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**Representation** submitted to the Local Planing Authority (LPA), for the **withdrawal of policy SB2 from the 2021 Local Plan Partial Update (**which provides for development of the Recreation ground).

Part One

#### Background

1 The Friends Association was formed in 1993 by local residents to press its Council, Trustees and LPA for the return of the Recreation ground (Rec) to its legal status as an **open space for** (non professional) **recreation** as prescribed in the 1956 Agreement & Conveyance (appendix reference 1), in support of the wider objective of protecting the city's UNESCO recognised heritage (ref 7). The association's present support is city wide and has attracted national interest (ref 4).

**2** Policy SB2 was introduced as part of the Council's 2016 Placemaking exercise to identify possible development sites in the city. The thrust of this Representation is to argue that policy SB2 is inconsistent with and endangers Bath's UNESCO heritage status, erroneously links planning and property law and ignores the legal protection of the Forester Covenant to which BANES is both Signatory and Guarantor. This paper will argue that the policy cannot be legally implemented and both it, and former policy B8(b) should be withdrawn from the Local Plan Partial Update.

**3** Policy SB2 is premised on the 2014 Core Plan *conditional* policy B8(b), since which time events have arisen which render that policy unsound as set out below (ref 2).



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4 Following many years of Citizen's correspondence and Objections, the **summary of grounds** for this Representation were notified at a full Council meeting on 22nd July 2021, as follows (full transcript as ref 3).

- a SB2 is inconsistent with **Plan Objectives to respond to Climate Change** cited in paras 1.5, 1.6 & 1.9(a) of the Local Plan Partial Update consultation document January 2021(ref 5).
- b SB2 is inconsistent with Bath's status as a **World Heritage Site**, and with National and Local conservation policies which are designed specifically to protect the historic environment.
- c SB2 is contrary to the 1956 **Conveyance** of the Recreation Ground to which the Council is both Signatory and Guarantor (ref 1)
- d The **Options** promoted by the LPA to defer decision (item 4.2 pp77 of the 2021 Consultation Document) are incomplete and **unsound.** Under the climate change emergency Councils are obliged to prevent unsustainable development.



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**Plan Objectives to respond to Climate Change** (page 2/para 4a above) and compliance with the IPCC August 2021 report.

5 Since the 2015 *Paris Accord* and the 2016 UN *New Urban Agenda*, numerous scientific papers have been produced in the run up to COP26. BANES own Climate Change committee will be familiar with these and in conjunction with the National Adaptation Programme 2023-2028, will have 'flagged up' the actions the LPA must take, cited in paras 1.6, 1.8 & 1,9(a) of the 2021 consultation document.

6 However the report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published mid August 2021 (in the hottest year recorded in Europe, amidst wildfires and floods worldwide) emphasises the present '*tipping point*' to avert the worst consequences of climate change and that *no time is to be lost* in making decisions to achieve the objective of net-zero carbon by 2050. NPPF 2021 confers a **legal** duty on Local Planning Authorities to ensure that '*taken as a whole, planning policy contributes to the mitigation and adaption to climate change.....and to protect and enhance the natural environment.... and move towards a low carbon economy....' (ref 6). The National Adaptation Programme must be accelerated* 

7 BANES response to climate change is never more prescient than in the 2021 Local Plan Partial Update which calls for climate change issues to inform **all** Council decisions. In promoting policy SB2 for development of the Rec, the LPA is ignoring the following :



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- the 2019 report of the UK Committee on Climate Change highlighted a reduction in UK of urban green space from 63% in 2001 to 55% in 2018 (ref 25). Infill is eating away at open space in Bath, and to lose some 14 acres in the city centre which could be used for urban reforesting can by no stretch of the imagination be "*contributing to the mitigation and adaption to climate change*" as required under NPPF 2021 (ref 6). A demonstration by Bath citizens outside the Guildhall in May 2019 showed the strength of local opposition to the misuse of this open green space.
- ii the Rec is a flood alleviation zone and a designated high risk flood plain.Development will alter its water table and effectiveness (part of the grade 1 listed Great Pulteney Street is built off a timber grillage).
- iii In 2019 an exhibition of proposals for building an 18,000 capacity stadium on the Rec (at cost of a major reduction in the green area) included a car park for some 700 vehicules and substantial commercial activity (shops, restaurants etc) to support the cost of running the stadium, all of which would contribute to city centre pollution and overheating (ref 8).
- iv the present temporary installations have much the same foot print with hardstanding extending up the whole north side of the Rec.( ref 13i)
- v the Bat colony on the north side of the Rec and other seeds of ecological re-building



