

**Application No. 20/00259/FUL**

**Appeal No. APP/F0114/W/21/3268794**

**Homebase Ltd, Pines Way, Westmoreland, Bath, Bath And North East Somerset, BA2 3ET**

Redevelopment of the site to provide a new care community (Use Class C2) comprising care residences and care suites and ancillary communal, care and well-being facilities, offices in Use Class E(g)(i) together with associated back of house and service areas, pedestrian and vehicular access, car and cycle parking, landscaping, private amenity space and public open space.

**Third party representation**

*My name is Joanna Robinson, I am Senior Planning and Conservation Officer at Bath Preservation Trust. Having been in post for 14 years I have extensive knowledge of the local character and context. My work involves reviewing and assessing Planning Applications, development and masterplan proposals, and impact assessments; writing guidance on heritage matters for publication, and working collaboratively with the LPA in the development SPD’s, specifically conservation area character assessments, and the World Heritage Site Setting SPD.*

*In previous posts as Conservation Officer and Planning Officer at Exeter City Council I have had experience of dealing with complex planning applications, preparing Conservation Area Character Assessments.*

*I hold a BA(Hons) degree in Town and Country Planning, a Masters degree in Town Planning, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Architectural Conservation.*

**Appeal Statement**

**The Bath Preservation Trust calls for this appeal to be dismissed on the following grounds.**

**The development site has a significant visual connection with the rural hillsides and landscape setting to the east and south. Townscape which relates visually to the landscape and surrounding green hillsides (the Picturesque principle) is a primary attribute of the World Heritage Site recognised as being of Outstanding Universal Value, and is a critical feature of the adjacent conservation area.**

**The historic vernacular of this area is predominantly 2-3 storeys, including Grade II listed terraces at Victoria Buildings, Park View, and Belvoir (“Beaver”) Castle.**

**We maintain that the overall scale, height, massing and lack of coherence in design, fails to respond to local townscape character, and would result in cumulative HARM to the setting and experience of multiple Grade II and II\* heritage assets, HARM the setting of the Bath conservation area, and would HARM views into and across the World Heritage Site.**

The Bath Building Heights Strategy is cited within the local policy site allocation as part of the evidence base that **should** be used to inform development across the Sydenham Park site; for a new development in Zone 3, **“building shoulder height should be 4 storeys”**, with an additional setback roof storey likely to be acceptable.

We maintain the proposal does not respond appropriately to the characteristics of building heights within the city or its townscape setting and is therefore **not policy compliant.**

The 6-storey height of buildings C and D drastically exceed the building heights guidance, and would be of excessive scale and height within a comparatively low-rise streetscape to the east and south. **Development at this height would be incoherent with the surrounding townscape and monolithic against the roadside.**

The reduction in height across Buildings A & B, while retaining 6 story heights at block C & D does not adequately mitigate harm - as defined by visual overbearing impact, material appearance and drastic change in scale, to the setting of multiple Grade II\* heritage assets including Norfolk Crescent and Cumberland House.

We maintain that the cumulative proposed scale and density of the development would cut Norfolk Crescent off from its wider landscape setting, which has already been substantially eroded by development to the north-west (Fig.15 View 5).

**Policy SB7 states that “development should not detract from important views over the site and should respond appropriately to the general characteristics of buildings heights within the city.”**

Buildings C & D would be an incoherent visual intrusion of excessive height and would result in the further erosion of landscape views. **Views that would be detrimentally affected are of green hillsides within the WHS and identified as important in the WHS Setting SPD.**

Historic England’s guidance on the Setting of Heritage Assets highlights the significance of views that are “a fundamental aspect of the design or function of the heritage asset” in contributing towards understanding the significance of the asset.

Part of Norfolk Crescent’s special architectural and historic interest is specifically drawn from its intentional relationship with rural landscape views **“in the manner of the Royal Crescent” (Historic England Listing 2010)**, and contributes to the 18th century blending of town and countryside “picturesque principles” that forms part of the special interest of the World Heritage Site. It is a **“notable landmark”** within the Bath conservation area.

The appellant’s Heritage Statement agrees that the significant height of the development would increase “the sense of density of its urbanisation” and “this extra height begins to intrude on the experience of the green hills beyond.” The LVIA notes that the proposed revisions to the scheme and reduction in height of Blocks A&B **do not** have any material change on the previously assessed level of impact to landscape views.

We consider that the proposed height and scale of development would result in **the cumulative loss of landscape views** from within and across the city, and therefore constitutes **cumulative harm** to the Outstanding Universal Value of a World Heritage Site.

**In addition, we maintain the proposed use of brick across principal elevations is excessive and erodes the visual cohesiveness of the site’s context and the wider World Heritage Site.** The area is predominantly characterised by its use of Bath stone ashlar and rubble stone, which contributes towards the wider homogeneity of the city and World Heritage Site. Other large-scale developments such as Bath Western Riverside conform to Bath’s dominant vernacular to sustain the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site; Appendix One of the Bath Western Riverside SPD identifies “buff bricks” and “sheet or profile metal” as unacceptable materials within the area.

The location, which is in closer proximity to the historic city centre than other riverside sites, retains a material and aesthetic coherence across both its historic and contemporary buildings. There are no examples of modern brick used in principal elevations in this immediate townscape; therefore, the prominence and volume of brick proposed would be a substantial, incongruous addition which would sit uncomfortably within its context and isolate the development from the townscape.

We maintain that the use of brick would not reinforce local distinctiveness or contribute to its specific local context, and would HARM the special interest of the World Heritage Site.

**To conclude.**

**Bath Preservation Trust maintains that this proposal by virtue of its excessive height, scale, and massing, poor design and use of inappropriate materials would result in ‘anywhere architecture’ which fails to reinforce local distinctiveness and would HARM the setting of multiple heritage assets, principally Norfolk Crescent, the Bath Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.**

**The proposals do not comply with the requirements of Policies D1 and D2 to contribute positively and avoid harm to local character and distinctiveness, to respond appropriately to their context in terms of building heights, massing and scale, and to enhance and respond to natural features including landscape and views.**

**The proposals do not accord with the guidance in the Bath City-wide Character Appraisal SPD, in that they do not reflect the generally open character of this part of the city, and would interrupt and HARM important views to wooded skylines and undeveloped slopes and hills**

**The proposed development does not comply with Policy BD1 in that its height and scale does not respect, respond and positively contribute to the character of Bath’s coherent heritage assets, values, and important views.**

**Views from the city to the enclosing green hillsides are a key attribute of the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS and would be blocked to a significant extent by the proposed development, representing UNJUSTIFIED HARM to the to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.**

**Policy B4 states that there is a strong presumption against development that would cause such harm.**

**The limited public benefits do not outweigh the cumulative harm to local character and distinctiveness and multiple heritage assets of the highest significance.**

**Bath Preservation Trust therefore calls for this appeal to be dismissed.**