

Bristol Zoo Gardens site plans for 200 homes and public gardens

Plans to redevelop the site of Bristol Zoo Gardens for 200 new homes have been submitted.

The Bristol Zoological Society is looking to sell the 12-acre site of one of the UK's oldest zoos, which is [set to close](#) in September.

The organisation is looking for funds to help create a new Bristol Zoo at its wildlife park in South Gloucestershire, the Wild Place Project.

Property firm Savills has now submitted plans on the society's behalf to Bristol City Council, which outline the intended sale of the 12-acre Clifton site with planning permission to develop sustainable housing, with its gardens near Clifton Downs to be open to the public free of charge for the first time since it first opened in 1836.

The creation of around 200 new homes has been proposed, mainly in areas on the site where there are already built structures.

According to the plans the homes could range in size "to encourage different generations to live there", with 20% of the properties classified as affordable housing.

Much of the gardens could remain unchanged under the proposals, which also include improvements to the lake, the creation of a new, free nature-inspired play area, and space for community events in the existing Terrace Theatre building.

Savills and the society said the zoo's famous monkey temple and the former Bear Pit would also be protected within the proposals, while a new cafe and exhibition space could be

created in the zoo entrance building.

Dr Justin Morris, chief executive of Bristol Zoological Society, said: “We are confident in our plans and proud of the ambition and quality of the design proposals we have submitted. Importantly, these plans will secure the site as a vital community asset, so everyone can enjoy its beauty and heritage for many years to come.”

Geraint Jones, a director in Savills planning team in Bristol, added: “After a year of building the evidence base, and consulting with both community and stakeholders, we are excited to share our proposals for the future of Bristol Zoo Gardens. The site represents an important piece of Bristol’s heritage and we are proud of our work to ensure its positive legacy.”

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The Wild Place Project, which is near junction 17 of the M5 motorway, will be open to visitors as normal while the new zoo is built, with completion slated for 2024.

The decision to sell Bristol Zoo Gardens site was announced after the second national lockdown in England, after the zoo had already missed out on revenue from the peak spring and summer months.

The zoo had already been struggling with declining visitor numbers before the pandemic hit, with the organisation having made an operating loss in four out of the past six years.

One of the city's biggest tourist attractions, the zoo has welcomed in an estimated 90 million visitors, and helped save 175 species of wildlife from extinction through its conservation programmes.

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