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**Statement to Planning Committee 22/09/2021**

**20/04760/EFUL**

Former Bath Press Premises, Lower Bristol Road, Westmoreland, Bath, Bath And North East Somerset

Development of the site to provide a residential-led mixed-use development, comprising 286 residential units (Use Class C3) and provision of commercial floor space at ground floor level (Use Class E), demolition of existing chimney, provision of three substations, together with associated infrastructure, landscaping, plant equipment, car and cycle parking, and access.

***Against***

All that’s left of the Bath Press is its early 20th century Art Deco façade. As such, its evidential value as an indicator of Bath’s post-19th century industrial history ought to be cherished and protected.

The street side elevation makes an important architectural contribution to Lower Bristol Road’s townscape character and is recognised as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset. The façade has been attributed EVEN greater significance following clearance of the Press site in 2017. The chimney is noted as a feature of particular interest with a strong landmark presence in the streetscape due to its scale, vertical form, and public visibility.

The proposed removal of the chimney would therefore **constitute substantial, unjustified harm** to a Non-Designated Heritage Asset, and **harm to local identity** and distinctiveness due to the removal of a prominent local landmark. The retention of just part of the façade does **not** justify the substantial loss of a sensitive historic feature, harm to the significance of the heritage asset, or harm to wider townscape character**.**

Approximately 4-5 additional apartments are proposed for delivery in place of the chimney. Considering the development’s residential delivery would exceed the local plan target of 200 homes for the site, we consider the benefits of an additional 4-5 homes to be limited and would not outweigh the proposed degree of harm contrary to paragraph 197 of the NPPF.

The absence of affordable housing from the scheme is contrary to Policy CP9, and an unacceptable drop from the 16% provision secured in the 2015 permit, already a significant reduction from the anticipated provision of 30%. There is no indication as to how the viability of housing provision on the site has changed since approval in 2016.

**The development as proposed would result in the substantial loss of architectural and historic significance and consequent unjustified, unbalanced harm to a Non-Designated Heritage Asset, without appropriate justification or mitigation, would harm local townscape character and distinctiveness, and would harm the indicative setting of the conservation area. We therefore call for this application to be refused.**