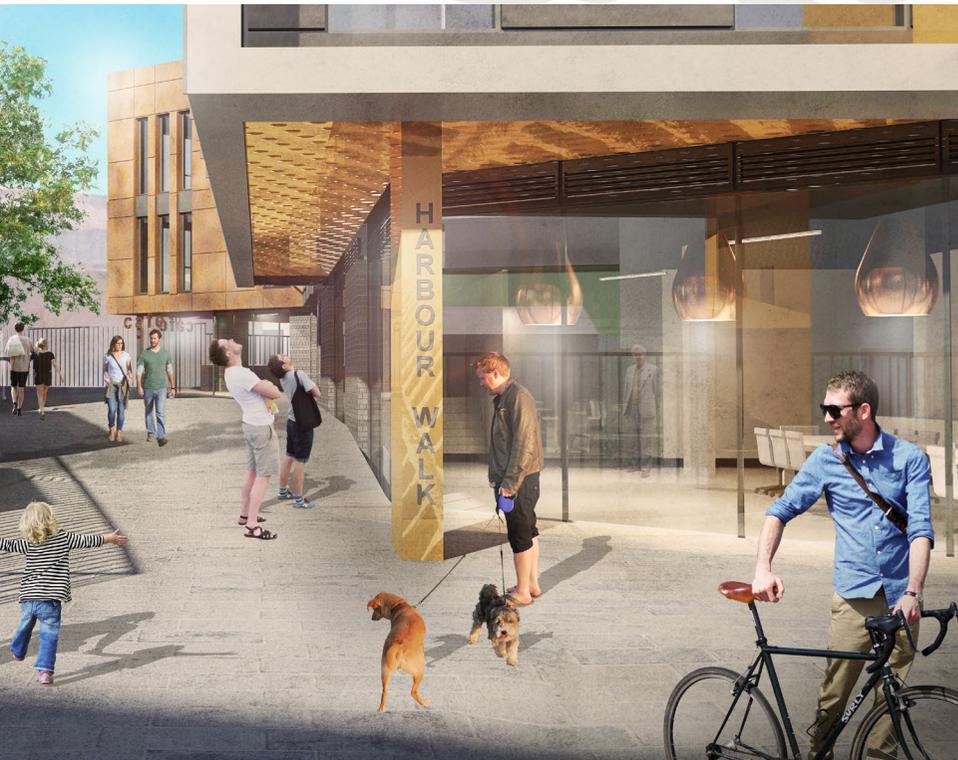
1. Early engagement of the community and local authority, before the design was 'fixed'
2. Inform and seek the views of the local authority
3. Inform, invite views, and enter into dialogue with the local community
4. Clear presentation of the evolving and proposed development, and
5. Listen to the views of different stakeholders during the community engagement process.

Key groups we engaged with included: Bristol City Council; Historic England; residents of the local area; businesses within the local area; local ward councillors; Local Authority Cabinet Members; Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network; Hotwells & Cliftonwood Community Association; Central, Clifton and Harbourside Neighbourhood Partnership; Bristol Harbourside Forum; Clifton & Hotwells Improvements Society; Merchants Landing Residents Association; Bristol Urban Design Forum; Bristol Civic Society; The Point Residents Association.

Given its prominence, cementing a deep understanding of the site among consultees was important. From experience, we know not everyone can understand drawings, so we took the initiative to have a model of the site produced which helped to explain the proposals in a way that everyone could understand. It was used to aid pre-application discussions and during the public consultations, and revisions could be 'plugged in' to the model easily to reflect an updated version.

The feedback received from these groups fed into the emerging design, influencing such issues as the scale, bulk and massing and detailed design of the proposed development. It influenced the approach to the energy strategy, central to which is a communal heating system and scope for future connection to a district heating network. It also led to a more fully-resolved approach to the commercial uses at ground floor level and proposed mitigation strategy for the interface with the adjacent Albion Dock.

As a result, this process shaped a more robust, coherent and contextually sensitive design that will contribute significantly to the character, vibrancy and vitality of this part of Bristol.



### Consideration of, discussion on and communication with local residents and businesses about their views.

Engagement and involvement was conducted through meetings, two open public exhibitions, and by publishing material on Nash Partnership's website following the exhibitions. Meetings were held with the following businesses: Aardman Animations; SS Great Britain; Rolt's Boatyard; and The Point Residents Association.

Given the failure of previous redevelopment attempts, the expectations of the local community were high. A statement of community involvement was included with the planning application to summarise the views of both individuals and groups and to outline responses and actions to comments/issues. It also highlights how comments have influenced the final scheme.

