



## Bath Heritage Watchdog

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APPLICATION NUMBER: 13/04571/LBA

ADDRESS: Street Record, Lark Place

PROPOSAL: Alteration to include the re-location and re-paint of the Mile Marker.

CASE OFFICER: John Davey

DATE: 13 November 2013

COMMENT: OBJECTION

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Bath Heritage Watchdog strongly objects to this application.

The milestone dates from c1800 and consists of a cast iron panel set onto a limestone post with the inscription '1 Mile from the Guildhall'. It is listed Grade II and is located in the Bath Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

We first have to contest the documentation which purely refers to the milestone as a '*heritage asset*'. The milestone is specifically listed in its own right something which is not mentioned in the documentation.

The Historic Statement says:-

*'As noted above, it appears that the mile marker stone may have been previously relocated, and poorly re-set into an existing retaining wall, perhaps to allow the Cork Place row of shops to be developed. The relevance of the exact distance of one mile from the Guildhall from the current position is therefore irrelevant. In addition, who knows the route that was taken to determine the 1 mile distance, as there are 4 street options that could have been taken'.*

We do not believe that the appraisal included with the application backs up this assertion and that further research should be carried out in this respect. The above statement shows a complete disregard for a listed feature which is deemed to be standing in the way of development. It also speculates on a history that never happened.

Our own investigation shows that the Ordnance Survey map of 1901 marks the milestone exactly in the position that it is currently in, so it has more than a century of verifiable history where it is currently located. There are several books on the history of Bath which identify the original route into the city from the west, and by measuring that route (via Nile Road, New King Street, Kingsmead Street and Westgate Street etc) on the 1901 Ordnance Survey map (thus avoiding all the post-war road realignments), it can be shown that the current location of the milestone is exactly a mile from the Guildhall, within an accuracy of plus or minus 8 inches according to the Ordnance Survey printed scale. All the evidence shows that the milestone is in exactly the right place to be showing a mile to the Guildhall by the normal route in use when it was originally installed, and any other location would make this distance incorrect.

We can also show that on 27 April 1942 a 500Kg high explosive bomb (Reference HE2/35 in the Ministry of Home Security Bomb Census Report) landed in the Tennyson Road end of the site, which would explain why the milestone looks an uncomfortable fit in the wall; because the wall was almost certainly damaged by that blast and later rebuilt, using whatever materials could be made available amidst the wartime shortages, around the milestone which because of its lower height would have survived in situ.

If serious consideration is to be considered to relocation then it is believed that this should only be to a position which can be proven historically rather than just a location '*nearby*'. Our research shows that there is no other historically correct location.

One of the considerations in an application for the removal of a listed structure is whether the public benefit outweighs the harm that would be caused. In this case the perceived benefit to the public is vanishingly small, being limited to repainting the marker. Indeed apart from this the benefit is entirely to the developer. The principle of whether the moving of the milestone was acceptable should have been determined prior to the submission of the development plans and not after. The 1901 map shows that there was an entrance to the site midway between Cork Place and Lark Place and thus well to the east of the milestone, and that raises the question of why the historical entrance was not recreated as part of the development plans so that the milestone would not be in the way.

The works, by virtue of the unnecessary relocation of a listed feature is considered to be detrimental to the special architectural and historic interest and character of the listed asset and adjacent listed buildings contrary to S16 and S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 12 "Conserving & Enhancing the Historic Environment" of the NPPF and Local Plan Policy BH2 and BH6 and should be refused.