

Application Number: 10/00803/AR

Address:

9 Southgate Place
Bath BA1 1AP

Proposal:

Display of 1no internally illuminated projecting sign and 1no illuminated fascia sign

Comments: submitted at 30/03/2010 12:59:01

Bath Heritage Watchdog objects to this application. These comments relate to both the FUL & AR

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.

The Proposal.

The design and access statement starts by saying how the style of the shopping centre reflects Bath's rich heritage and at this point it goes without saying that without reading further it could be envisaged that the shop front proposed would not.

The proposals are another in the dismal procession seen thus far. Full height glazing with the minimum of detail. No traditional fascia as such, no joinery, no stall riser of any substance. The proportions looking somewhat odd. A comparison between the supplied elevation and the tenant shopfront area drawing in section two of the revised shop front guide shows the applicants have increased the height of the shop front to abut the projecting cornice thus covering the stone band beneath. This places the whole frontage and the active signage zone outside the area permitted in the guide, it will also throw the whole run of shop fronts in block D out of balance if installed as indicated. Therefore the shop front as proposed does not comply with the guidance. Revised drawings must be provided.

Further confusion lies in the materials the Design and Access statement says the framing is to be high gloss mirror aluminium profile, the drawing states an oxy brass finish and the colour would seem to confirm this. It should however be clarified.

The security shutter is also an item of concern as there appear to be no doors. When closed the shutter will not enhance the streetscape. Doors should be provided and the shutter mounted behind. No detail of colour other than a number is provided, a swatch of the proposed colour should be supplied.

The illuminated sign and lettering are not considered appropriate in terms of both style and materials. They do not reflect the special signage requirements of the area. We maintain our objection to illuminated signs of all types in the Conservation Area.

The open door policy with heat screen apart from not being carbon friendly is also frowned upon in the tenants fit out guide. We also have to point out another area of concern as this appears to be yet another retailer with an existing store on the north/south shopping spine relocating to Southgate. This migration could lead to a retail desert of to-let signs in the heart of the World Heritage Site. The visual impact of the empty units will also negatively impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

We cannot agree with the applicants summation that what is proposed compliments the style of the building or reflects the character of the area.

There also remains the concern that the shopfront will be installed prior to the determination of the application (it appears that work is already in progress) making it almost impossible to reverse any unauthorised or unacceptable elements.

We would also ask that the following is taken into consideration

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, BH6, BH17, BH19, S5, D2 & D4 and with guidance contained within PPG15 and should therefore be refused.