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**Bath's status as a World Heritage Site,** (WHS) National & Local Conservation policies (page 2 para 4b above)

**8** Bath is unique. That unique quality is the foundation of and a significant contributor to the local economy.

**9** Bath is one of the very few locations in the world holding 'Outstanding Universal Value' and two separate UNESCO inscriptions. It is one of only eleven 'Great Spa Towns of Europe'

**10** The particular attributes of its uniqueness is set out in Council's adopted World Heritage Site management plan 2016-2022 pages 18-21 incl, and actions to be taken on pages 41-47 incl.(ref 7)

**11** The Recreation ground itself is a historic area with its own constitution, in a Conservation Area at the core of the World Heritage Site.

12 The listing of buildings relies on their setting as much as their intrinsic architectural or historic significance. The Recreation ground together with Henrietta Park to the east is the essential setting of the grade one listed Great Pulteney Street, referred to by Pevsner as the finest palladian street in the UK (ref 13ii)

**13** A WHS cannot simply be regarded as a chessboard for potential development or infilling, without regard to holistic and spatial awareness in the context of the attributes that have been ascribed (ref 7).

14 The construction of a major industrial structure in the very heart of the World Heritage Site would, as demonstrated by the 2019 exhibition (ref 8), compromise the Outstanding Universal Value of the core of the World Heritage Site, specifically, to the west the Tudor /



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Abbey and its setting against the river, to the north Robert Adam's world famous Pulteney Bridge (ref 13 iii), the listed terraces of Johnstone Street (13 properties), Laura Place (20 properties), Argyle Street (10 properties), Henrietta Street (36 properties) and Great Pulteney Street (76 properties), in addition to the wider 'neighbourhood' referenced in the 1922 covenant, and contrary to national and local conservation policies.

In summary, development on the Rec would have a devastatingly negative impact on the Conservation area, the WHS, its skyline and iconic views from within, the setting of nearby historic buildings, loss of local green area, the amenities of local residents and the quality of a built environment for which Bath is recognised (ref 13iv & v).

15 Present installations on the Recreation ground, arising from a sequence of temporary consents over the years, do not come up to the design standard envisaged by Bath's adopted WHS Management Plan (ref 13 vi); in the context of a sequence of unsatisfactory consents of recent years, policy SB2 runs the risk of losing, as Liverpool has, the WHS status which is fundamental to Bath's tourism economy. Temporary consents and variations have consistently bypassed the involvement of heritage and conservation interests. Implementation of policy SB2 would unquestionably challenge Bath's ongoing status as a World Heritage Site. (ref 7).



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#### Legal status of the Recreation Ground (page 2 para 4c above)

16 The Recreation Ground is **unique** in its legal Title

17 The constitution **limiting its use** was established by the 1922 Forester 'covenant' (ref 16). A 1956 Agreement and Conveyance, to which the Council was both Signatory and Guarantor, necessarily incorporated the terms of the 1922 conveyance of the Recreation grounds in accordance with the Tulk/Moxhay 1846 rules for conveyancing (ref 1)

18 In 2002 the Council's application to the High Court for relief from limitations of use was dismissed by Justice Hart (ref 10), who stated that

- the Rec was not part of the Council's estate,

- the Rec was a charity to be administered by Trustees independent of the Council.

The Decision was not Appealed by the Council which continued as Trustee until 2014 when an independent Board of Trustees was set up in accordance with the High Court Decision (ref 11).

