

Application Number: 09/04133/FUL

Address:

9 - 11 St Lawrence Street
City Centre
Bath BA1 1AN

Proposal:

Installation of new shopfront.

Comments: submitted at 15/12/2009 11:56:38

Planning Application 09/04133/FUL 9-11 St Lawrence Street Bath BA1 1AN

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.

Introduction

The opening of Phase One of the SouthGate development gave us the opportunity to see exactly what had been installed prior to consent and whether it matched the supplied drawings in colour, materials and finish. Its impact on the Conservation Area could be judged and the reaction of the public could also be gauged.

Design & Access

From this it is clear that the applicants have some understanding of Bath and even note this is an important Conservation Area and have tried to respect this. It is therefore unfortunate that guidelines and policies designed to enforce this have been so laxly applied. This though is no fault of the applicants.

Elevations

Once again the standard relatively plain surrounds are installed which though not objectionable lack that extra degree of detail that would give them some individuality. The drawings claim these are made of timber but they are the now standard plywood boxes. A

decent stall riser is incorporated this time with a black granite finish. This is a common feature on Bath shop fronts and there is no objection to its use here. The window frames are in an anodised metal with basic fenestration. The whole however is let down by the doors which are poorly detailed and permanently open. This unbalances the whole elevation.

Signage

Rather over-scaled and made of inappropriate materials for a Conservation Area and a World Heritage Site. Hand painted, fret cut wood or anodised metal should have been the preferred materials.

Illumination

We maintain our objection to illuminated signs of all types in the Conservation Area and World Heritage Site.

Colour

In itself not objectionable it is just there is too much grey in the whole scheme (we have heard a number of comments reiterating this fact)

The Finish

This is a real minus point, the fascia shows a number of screw heads popping through and points where the joints of the plywood is lifting. The joints of the metal of the window frames being crudely welded. The whole smacks of a rush job. We doubt it will stand the test of time.

Green Issues

Great claims were made about the green credentials of the Southgate scheme, yet this is another store that has the doors kept open and a heat screen blasting down all day. This fails to comply with guidance laid down in the tenants fit-out guide.

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 store being open a month before the site notice was posted. Part of the main objection to this application therefore has to be that the planning process has not been correctly followed. We cannot condone or 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 at present are unauthorised. 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.

For the reasons stated above 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.