****

**Statement to B&NES Planning Committee 26/08/2020**

**19/05165/ERES**

Western Riverside Development Area, Midland Road, Westmoreland, Bath.

Approval of reserved matters (scale, appearance and landscaping) pursuant to outline application 06/01733/EOUT for the erection of 2 no. 5-storey buildings comprising 290 student bedrooms (Sui Generis); retail floorspace (Class A1); bin and cycle stores, plant rooms, and associated landscaping works.

***Against***

BPT acknowledges that the layout, height, and function of the proposed buildings has already been consented within the parameters of the overall masterplan. However, we have the following concerns with the appearance of the scheme with regards to its design and relationship with the surrounding townscape and its contextual setting:

* The development site is located within a primarily residential, two-storey area along Lower Bristol Road, set back significantly from the riverside along the southernmost edge of the masterplan boundary. Due to the site’s setting at the inland, southern edge of the Western Riverside development, its industrial-inspired appearance is fundamentally incongruous with its material context, does not suitably demonstrate an understanding of the area, and is not locally distinctive in its use of form, material, or detail.
* The proposed use of red brick would be over-dominant within its setting and would negatively impact the existing, largely harmonious use of Bath stone through the conspicuous introduction of a new material and colour palette. Camden Mill remains one of the only historic use of red brick along Lower Bristol Road to the far west of the proposed development site, and does not actively contribute to the development site’s immediate context. Whilst we appreciate the D&A Statement’s exploration of the intangible heritage of the site, we do not feel that the extant material heritage of the Lower Bristol Street area is suitably reflected in the consequent overuse of red brick.
* We acknowledge that the layout and height of the site has been consented. However, we remain concerned regarding the close proximity of the building’s south elevation to the road and pedestrian pavement, as well as the addition of an extra half storey in roof fenestration to the previously proposed five storeys. The roadside block would consequently dominate and ‘box in’ the streetscape in sharp contrast to the current low density of the existing site and the predominant two and three-storey residential height of the surrounding townscape, an effect that would be exacerbated by the upcoming four-five storey development of the Bath Press directly opposite.
* BPT continues to question the viability of student housing on this scale; therefore, we would encourage the consideration of futureproof design that considers the long-term flexibility of interiors and amenity space and the ease of adapting the space to alternative uses.

Ultimately, the Trust does not support this current design due to its failure to reinforce local distinctiveness and lack of alignment with or contribution to local townscape character. This has resulted in a standalone building that is architecturally and materially isolated from the distinctive architectural aspects of its localised environment.