



Bath Heritage Watchdog

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APPLICATION NUMBER: 18/04757/REG03

ADDRESS: Parkside Children's Centre, Charlotte Street

PROPOSAL: Extension of existing public car park, including reconfiguration of existing parking spaces, following the demolition of Parkside Children's Centre, with associated drainage, lighting and surfacing

CASE OFFICER: Chris Gomm

DATE: 6 January 2019

COMMENT: OBJECTION

Bath Heritage Watchdog objects to this application.

This is an application which we regrettably did not pay close enough attention to at an earlier point in time, hence the time taken to complete the research below (and the social disruption of Christmas) makes our comments a little late.

The building in question is described as the Parkside Children's Centre, previously Parkside School, which it is proposed to demolish to be replaced with parking spaces.

We have studied the Heritage Desk Based Assessment (submitted to website on 7th December 2018) together with the other various documents. The thing that struck us immediately was the vagueness of information together with a large gap in the provided maps; ie nothing between 1932 and 1951.

HISTORY

This is a 20-year gap which includes the World War II period, yet it is during World War II when Parkside's history begins.

In 1941 Bath City Council received an order from the Ministry of Food to erect British Restaurants in the city to provide good day to day food for the general public and to act as '*a first line of defence in an emergency*'. They were originally proposed to be called '*Command Feeding Centres*' which Churchill objected to hence the adoption of the name British Restaurants. The Ministry of Food would take any profits from the restaurants, but would also make good any losses.

In February 1942 plans to build three restaurants were approved: at Charlotte Street in the city centre, Cotswold Road in Oldfield Park and at Kensington in Walcot. This was shortly before the devastating Bath Blitz in April 1942, though after the occasional bombs in Twerton, Lower Weston and Dolmeads in 1940 and 1941.

The Bath Weekly Chronicle & Herald of 15th August 1942 announced the winners of the competition to name the three restaurants. A Miss V Smart of Kipling Avenue won two prizes for suggesting Parkside and Riverside and a Mrs F E Briggs of Thomas Street won a prize for suggesting Hillside.

PARKSIDE

The first to be built was 'Parkside' was opened on Tuesday 25th August at 1pm by Mr Oscar C Waygood of the Wartime Meals Department of the Ministry of Food accompanied the Mayor of Bath. This was followed by 'Hillside' at Cotswold Road and 'Riverside' at Kensington Meadows. The total cost of constructing and equipping the three restaurants was estimated at £16,421 and until work was completed the Pavilion was used as a temporary restaurant.

It was intended that '*a good square meal*' would be available for the modest sum of 7d or 8d. A meat and two veg course would cost 5d or 6d, soup with bread 2d, and for a similar sum the meal could be finished off with a pudding. A 'cash and carry' service was also provided for those who preferred to eat at home. The hours of meals were to be: mornings for tea and coffee, dinner from noon to 2.30pm and suppers from 5.30pm to 8.30pm

Parkside was the most used, serving 900 lunches a day, 30 teas and 70 suppers (open between 10 a.m. and 8.30 p.m., the cost of an average three-course lunch being set at 9d).

In 1943 Parkside was opened in the evenings and became a venue for wedding receptions, parties, concerts and shows.

The Ministry of Food withdrew its support for the scheme in April 1947 and the Council purchased the buildings which they continued to run under the name of Civic Restaurants.

Hillside closed in December 1948 and went on to be used for school meals and a community centre (such use remains today). Riverside closed in 1949 due to a decline in patronage and was taken over as a day nursery. It remains in use today as a youth hub/mentoring centre.

Parkside was the last to close at the end of 1950 by which time the spare ground on the north side of the building was already in use as a car park. It was used to house Kingsmead Infants School which subsequently became Hillside Infants School. It closed as a school in 2006 when it became a Children's Centre.

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

The letter (entitled Further Archaeological information) states '*The proposals are very limited, and actually include removal of a detracting post-war building*'. It is clear that those submitting the application and those who carried out the research have not done so with due diligence which is of considerable concern (and certainly the local authority should know the origins of the building and should have advised those preparing the documentation). The documentation therefore misses out nearly 20 years of history which just happens to include the construction of this building and its original purpose.

Basically the heritage assessment is wholly wrong. We believe that Historic England should be reconsulted given the inaccuracies in the documentation and the clarifications in this comment.

It is clear that Parkside (and its sisters Hillside and Riverside) played a very important role in the lives of the citizens of Bath during the War. No doubt after the devastation caused by the Bath Blitz in April 1942 it was a lifeline to those who were made homeless or simply had no means of providing for themselves. The overall scheme was national and it is unknown how many of these structures remain. It must be unusual for all those built in one place to still be in existence.

The building is reportedly in good condition and can clearly be adapted for a number of uses. We see no reason why its use cannot change again and remain as a community or business asset.

PARKING CONSIDERATIONS

Although realising there ought to be a balance with public benefit, the proposal to provide an extra 100 parking spaces at Charlotte Street is purely driven by the local authority development proposals for Avon Street car park.

It is also going to create a conflict of purposes. The current Charlotte Street car park is widely advertised as a long stay car park, yet the extra 100 spaces are intended to be short stay spaces. As all the parked vehicles are in one seamless parking area, how is the separation to be controlled, and which parking machine (and presumably pricing structure) is the motorist arriving be directed to? If the short stay spaces are full, who is going to check that a short stay vehicle is not parked among the long stay ones? Conversely would a long stay vehicle be penalised for occupying a short stay space? The creation of a multi-purpose car park has obviously not been thought through, and visitors not familiar with Bath are going to be the ones caught out by the inconsistent combination of short and long stay spaces. It would also appear to be in conflict with the recent clean air zone proposals by directing higher turnover motorists to short stay parking inside the CAZ and would thus push more traffic to a controlled area of the city even if their cars are non-compliant.

The works proposed would result in the loss of a locally important building and community asset with virtually no public benefit and a parking management headache. We believe that the application should be refused both to retain a significant building in good condition and to keep short stay vehicles (and thus primarily visitors) outside the proposed CAZ boundary.