



Bath Heritage Watchdog

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APPLICATION NUMBER: 17/04523/AR

ADDRESS: 1-3 James Street West

PROPOSAL: Display of 2no externally illuminated business name and logo signs set in fanlight above entrance doors and addition of an externally illuminated hanging sculpture

CASE OFFICER: Samantha Mason

DATE: 1 October 2017

COMMENT: STRONG OBJECTION

Bath Heritage Watchdog strongly objects to this application.

The original building was the last remaining wartime 'make do and mend' repaired building in Bath, and although other bomb damaged buildings are preserved elsewhere in a derelict state it is believed that this was the last wartime repaired survivor in the whole of the country that was still fit for use in its wartime repaired state, and the Genesis Trust would have been happy to continue using it. The war-scarred building stood as a reminder of the tragic events in the Bath Blitz and as a memorial to those who lost their lives. It was treated locally as an unofficial war memorial. Sadly, consent was granted for the demolition of the majority of the building leaving just the façade. As a consequence any proposals for the remaining façade have to be very carefully considered and thought out in order not to cause physical harm and public offence.

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.

As the documentation states, the former Labour Exchange is located in an area where a lot of historic fabric has already been lost and replaced by what can at best be described as 'any place' architecture. This means the historic fabric which remains is to be protected more fiercely.

This application relates to the addition of signage for the commercial operator at ground floor level. The remaining façade is a unique structure for which it will be difficult, if not impossible, to find any signage that will not cause harm. It is unfortunate that consideration for such signage was not given at the time of the original application.

We are concerned at the statement '*The remaining detailing of the façade is not of high heritage value*'. The value of the former Labour Exchange lies in the entire façade given evidence of Blitz damage is visible across the façade.

The drawings submitted to this application are poor and should be treated more as indicative. There is no substitute for accurate scaled drawings and none that have been provided have included the projecting sign. We also note the intention to illuminate the signs (according to the application description) though no information in this respect has been provided.

Illumination is both unnecessary and unacceptable and this aspect of proposals should be removed from the application.

There are 3 signs proposed: graphics to the Milk Street and James Street West elevations and a projecting sign to the James Street West elevation.

JAMES STREET WEST PROJECTING SIGN

It is the projecting sign which leads to our strong objection.

We can understand the applicants wish to advertise their business and to use an appropriate bespoke sculptural sign would normally be supported. In this case we have an in principle objection to the addition of a hanging/projecting sign of any description to the façade of the building.



We have undertaken a site visit to carefully assess this aspect of proposals and note that the façade is pockmarked all over including the area where it is proposed to fix this bracket. As this is the most important aspect of the listed building we have come to the conclusion that to erect a sign would be extremely harmful to the building. In addition the proposed bracket is somewhat crude and, probably out of necessity to carry the weight, robustly formed which is also harmful. Given that there are now cracks/open joints appearing on the building we have considerable concern for the structure itself.

Also no information has been provided with regard to colours for the sign, especially the brand name.

We consider the harm and public offence that this addition would cause outweighs any perceived benefits.



If it is considered essential to have a hanging sign we would suggest that it is fixed to the curved section of the new build above and not the former labour exchange.

JAMES STREET WEST ELEVATION

It is noted from Drawing NL1-PD76 Rev – that a plastic graphic is proposed over this door.

As reported to Enforcement the current door is unauthorised having been changed from the original timber doors to a poorly detailed modern glass door. It is noted that this drawing shows doors of a different style and design to the original. In addition the original doors completely filled the doorframe with no fanlight. Therefore if the original doors are not to go back a new Listed Building Application is required for any changes. Therefore this aspect of the application cannot be determined until the issue of the door is resolved. To do so would pre-determine the outcome of the application for the doors.

We would prefer consideration be made to the erection of a traditionally signwritten timber board sign rather than graphics.

MILK STREET ELEVATION

Whilst we are not in favour of plastic graphics, it is acknowledged that the position of this sign is acceptable. We do, however, query whether a traditionally signwritten timber board could be used in this position.

SUMMARY

The works, by virtue of the lack of information leaving considerable doubt as to what precisely is proposed and the addition of a projecting sign are considered to be extremely detrimental to the special architectural and historic character and interest of the listed building and especially the most important aspect of the listed building (ie the bomb damage) 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 Policies CP6, D1, D2, D9, HE1 and ST7 of the Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan and should be refused.