**19** The **"unique legal issues"** a condition of the LPA's policy B8(b) 2014 providing for development of the Rec, were resolved by the 2002 High Court Decision, the 1846 rules having been properly observed

**20** In 2020 the 1922 Covenant was again challenged in the High Court and upheld as an extant and thus enforceable covenant.



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**21** (Quote) ".....As a result of the 2002 High Court and 2016 Charity Commission decisions, BANES re-registered the Title in the name of Bath Recreation Ground Trust (charity no 10735297) and more recently in the name of Bath Recreation Company Ltd (company no 1073527) a limited company with charitable status (charity no 1173521) .....set up for managing the Rec on an ongoing basis" (ref 18). There was no onward conveyancing and the conditions attached to the Second Schedule of the 1956 Title remain unchanged.

**22** Bath Recreation Ltd was thus born out of the charitable purpose of protecting the Forester restrictive covenant, preserving the Rec as an open space for non professional sport and recreation, in perpetuity. The 2020 High Court agreed that Forester's intent was to protect the Rec from development in order to enhance the neighbourhood, as defined in that covenant.

**23** A Charity is no different from an Owner whose **first** obligation is to abide by the law, and *thereafter* its charitable terms.



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Part Two

#### Argument

**24** The association argues that for a previous administration of BANES to have identified the Recreation ground as an opportunity for development was unsound since it contravened the 1956 Conveyance governing use of the Rec in addition to threatening the historic environment of the neighbourhood defined in the 1919 Indenture of the Bathwick Estate (ref 16).

**25** The association argues that it is wrong for the present LPA to continue to promulgate policies (SB2 & B8(b)) in the knowledge that being legally non compliant, they are not capable of implementation.

26 The association argues that withdrawing the policy at this stage of review is quite legitimate but to continue to move the issue forward to future reviews is an abuse of process, contradicts the Inspectorate's advice ' *not to defer matters to future updates or rely on the Inspector to deal with them at examination*' (ref 12), contradicts the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and should not be further deferred.

27 The association argues that in making proposals for its development on the Rec, Bath Rugby Ltd neglected to offer alternative locations since it believed that in the context of policies B8(b) and SB2, the LPA would encourage such development in support of its own ambition for a "sporting, cultural & leisure stadium" on the Rec. The brief for this latter ambition even yet requires further definition before it can be properly considered.



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**28** The association argues that Bath Rugby Ltd and BANES have collaborated for development of the recreation ground by the following actions.....

- a in 1995 Bath City Council issued a 75 year lease to the amateur rugby club for exclusive use of a part of the Recreation ground contrary to the terms of the Rec's constitution which precludes favouring any single sport or organisation, an action which cut the Rec off from its frontage to the river compromising its historic setting in relation to the Abbey. (ref 13vii) In 1996 purchase of the amateur club and its lease interest by Bath Rugby Ltd, a professional company dedicated to premiership rugby, was again contrary to the Rec's constitution.
- since 1996 Bath Rugby Ltd have applied for and been granted over 100 time-limited consents and variations for the construction of temporary viewer stands, pitch lighting, acoustics and related facilities, notwithstanding the Applicant is unable to produce a legitimate Certificate under Article 12 of the Town and Country Planning Act Procedure Order necessary to support such Applications. Such repeated applications and consents are an abuse of process.
- c in 2014 BANES introduced Core Plan policy B8(b) which provided for development of the Rec "subject to the resolution of unique legal issues". It is argued that B8(b) is a Developer led and not a plan led policy as called for by the Inspectorate, and as called for in the Partial Update consultation document.
- d in 2016 BANES included policy SB2 in its *Placemaking Plan* and this introduced development of the Rec **unconditionally.** The then *Placemaking Plan* was subsequently retitled as a Local Plan. The association's Objection to the Council was dismissed without comment (ref 14)



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- e in 2019 BANES allowed Bath Rugby Ltd to mount an exhibition in the Guildhall of its proposal for a stadium on the Rec, albeit a 3 sided stadium due to the cramped nature of its site.. Whilst the exhibitor's professional lobbying and PR Agency promoted this proposal in the local media, the many visitor objections and a public demonstration outside the Guildhall went unreported.
- f interference with the wording of the Local Plan Partial Update as published, resulting in the re-insertion of policy SB2, was exposed by a Freedom of Information enquiry in 2021 (ref 20).

