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**Statement to Planning Committee 15/12/2021**

**18/02500/LBA**

32 - 33 Victoria Buildings Westmoreland

Provision of new skittle alley, a new community room, provision of new accessible toilets, refurbishment of the public house and the provision of 10no studio apartments at the Belvoir Castle Bath.

***Against***

Belvoir Castle is a heritage asset highly valued by the community. It originally opened as a public house in the mid-19th century, and has accumulated special historic and communal interest, having been in operation for well over 100 years. The skittle alley can also be dated to the mid-19th century and contributes to the social significance and setting of the heritage asset, and great weight should be given to its conservation.

The demolition of the alley would result in harm to a listed building, and the development would be discordant with the historic pub use of the site, fracturing Belvoir Castle from its social and historic context.

In light of the recent pandemic, it is more important than ever to protect and support our local community centres and businesses. We remain sceptical that this overdevelopment is necessary to keep the pub financially viable. This would instead restrict the pub’s amenity space with possible harm to its future viability.

The public benefit of the scheme is therefore limited and does not outweigh harm to a heritage asset.

The development would over dominate its primarily 2 storey terraced setting due to its excessive height and scale, and would harm the setting of multiple listed buildings. Development of this scale would result in a cramped infill out of keeping with its recessive backland setting.

Comparison with Bath Western Riverside is inappropriate and does not account for the sensitivity of its setting. There has been an increased build-up of development height along Lower Bristol Road with resulting pressure on the historic townscape. We maintain that further cumulative harm to local distinctiveness and a historic entryway into the conservation area should be resisted. Here, the opportunity presents itself to retain an area of visual openness and a welcome breathing space in a heavily developed urban landscape.

The proposed room sizes would fail to meet national space standards, and we continue to challenge the suitability of this accommodation for local residents. The proposed housing type is more popular with students and short term holiday lets. Further accommodation of this type in an area of 25% oversaturation of HMOs would be of detriment to local amenity and would not support a balanced housing mix, contrary to Policies CP10 and D6.

**We maintain that this development would result in unjustified harm to the special historic and architectural interest of a listed building, harm to local distinctiveness and townscape character, and compounded harm to the setting of multiple Grade II heritage assets including Park View and Victoria Buildings, which have not been demonstratively outweighed by public benefit.**

**No changes have been made to the scheme which would appropriately address the case officer’s reasons for refusal. We therefore ask this committee to refuse this application.**