### Inclusive Planning

The needs of all the potential users of a development or place have been taken into account to ensure everyone is able to participate equally, confidentially and independently in everyday activities.

The scheme complies with the relevant policies and legislation, including building regulations Part M, and Council planning policy, which requires a proportion of wheelchair accessible and adaptable housing.

### Approaches to promote equality and diversity issues.

By working closely with the Council, we met the aspirations and commitments set out in their Equality and Community Cohesion Policy. We were mindful of the requirements within the 'consultation process' part of the policy in particular.

### Outcomes

#### Benefits of the project for the local community.

As one of the last remaining undeveloped plots on the Bristol harbourside, the site is neglected and derelict and the former malthouse is in a dangerous state. This development will finally bring back into productive use a site which has not seen any activity for 20 years. The site has lain vacant for an extensive period, has seen numerous failed schemes and currently detracts from the amenity and function of the area. Redevelopment of the site will better this area in general, therefore providing improvements to both local businesses and residents.

Several challenges and adverse on-site conditions have meant that none of the previous schemes proposed for the site have been built out. Given this, the expectations of the local community are high, and finding an acceptable and viable use for the site is essential for the local economy.

This development will greatly improve the look and feel of the local area while bringing additional much-needed housing to central Bristol for the local community. The development will aim to contribute to the local community by building on an existing brownfield site in need of regeneration. The development will add to the vitality of the local area, enhancing existing routes around the development and creating a vibrant mix of uses that bring life around the clock.

Currently, no employment opportunities are available on the site due to its vacant nature. The proposed scheme will deliver flexible commercial spaces that can respond to the needs of a variety of smaller businesses, appropriate to this central, harbourside location, delivering employment opportunities to the local area.

The CIL payable as a result of the new build development is expected to total over £1,000,000.

The 147 new homes proposed will create around 352.8 new jobs based on House Building Federation (HBF) estimates.

The proposed commercial space (flexible B1 and A3/D1) is estimated to provide approximately 88-92 new jobs at the site.

Improvement works to the public walkway connecting Gas Ferry Road with the Albion Dock, which is currently of poor quality and legibility, will contribute to the wider area and the Harbourside Walk, encouraging more people to use this route, and the facilities available along it.

### Positive impacts the project has had for the economy.

With a cafe and workspace strategically located on the ground floor, the development will bring new economic activity to the locality. This has been recognised by the Bristol Urban Design Forum, which – in its review of the scheme – says: "The design makes a bold decision to create a landscaped podium over the parking area, contained on two sides by commercial uses and a café. This will bring welcome activity to the surrounding area, potentially animating the route past Rolt's Boathouse and provide greater amenity to the residents of the flats."

The development will provide a number of benefits to the local economy, including new employment generating uses, creating circa 90 full time equivalent jobs, circa 350 new jobs during the construction phase, and intangible off-site benefits through the regeneration of one of the last sites on Bristol harbourside.

### Positive impacts the project has had on the environment.

In working with the council, there have been stringent sustainability and biodiversity goals to meet. The sustainability and energy strategy took into account the council's policy objectives relating to passive design, district heating networks/ heating and renewables.

Sustainable design and construction measures were also considered. Overall, it is anticipated that the development will achieve a 27% reduction in CO2 emissions beyond the Building Regulations Part L 2013 'baseline'.



## Good practice

### Creative and innovative techniques and processes that have been undertaken.

From the outset, a collaborative process has been key. Working alongside the Council's City Design Group, we held a series of meetings and design workshops to interrogate the design and develop more creative solutions with mutual support.

### The transferability of the approaches taken in the project.

Adopting the PPA process allowed for open and ongoing engagement with the Council. The extent of up-front analysis we completed is also a noteworthy approach; this provided a full and robust explanation of the principles underlying the scheme. We were able to show how the principles had evolved and how they relate back to the Council's policy and objectives, as well as wider influencing trends.

## The lessons learnt from delivering the project.

From various discussions with the Council, we understand the need to address viability and affordable housing as early in the process as possible. The value of early input from the Council should not be underestimated and this scheme has taught us that the sooner discussions start, the better.

## Social benefit

### How this project has helped provide a better quality of life for disadvantaged communities.

The scheme will provide 27 affordable units, integrated with the market housing, which is unusual for a development of this nature.

The project is being taken forward by The Guinness Partnership, an organisation which reinvests any profit into their homes and improving services for their customers and communities. The project is therefore helping to secure future initiatives by taking a circular approach to investment while also helping to reduce the housing deficit in central Bristol.



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