**Statement to Planning Committee 16/11/2022**

**21/05672/EFUL**

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

Redevelopment of the site to provide a residential-led mixed-use development, comprising residential units (Class C3 Use) and provision of office floor space at ground floor level (Class E(g)(i) Use), provision of three substations, together with associated infrastructure, landscaping, plant equipment, car and cycle parking and access (Resubmission).

***Comment***

BPT welcomes the urgent regeneration of this site to provide much needed MIXED TENURE AND HIGH QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING to meet local need.

Despite the time taken to negotiate details of this proposal, the scheme before you today is still one that would fail to deliver ANY affordable housing. This is contrary to Policy CP9 which applies a 30% MINIMUM affordable housing provision to this site.

The Local Plan has already set out an identified need for the delivery of 3290 affordable homes by 2029 under Policy DW1. With the rising cost of living and Bath’s soaring house prices – up 13% in 2022, with an average house price 46% higher than the UK average[**\***](https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/browse?from=2021-09-01&location=http%3A%2F%2Flandregistry.data.gov.uk%2Fid%2Fregion%2Fbath-and-north-east-somerset&to=2022-09-01&lang=en) - there is an ever-increasing demand for genuinely affordable housing within the district. Maximum affordable housing must be delivered on remaining brownfield sites within the City The absence of any affordable housing from the scheme would fail to meet demand and the Council’s housing targets.

It remains unclear as to how a development site of this site could not viably deliver affordable housing (approx. 73 units) against a median market value of over £580,000 per dwelling. The previously permitted scheme proposed a 16% provision and it is unclear as to why this can’t still be delivered as a minimum.

**We urge the committee to call viability into question, and call on your officers to facilitate housing development that accords with Policy CP9 and brings the site in a mixed tenure housing use that contributes towards meeting local affordable housing need and makes a positive step in the right directions for Bath’s housing problems.**

In bringing housing forward on this site, given the chimney is recognised as locally distinctive landmark much more should be made of this feature in the overall design and appearance of the development. It would **raise the quality** of this housing development if greater consideration were given to sensitively integrating and better revealing the Non-Designated Heritage Asset which defines the site in views along Lower Bristol Road

Despite claims by the applicant, the proposed enclosure of the chimney between Buildings J & G would be greater than previously permitted in the 2015 scheme. The proposed buildings would fully enclose the chimney up to third floor level with limited set back between the upper floors and the chimney itself. The proposed roofline would sit higher alongside the chimney than the historic form of the building.

The consequential enclosure of the chimney would therefore detract from its clear and prominent legibility as part of the original Press building, with resulting harm to a NDHA. The **site is a key gateway into the City and new development must be more sensitive to the distinctive character of the local area, and reinforce and sustain the contributions of its heritage to the local community and future residents.**