**29** The association further argues that since 2016 Bath Recreation Ltd, the company charged with upholding the Forester covenant, has collaborated with Bath Rugby Ltd to progressively develop the Rec for the benefit of both limited companies, notwithstanding the legal constraints by which both are governed

- a Bath Recreation Limited has been re-constituted as a private limited company, precluding charity beneficiaries' participation in its AGM
- b Bath Recreation Company Ltd has joined with Bath Rugby Ltd in the latter's renewed Appeal against the 2020 Decision of the High Court which dismissed an Application by Bath Rugby Ltd for relief from the 1922 Covenant. In its statement to the Court, Bath Recreation Company Ltd supports the Appellant's proposal for development of the Rec with a single purpose stadium, contrary to the terms of its Governing Document (ref 24). This appears to be a direct conflict of interest.
- c Aside from the considerable fixed assets recorded in its 2020 Financial Statement, Bath Recreation Ltd is in receipt of over £1m pa which is more than adequate to manage and maintain the Rec in accordance with the terms of its Governing Document. (ref 23 )



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- **30** The association further argues that Policy SB2 is
  - a inconsistent with para 2.58 of the Local Plan Partial Update Consultation Document citing "an insufficient supply of youth play space and recreational grounds across all area profiles"
  - b inconsistent with para 2.45 (ibid) recording Council's declaration of "an ecological emergency"
  - c inconsistent with para 2.49 (ibid) calling for "coherent ecological networks"
  - d inconsistent with para 2.52 (ibid) calling for policies to "contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impact on, and providing net gains for bio diversity"
  - e inconsistent with para 2.225 calling for "*a green infrastructure of multimulti-functional green space*"

all of which policies are consistent with the constitution of the Rec.

31 As a result of failures in adhering to the constitution of the Rec, an Application was registered as 'duly made' on 17 Dec 2012 for the Rec to be designated a Town and Village Green under Sect 15 of the Commons Act 2006. In its capacity as Registration Authority, BANES agreed the scope of the very comprehensive submission on 8 Jan 2013. On 18 Nov 2013 without further discussion, BANES refused the application under sect 15(2), grounds of which were manifestly unsound given that the Rec has been in constant use since 1922 (ref 21). The association therefore calls for re-examination of this Application as part of the Local Plan Partial Update proceedings.



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32 As a result of ongoing failure to adhere to the constitution of the Rec, the Association applied directly to the Minister in 2019 for the Rec to be designated a Local Green Area in accordance with Sects 76/77 NPPF18. (ref 22)

The Application fulfills the three requirements that

- a "...it is reasonably close to the community it serves..."
- b "....it is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular significance because of its beauty, historic significance & recreational value"
- c "....it is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land..."

The Minister delegated scrutiny to the LPA.

BANES accepted the Application for Determination within the Local Plan Partial Update on 9 January 2020 and in July 2020 was advised of the ongoing robustness of the Application arising from a local survey.

**33** The association argues that use of the Rec for a single purpose private arena some 16 times a year, is a serious misallocation of the urban resource and sits badly against para 2.58 of the LPA consultation document.



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#### In Summary

- 34 the association's objection to the Local Plan Partial Update set out above is that
  - a policy SB2 contradicts the climate change **Objectives** of the Local Plan Partial Update and the National Adaptation Programme, and fails to align with the 2021 UN IPCC by considering building on a designated flood plain.
  - b policy SB2 fails to "*contribute to the mitigation and adaptation to climate change....and to protect and enhance the natural environment....*" which is a legal obligation on the LPA under the National Planning Policy Framework.
  - c policy SB2 is inconsistent with the **Attributes** of Bath's World Heritage Site status, risking withdrawal of its heritage status and is in stark contrast with all national and local planning policies designed to protect the historic environment.
  - d policy SB2 derives from policy B8(b) linking planning law to property law rendering SB2 legally non compliant
  - e policy SB2 disregards the unique constitution of the Rec defined by the terms of the 1956 Conveyance, an Agreement to which BANES is both Signatory and Guarantor
  - f policy SB2 fails to recognise the 2020 High Court Decision and its confirmation that the listed Defendants hold power of enforcement with respect to the 1922 Covenant.

