



## Bath Heritage Watchdog

contact@bathheritagewatchdog.org

APPLICATION NUMBER: 17/00707/LBA

ADDRESS: Bluecoat House School

PROPOSAL: External alterations for the erection of a flag pole over the entrance portico, the addition of a non-illuminated direction sign and 2no free standing menu boxes

CASE OFFICER: Caroline Power

DATE: 31 March 2017

COMMENT: OBJECTION

\*\*\*\*\*

Bath Heritage Watchdog objects to this application.

The Bluecoat School is one of Bath's eccentric and unique buildings. Dating from 1859/60 by G P Manners & J Elkington Gill this former school has latterly been used as offices but has now been converted into residential and restaurant use. It is a dominant building on a prominent site in the setting of many listed buildings and immediately adjacent to scheduled ancient monuments.

The corner turret dominates the ensemble together with the tall curved gables. There are many architectural features on the main elevations not least the strap work panel which show the initials R and N which represent the founder of the school Richard Nelson. This is an assertive and highly characteristic High Victorian public building, challenging the dominant classicism of the city. It is listed Grade II and located in the Bath Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

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.*

There are no large scale drawings of any of the signs provided for assessment and we do not believe that the application should have been validated without them.

We take each sign in turn.

#### SIGN 1 (Flag)

We have an in principle objection to the addition of a flag to the portico or anywhere on the building. It would be extremely harmful to the listed building.

The diagram provided of the proposed bracket is poor. We are extremely concerned at the potential damage that will be caused to the stonework both in its installation and from the torque from wind.

It will also obscure the decorative stonework over the portico and should there be any movement with the flag it could easily knock this decorative stonework which would be catastrophic.

The flag should be removed from the application.

#### SIGN 2 (Directional Sign)

Although appreciating that this is a blocked doorway, it forms part of the main elevation of the building. We therefore consider it unacceptable to include any form of signage in this position. It is abundantly obvious where the entrance to the building is without requiring signage.

### SIGNS 3 & 4 (Barriers & Jumberella)

There seems little point in opposing the provision of tables & chairs to the side of this building given the consented principle to the use of the former car park as an eating zone.

That said we believe that to avoid a terrible jumble of different designs, colours and sizes the area should be subject to a uniform colour scheme and design. This would also help prevent competition between various businesses trying to outdo each other. There should also be no logos or text on the barriers or umbrellas.

### SIGN5 (Menu Boxes)

We have considerable concerns at the proposal to site menu boxes to the pavement in Upper Borough Walls. Although these are stated to be freestanding, they are not. The diagram of the menu boxes clearly shows that these signs are to be concreted in. Do the applicants own this land or is it public highway?

The close proximity of the proposed menu boxes to the building will cause problems with any maintenance.

We also object to any illumination.

We do not believe these menu boxes are necessary (any menu stand should be closer to the entrance door) or desirable and should be removed from proposals.

### CONCLUSION

Whilst appreciating the desire and need for the applicants to advertise their business, the Bluecoat School has a unique and unusual façade such that signage which is sympathetic is virtually impossible. However the building is extremely well known and is in a prominent location.

The works are considered to be 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 and CP6 of the BANES Core Strategy and saved policies BH1, BH2, BH6 and BH17 of the BANES local plan and should be refused.