



## Bath Heritage Watchdog

contact@bathheritagewatchdog.org

APPLICATION NUMBER: 18/00186/LBA

ADDRESS: 55 New King Street

PROPOSAL: Internal and external alterations for the erection of new block of 4No residential flats and associated bike and bin store amenity structures to rear courtyard, including demolition of the 1960's garage building, the remaining original rear facade element of No54, the rear 1960's concrete pre-fabricated building and the partial demolition of the reconstructed rear boundary wall to Cumberland Row and continued use of No55 as office accommodation

CASE OFFICER: Laura Batham

DATE: 28 February 2018

COMMENT: OBJECTION

\*\*\*\*\*

Bath Heritage Watchdog objects to this application in its current format.

We must emphasise that the proposed development and use are not in question, it is on the grounds of design that we object.

In other locations in Bath we might have considered the design proposed to be acceptable, but No55 New King Street is the remains of a bomb-damaged pair. The listing entry acknowledges this damage ("*Formerly one of pair. c1770 with C19 and C20 alterations*" and "*left half damaged by bombing and demolished. ... third bay has blind lights, formerly centre of composition*")

The Heritage Statement wrongly assumes that No54 was badly damaged but No55 wasn't, when the photographs and records of the time show that a 1000Kg bomb landed on the middle of the road outside No7 which would have damaged Nos54 and 55 almost equally. In the City Engineer's report from 1942 it shows the pair of 54 and 55 as being equally badly damaged and dangerous, requiring some repairs before either could be safely reused. It doesn't explain why No55 was repaired and No54 removed, but the wartime shortages of materials suggests that some initial cannibalism may have taken place.

Similar wartime damage was reported on the other side of the street, where Nos 5 to 10 were left in various stages of severe damage. The post-war repairs on the other side recreated the street scene almost as original, though not all the interiors followed the original plan forms. The post-war objective was to fit all the reconstructions into the general appearance of the street.

It follows that plans to redevelop No55, effectively replacing that part of No54 which was demolished, ought to follow the same approach of being a post-war reconstruction matching the general appearance of the street, even if the interior did not follow the original plan form. There is enough of No55's building character, and enough of the description in the listing entry to be able to recreate its mirror image as seen from the street, which would have been No54.

The part of the site which is now a wider pavement was provided as hardstanding for an ambulance in front of the 1960s garage (which suggests that it wasn't officially part of the highway but a reuse of derelict land) and it serves no practical purpose now when the garage is to be demolished and the planning applicant is already using No55, so there is the capability of recreating the building line of No54. This should be taken. There is no aesthetic value in retaining non-functional structures to show where No54 was when its recreation would be more sensible in the context of a residential development, and more pleasing to the eye. The comparison with 1-3 James Street West is not relevant, because that façade was retained because of the distinctive shrapnel damage and the wartime "*make do and mend*" patching, and there is no similar value in the New King Street location.

We would also raise the issue of materials which are of the utmost importance. Grey aluminium windows are inappropriate both to the listed building and conservation area. Windows should be of timber.

Consequently, it is recommended that the application should be refused because of the failure to enhance the listed building and preserve the context of that part of the street. Roger Houghton's sketches show that a more sympathetic external design is both possible and more in keeping, and we urge the applicant to pursue such an approach with its architects.