



Bath Heritage Watchdog

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APPLICATION NUMBER: 18/00135/FUL

ADDRESS: Marks & Spencer, 16-18 Stall Street

PROPOSAL: External alterations to shopfront including the installation of 2no ATMs, display of advertisements and associated works

CASE OFFICER: Alice Barnes

DATE: 29 January 2018

COMMENT: STRONG OBJECTION

Bath Heritage Watchdog strongly objects to this application.

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.

Whilst it is accepted that the building in question is not listed, it is in the Bath Conservation Area and in a very prominent location with a very high footfall.

There are two main aspects to this application – the alterations to the building and the signage. We take each in turn.

ALTERATIONS

We strongly object to the proposed new glazed frontage areas to the New Orchard Street elevation. This would upset the overall elevation of the original building which is undesirable and unnecessary. This building has been used by various retail businesses since it was built without the need for extra 'shopfront'. The proposed occupants are a bank and there is no justifiable reason for this to change.

In addition it would also prevent the existing fruit & vegetable stall from operating as it has done now for around 15 years. This is an extremely popular and vital aspect of Bath's retail offering and should be supported and protected. It is one of the few places where residents can purchase fresh fruit & veg without unnecessary packaging and in the amounts they require. It would be perfectly possible for the stall to operate alongside the bank, as it does with the current retailer, by omitting the alterations to the side elevation

This aspect of the application should be omitted completely.

SIGNAGE

We have seen some particularly bad, inappropriate and excessive signage proposals over the years, but we think this has to take the prize for one of the worst so far. We can find no redeeming features at all.

The application proposes 18 illuminated signs of one sort or another, constructed from inferior materials such as acrylic and Perspex.

As proposed, three huge fascias would be installed, which in itself is excessive. However, given the poor design, strident colours and illumination to each fascia, just one of these fascias would be unacceptable.

We believe that a scheme similar to the current retailer, ie offset lettering which is not illuminated is the most appropriate approach, on the corner and maybe above the existing glazed frontage. The rest of the signage, including the projecting signs, should be eliminated from proposals.

We consider that the application is so inappropriate that it would be very difficult to negotiate to an acceptable scheme in the timescale for a planning application. We therefore recommend that the application is withdrawn and the scheme redrawn.

SUMMARY

Whilst we appreciate that applicants wish to advertise their business and apply their corporate image, however they must be prepared to tailor their proposals to take account of the very special circumstances that exist in Bath.

The works, by virtue of inappropriate alterations, excessive and illuminated signage using inferior materials and strident colours are considered detrimental to the conservation area contrary to S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 12 'Conserving & Enhancing the Historic Environment of the NPPF and Policies DW1, CP1,CP6, D1, D2, D3, D5, D8, D9, D10 and HE1 of the Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan and should be refused.