

Application Number: 09/03737/FUL

Address:

Calvin Klein,
6 St Lawrence Street,
Bath BA1 1AN

Proposal:

Installation of new shopfront.

Comments: submitted at 30/10/2009

Bath Heritage Watchdog objects to this application.

- *When determining all applications for new shop fronts 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 shop fronts.*
- *Design, materials and workmanship should be of the highest quality.*
- *Any proposed or altered shop front 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.*

(Bath City Council. Bath Shop Fronts, Guidelines for Design and Conservation 1993)

Bath Heritage Watchdog has been paying particular attention to shop fronts fitted in Bath as Bath has one of the finest collections of period shop fronts in the country. There are fine examples from Georgian through to Victorian and Edwardian into the 20C (including Art Deco, etc) right up to the present day where traditional shop fronts have been installed to replace inferior designs in both listed and unlisted buildings.

Application Form

The Application Form states the work has already started, yet the application is not described as retrospective. Section 29 of the Application Form states the signage is not to be illuminated, yet the drawings clearly state that it is. The documentation is therefore incorrect and should not have been validated.

Documentation

Apart from an incredibly brief (no pun intended) Design & Access Statement, the drawings are inconsistent - stating the proposed finish is satin white when, at present, the shop front is painted what appears to be gloss grey (although it is possible this could be an undercoat). The drawings show a mixture of hardwood and marine ply (which is not timber as stated). Which ever has been used, it does not appear that it will stand the test

of time as evidenced by the poor quality of the previously installed shop fronts in Southgate Street.

The Design

Dare we say it - in design terms this is a fair-to-middling attempt and is largely along the lines of what most were expecting to be installed. Although somewhat plain, the doorway is centrally positioned and it has a decent stall riser. It would, however, have benefited from some more detail above transom level, possibly in the form of some leaded or decorative glass. In terms of a shop front in a prestige development in a Conservation Area in the World Heritage City of Bath, it just needs that little extra lift.

The Signage

Correctly positioned on the fascia above the main door and well scaled, Why, Oh! Why! has it then been let down by the stainless steel finish and the illumination? If the lettering had been hand painted, of fret cut wood or even a dulled anodised finish, it would have been preferable. The illumination is unnecessary. There is no objection to the mall signage.

The Process

We are consistently informed that comments are considered right up to the determination date. Again, this case stretches the credibility of such claims. The main objection to this application therefore has to be that the planning process has not been correctly followed. We cannot support what is unauthorised work.

The Tenant Fit Out Guide Revision J February 2009 Section 5.2.7 states ***“works may only commence on site after the preconditions listed have been satisfied”*** . On that list are the words ***“Planning Consent where applicable”***.

The works are unauthorised. The documentation is also not marked as retrospective. What is taking place is an abuse of the democratic planning system.

We would also ask that the following is taken into account:

Following a less than democratic passage through the planning process that led to the approval of the latest revisions to the SouthGate Shop Front Guide, all current proposals submitted for SouthGate that take advantage of the newly introduced laxity in the guide fall far short of what is considered appropriate for a World Heritage City in both style and materials despite what is theoretically deemed acceptable. We would draw your attention to the fact that all proposals submitted so far are contrary to the advice given by Bath & North East Somerset Council's Senior Conservation Officer whose clear statement of ***“not acceptable in the current form”*** was ignored. Therefore the statement in the tenants fit out guide section 5 Design Policy and approval Procedure. That ***“there are strict guidelines regarding tenants shop front as agreed with B&NES and Environmental Heritage”*** is untrue as it quite clearly does not have the support of the Senior Conservation Officer in its current form.

We cannot understand the logic of any shop moving into a prestige development and installing shop fronts and signage that detracts from its surroundings.

Conclusion

If the process had been correctly followed and if some of the details and finish along with the illumination had been amended, we may well have supported this. Unfortunately, they have not.

In its current form the application contravenes Local Plan Policies BH1, BH2, BH6, BH17, BH19, S5, D2 & D4 and with guidance contained within PPG15 and should therefore be refused.