

**STATEMENT BY BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY** re 23/02827/F | Demolition and redevelopment to provide co-living units and purpose built student accommodation, (PBSA) etc | Premier Inn, The Haymarket Bristol BS1 3LR

**Bristol's housing crisis...** Like anybody who cares about Bristol, we want to see more affordable homes, and in numbers that make a difference. But we don't support cutting corners: in liveability, tackling the climate emergency or in delivering good design. We don't have to panic ourselves into accepting second-best.

You are being **invited by your officers to accept significant damage to Bristol's townscape and built heritage to pave the way for PBSA**. The 28-story tower is student housing - there's no affordable housing in it. **Less than 4% of the total floorspace being proposed would be provided as affordable housing**. Can't we do better than this?

**Does Bristol deserve better...?** In our view, Bristol deserves better than these proposals. We can house our citizens in decent, affordable homes and densify with dignity, keeping the essence of Bristol. **Tall buildings privatise public panoramas**. They dilute the contribution of views to the community's wellbeing through cutting off the sense of being in touch with the countryside and nature. It **makes for a claustrophobic, brutalist city that has lost touch with human scale**. The **huge carbon load** of these proposals **sits uncomfortably with Bristol's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030**.

**Are you surprised by the recommendations?** There is nothing in the local plan that that even remotely suggests we would see 28-storey towers in Bristol.

**What is your legal duty?** Applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions. **There is nothing in the local plan or SPD, or the CCDDP, which says you must approve these proposals**. And many policies that suggest you shouldn't. National policy underlines "the importance of securing well-designed and beautiful, attractive and healthy places" and **is very clear that making the effective use of land is subject to "safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions."** HSE, the statutory adviser on fire safety and land use planning, have concerns, and say the necessary design changes to resolve these will affect "the number and configuration of dwellings in the building, and layout of the development." The developer disputes this advice.

The **Court of Appeal has emphasised that a finding of harm** to the setting of a listed building gives rise to a strong presumption against planning permission which can only be outweighed by powerful material considerations. **Are there any..?**

Notwithstanding the 'opening up of views' of the Scottish Presbyterian Chapel stated as a heritage benefit in the report, Historic England (the statutory adviser on such matters) say "**our strong concerns have not been overcome**" and "**a more significant reduction in height is insisted upon.... we still advise this to be eight storeys.**" Cutting the height in line with this loses 69 (16%) of the student units. **Surely, this tower cannot be the only way, anywhere in Bristol, to provide these?** Not least given concerns about the over-concentration of students in the locality.

The "improved performance in respect of carbon emissions" is a mirage. The rest of the officer's list justifying approval "Design improvements" and "Significant improvements to the public realm" and biodiversity don't require 28 storeys.