

STATEMENT BY BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY re 23/04490/F | Redevelopment of former Debenhams building for mixed use development comprising residential and commercial floorspace | The Horsefair Bristol

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, including for those who need a home in Bristol.**

This won't be a liveable development... is it really acceptable a **fifth of the rooms won't get enough daylight** and **half don't meet BRE's sunlight target**? Or only a third will function as dual aspect flats? Or many homes would **look out onto 24/7 service courts**? It's no way to live and we have a responsibility to those in housing need to do better. The housing crisis doesn't justify 'anything is better than nothing'. We can house **our citizens in decent, affordable homes and densify with dignity, keeping the essence of Bristol.**

What happened to the climate emergency...? You'd think twice before throwing away a coffee cup but officers are relaxed about binning the Debenhams building. You're not told the carbon cost, but it's probably more than 12,000 tonnes. Roughly equivalent to 40,000 flights to New York. Add in the new build, upfront, carbon, **approving these proposals costs over 36,000 tonnes of carbon.** If you plant a tree, in 100 years, it will have sequestered one tonne. To offset the carbon, you'd need to plant a mixed-use woodland getting on for 10x the size of Queen Square.

Many towns and cities are converting their old Debenhams... including high-rise Manchester. But not Bristol, here it's all too difficult. **You're told without knocking down Debenhams you won't get Barr's Street... but is the carbon price worth it? And the promised boulevard in reality will be a lengthy, windswept, zig-zag ramp** set between two towering blocks - **Barr's Canyon**, not Barr's Street. Yes, we want better access to Stokes Croft and beyond. But without remodelling the Bearpit and taming the traffic we don't get that.

Bristol deserves better... the 28-storey tower is another so-called landmark building helping to destroy what makes Bristol special. **Local people keep saying they don't want tall buildings, but between elections they get ignored.** They don't want them because they **privatise public views and cut them off from the countryside and nature.** They don't want a **claustrophobic city dominated by the anywhere architecture** being served up. They want **human scale buildings**, not a budget version of **the anonymous downtown high-rise of a North American city.** That's what we get with these proposals and the Premier Inn redevelopment. **Bristol is losing its USP, and that damages the city, including economically.**

Planning law sets a presumption against harming listed buildings and their settings. Historic England says the tower is eight floors too tall. We agree. Research tells us it makes economic sense to look after historic buildings. And don't we have a **responsibility to pass on John Wesley's New Room**, the oldest Methodist building in the world, **as we found it?**

Planning law requires applications to be determined in accordance with the local plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. There is **nothing in the local plan which says these proposals must be approved. And many local and national policies, including the Urban Living SPD, point to refusal. The presumption doesn't bite if you think the damage to Bristol's heritage is unacceptable. Look at paragraph 11(d)(i) in the NPPF. Irrespective of the officer's recommendation, the decision is your choice... your legacy to Bristol.**

The views the developer's PR campaign doesn't use....



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Before and after...



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“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.” NPPF

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).” NPPF



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