# 35 Policy SB2 cannot be legally implemented. Both SB2 and former policy B8(b) should be withdrawn from the 2021 Local Plan Partial Update.



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#### References

(ref 1) 1956 Agreement and Conveyance.....Clause 12 states

The property will be conveyed to the corporation upon trust that the corporation for ever thereafter will manage, let or allow use with or without charge of the whole or any parts for the purpose of or in connection with games and sports of all kinds, tournaments, fetes, shows exhibitions, displays, amusements, entertainments or other activities of a like character, subject to the restrictions and stipulations hereinafter contained.

.....its Second Schedule states

the corporation will not use the recreation ground otherwise than as an open space and will so manage, let or allow use with or without charge of the whole or any parts thereof for the purposes or in connection with games and sports of all kinds and will not show undue preference to or in favour of any particular gamer or sport or any particular person, club, body or organisation

- (ref 2) The term *unsound* is used in the context of Objections at paras 4a, 4b, & 4c
- (ref 3) The pre-submitted transcript delivered in 3 minutes reads

I am instructed by the Friends of the Recreation Ground, Bath to call for the omission from the Local Plan Partial Update of policy SB2 which provides for the development of the Recreation Ground, and for the deletion of proposed options in its partial update. Policy SB2 is an error for the following three reasons

- no 1. Construction of a major industrial structure at the heart of the World Heritage City is contrary to National and Local conservation policies. Council runs the risk of losing the city's valued World Heritage status.

- no 2. Development of the recreation ground is contrary to Title and Charity terms which limited use of the Rec to open space for amateur recreation, in perpetuity. Legal proceedings to overturn this restriction have failed. Further spending of taxpayer's money on fruitless legal effort, risking the possibility of injunction proceedings, would be irresponsible.

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- no 3. Last monday the Met office issued its first UK extreme heat warning whilst extensive wildfires burn in the US. Climate change must be at the heart of every decision this Council takes. The UK Climate Change Committee places the highest priority on the preservation of open green space in city centres as absolutely critical in tempering severe heatwaves we will be experiencing in our lifetimes. Infill is eating away at open space in Bath. It would be nothing less than a climate calamity to lose the Recreation Ground as well.

(ref 4) The Association's twenty-six year archive of documents and letters is available for inspection, the most recent letter to BANES Chief Executive being 16 July 2021 which enlarged on its complaint 17 June 2020 and 5 August 2020, and to Planners and Councillors setting out the Association's case, being 15 July 2021. This Representation is a response to Chief Executives invitation 21 July 2021 to make a formal Representation.

- (ref 5) Local Plan Partial Update Consultation Document Jan 2021 pp77 para 4.2
- (ref 6) 2021 National Planning Policy Framework
- (ref 7) City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan 2016-2022

(ref 8) Public Exhibition of development proposals by Bath Rugby Ltd held in the Guildhall, Bath March 2019

(ref 9) Letter from Pulteney Estate Residents Association to Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas, Historic England 27 August 2021

(ref 10) EWCA 1623 2002

(ref 11) The Governing Document Scheme 21 April 2014, (as amended by Scheme dated 14 Dec 2016, as amended by Scheme dated 3 November 2017) requires

The provision with or without charge of land in or near Bath, including but not limited to the Bath Recreation Ground, for use as outdoor recreational facilities for the benefit of the public at large and in particular for use for games and sports of all kinds, tournaments, fetes, shows, exhibitions, displays, amusements or layout as the Trustees shall think fit for such land and always provided that () the charity will not show any undue preference to or in favour of any particular game or sport or any particular person, club, body or organisation and (ii) the charity will not use the Bath Recreation Ground otherwise than as an open space.



