



## Bath Heritage Watchdog

contact@bathheritagewatchdog.org

APPLICATION NUMBER: 17/00177/LBA

ADDRESS: Cake Café, 2 Quiet Street, Bath

PROPOSAL: External alterations to fix Victorian style awning to front of shop

CASE OFFICER: Martin Almond

DATE: 25 January 2017

COMMENT: OBJECTION

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Bath Heritage Watchdog strongly objects to this application.

We first have to address the issue of the retrospective application. Unauthorised works to a listed building are a criminal offence and cannot be condoned. Ignorance of listing is not a defence where work is undertaken without the necessary consent. The listing is revealed in conveyance searches and the Historic England Register is freely available online. Advice on the Local Authority website is also easily accessible as is the 'Shopfronts Guide' which we refer.

We are concerned and disappointed by the increasing incidents of unauthorised and inappropriate works, especially to listed buildings. Using retrospective applications shows disdain for the democratic planning process and a flagrant disregard for Bath's historic environment.

We note that the application description does not mention the retrospective status and this should be updated.

When determining all applications for new shopfronts and signage we ask that the following guidelines are observed.

*The context, or general setting, of Bath should be understood, respected and reflected in any proposed work to shopfronts.*

*Design, materials and workmanship should be of the highest quality.*

*Any proposed or altered shopfront should be historically credible.*

*House styles which do not meet the requirements of style, lettering, materials and signs are not acceptable. Multiples should be required to adapt their proposals to the special conditions of the city.*

*Standard designs of any sort are not acceptable. They should be specifically designed for their context.*

The listing entry is for 1 Milsom Street and 2-6 Quiet Street, described as “*Row of commercial premises, 1871 by C.E.Davis*”. Much of the description covers the similarities of the buildings from first floor to roof. However, the descriptions of the ground floor shopfronts identifies the differences: No.3 has an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century shopfront; Nos.4&5 have a late 20<sup>th</sup> Century replacement; No.6 has a poor quality 20<sup>th</sup> Century shop insert; No.7 (originally), now 1 Milsom Street, has late 20<sup>th</sup> Century inserts to c1825 stone piers. By contrast, **No.2 has its original 1871 shopfront “with a pair of original lofty glazed doors with transom light to left, central doors to deep arched transom light, flanked by large plate glass display windows with decorative arched heads and stone pilasters, to left and centre low Greek pediments with acroteria and cornice.”**

As the last surviving original shopfront, retaining and preserving its appearance is particularly important.

It was for this reason that Bath Heritage Watchdog raised the issue with the Enforcement Department when the unsympathetic alterations (the added awning, unauthorised signage in inappropriate colours & pavement clutter) were noticed. This was accepted as a valid case, registered as 16/00684/LBWORK. Exceptionally, this was clarified by an email from Enforcement dated 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016 – ‘*I have requested that the awning be removed from the Quiet Street property and will keep you updated on the other issues when applications are submitted*’.

It appeared clear from this that the awning was wholly unacceptable and the remainder was what was open to suitable planning applications. Whilst we accept that despite this the applicant has a right to raise an application for retaining the unauthorised awning, we maintain that it should not override the Enforcement view (which we share) that the original shopfront is important enough to ask outright that the awning be removed.

We turn now to the actual proposals as submitted.

The drawings submitted for this application are at best poor and at worst smudged and illegible. We do not believe it should have been accepted in this condition let alone validated. There are no large scale drawings of the proposed awning, the fixings or colour swatches. Whilst photos are enclosed, there is no photo of the awning when open.

Strong justification is required for the addition of any sort of awning. In this case the justification is *'to safeguard our display of perishable homemade cakes'*. Whilst this reasoning is appreciated, following a site visit it has to be noted that the cakes are displayed completely open with no protection at all. It is considered that this alone will lead to them becoming less than fresh, regardless of shading. This issue should also have been considered and the options explored with the Historic Environment Team before moving into this particular building. It is not acceptable to assume that a building, especially one that is listed, can be retrofitted to any use at all. It should also be noted that there are modern coatings for glass that restrict solar gain, so an awning is not the only option available.

We have carried out some brief research and can find no historical context for an awning to this building.



The awning has an extremely harmful impact on the attractive historic shopfront. It obscures and crosses some of the architectural detailing and will have caused damage to the otherwise untouched stonework.

In fact there has to be concern that the extra loading (especially with any wind exerting force) and drilling could have an adverse impact on the cracking to the building already evident (see picture left).

No information has been provided on the material used for the awning nor whether there is any form of advertising on it. The orange colour is strident and together with the rest of the unauthorised signage/frontage gives a cheap and tacky look inappropriate and unsympathetic to any listed building.

Bath has a renowned collection of shopfronts and the complete lack of regard shown by businesses such as the applicants here means they are being eroded and damaged. This must be arrested before it is too late.

## SUMMARY

The works, by virtue of the lack of justification, strident and inappropriate colour and harm caused to the historic fabric and shopfront is considered to be highly detrimental to the special architectural and historic character and interest of the listed building, adjacent listed buildings and the Conservation Area 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 Policies B1, B2, B4 and CP6 of the BANES Core Strategy and saved policies BH2, BH6, BH19 and BH20 of the BANES local plan and should be refused.

The matter should be referred back to the Enforcement Team to ensure that the awning is removed within a month and the damage made good by conservation masons.

The removal of the remainder of the alterations to the shop frontage should also be addressed as a matter of urgency.