



Bath Heritage Watchdog

contact@bathheritagewatchdog.org

APPLICATION NUMBER: 18/03527/LBA

ADDRESS: Octagon Chapel, Milsom Street

PROPOSAL: Internal and external alterations to refurbish Octagon Chapel and Vaults for A3/A4 use

CASE OFFICER: Helen Ellison

DATE: 12 August 2018

COMMENT: STRONG OBJECTION

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

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.

We also maintain our objection to the unnecessary use of illumination in the conservation area.

It is immediately evident from the photos provided with the application that works by previous operators have been extremely harmful to what is a very special, important and very unique building. It is accepted that the location and shape of the building is challenging but this is no reason to harm both the fabric and the aura of the chapel.

Unfortunately the proposals put forward in this application concern us greatly. The amount of furniture, partitioning, clutter and vegetation means that the original detailing and form of the chapel will be obscured. Although it could be argued that all of it is reversible, it is the inability of visitors to be able to see the unique space and appreciate the protected building that causes the overall harm. We are very disappointed that operators are unable to take the originality of the building as a cue instead of imposing corporate designs upon it.

INTERIOR

There is a lack of information relating to the proposed flooring. The retention of existing timber flooring and reclaimed timber is considered acceptable but for other flooring no colour scheme or materials have been submitted (eg *'tiles round bar to be octagon & dot style, spec to be confirmed by designer'*). Such information is required for assessment to avoid the chapel being harmed further.

It is proposed to clad the walls with stud and then some form of brick work, especially to the north west and south east alcoves. The original finishes are very much part of the character of the chapel and we believe they should not be obscured. Again there is a lack of information provided as to the actual proposed cladding.

The materials proposed (eg plywood) for the benches, etc are considered to be inferior for such an important building. Confirmation is required that the benches are not to be fixed to the walls and again there is a lack of information on the fabrics/materials/colours etc.

Whilst the idea of the bar planting scheme is not objectionable in principle, we have considerable concerns regarding the dividing up of the interior of the building as it prevents the appreciation of the uniqueness of the space. We also have concerns at the amount of furniture, lamp posts, partitioning and vegetation, not least trees, which will considerably increase the loading on the historic fabric unnecessarily.

EXTERIOR

Milsom Street Entrance

We strongly oppose the proposals for this entrance. Other than the proposed plant trough we can find nothing positive to the proposals. Not only are the proposed signs inelegant, clumsy and lack finesse, they involve many fixings to the historic fabric and obscure the original historic and architectural features. The menu board and plant plots are likely to be a hazard to pedestrians and again are not required. The proposed projected sign onto the pavement is also considered unnecessary and inappropriate.

Green Street Entrance

Although overall the design and materials are considered acceptable and an improvement on the existing, illumination is unnecessary and should be removed from proposals.

Milsom Place Entrance

Sadly this aspect of the chapel was previously butchered as part of the Milsom Place project. The proposals are therefore more in keeping with this area. However we still maintain our objection to the use of unnecessary illumination.

SUMMARY

Overall we are extremely disappointed and concerned at these proposals which seek to impose a corporate identity and brand onto a special, unique and relatively small building. We would urge the applicants to scale back and change their proposals considerably in order for proposals to be considered acceptable.

The works as proposed 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 Policies DW1, CP6, D1, D2, D3, D8, D9, D10, and HE1 of the Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan and should be refused in its current format.