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(ref 12) Procedural Guide to Local Plan Examination. Planning Inspectorate Feb 2021 pp10 para 1.1

(ref 13)	visual i	temporary installation occupying 40% of the Rec
	visual ii	Great Pulteney Street
	visual iii	Pulteney Bridge
	visual iv	temporary installations viewed from the east
	visual v	temporary installations viewed from Rec Grand Parade
	visual vi	'do not come up to design standard envisaged'
	visual vii	'Rec's frontage to the river'

(ref 14) Particulars of Objection to BANES adoption of Placemaking Plan on 26 July 2017 dated 1 Aug 2017

(ref 15) In 2018 a scheme was put before Councillors which combined an eastern park & ride facility with ancillary parking and a **full size stadium** at the Company's wholly owned Larkhall site. That the proposal appeared not to be taken seriously and was read by the association as an indication that BANES itself was using the Company as an Agent to gain control of the Rec for Development.

(ref 16) Conditions of Conveyance of the Bath & County Recreation Ground, Bath between Captain Francis W Forester and The Bath and County Recreation Ground Company Limited. Dated 6 April 1922. Para 2 of the Indenture states that

The Purchasers for themselves, their successors and assigns hereby covenant with the Vendor his successors in title and assigns and to the intent that this covenant shall run with and be binding on such portions of the hereditaments and premises hereby conveyed as are respectively affected thereby into whosoever hands the same may come but so the Purchaser shall not be personally liable in damages for any breach thereof after they shall have parted with the same hereditaments and remises that no workshops, warehouses, /



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factories or other buildings for the purpose of any trade or business which may be or may grow to be a nuisance, annoyance or disturbance or otherwise prejudicially affect the adjoining premises or **the neighbourhood** shall at any time hereinafter be erected upon the said hereditaments......etc

(ref 17) The 'neighbourhood' is defined in the *Particulars of the Bathwick Estate Practically the whole of the Parish of Bathwick within the City of Bath*, described as being for sale in a document dated 1919.

(ref 18) Letter from BANES Head of Property to Friends of the Recreation Ground 17 December 2020

> ".....as a result of High Court and Charity Commission decisions, ownership of the Recreation Ground was re-registered in the name of Bath Recreation Limited which is a company solely owned by the Trustees set up for managing the Rec on an ongoing basis. There was no onward conveyance of the Rec by the Council to Bath Recreation Ltd but rather the change in registered ownership as a result of legal clarification as to the provisions under which the Rec was originally conveyed in 1956 and hence no consideration was received as the Rec remains held under public trust for the benefit of the public at large.... ".

The Company is subject to the terms of the 1956 Agreement and Conveyance referenced in ref 1 above.

(ref 19) Particulars of Objection to BANES adoption of the Placemaking Plan / Local Plan on 26 July 2017. Friends association doc210607 August 2017

(ref 20) Letter of complaint from Pulteney Estates Residents Association to all Councillors 11 April 2021

(ref 21) Letter 18/11/2013 from Snr Rights of Way Officer for BANES (in its capacity as Registration Authority) to Mr Jack Sparrow as Applicant



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(ref 22) Friends association doc 181212. On 6 January 2018 BANES confirmed that the **Local Green Area** Application would be treated as a Representation in the forthcoming Local Plan Partial Options document. Arising from a local straw poll, the robustness of the Application was advised to BANES Project Officer 29 July 2019. On 6 July 2020 BANES stated that '...*the matter would be carefully considered in preparing the partial update.....*'

On 7 July 2021 BANES advised that the Application would not be Determined in the Local Plan Partial Update since such applications could only be Determined in the much later Local Plan (2024) ).

(ref 23) Financial Statement for Registered Company 10735297 for the year ended 31March 2020

(ref 24) Submission to the Court by Bath Recreation Ltd in support of an Appeal byBath Rugby Ltd (PT-2019-BRS-00103 against the 2020 High Court Decision EWHC 2856(Ch)

(ref 25) Baroness Brown, Chair of UK Committee on Climate Change July 2019

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Friends of the Recreation Ground, Bath 30 September 2021

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