

## **Application Number: 10/04867/FUL**

### **Address:**

Kingsmead House  
James Street West  
Bath BA1 2DG

### **Proposal:**

Erection of a 177-bed hotel incorporating conference facilities, restaurant, café/bar and associated facilities, servicing and works following demolition of Kingsmead House.

### **Comments: submitted at 06/06/2011**

Bath Heritage Watchdog notes the revised drawings on this application.

Although we welcome some positive aspects to the changes, there is no sign of the radical change which would be required to overcome the previous objections.

The change to the fenestration is welcome, creating regular detailing and rhythm that was missing before. The claimed change of height is noted, but it is a minimal improvement.

The building is still too tall and does not comply with the Council's Building Height Strategy – 'Recommended heights are related to the existing prevailing heights of Georgian buildings in the immediate area and are defined in absolute metres' and 'The overall height should not be less than or exceed the overall prevailing height of nearby Georgian buildings'. It is clear from the comparison elevation drawings that the revised proposal is still way in excess of the nearest Georgian properties ie Charles Street. It should also be noted that Charles Street is comparable in height to Monmouth Street and Chapel Row so there can be no doubt that the Charles Street properties are properly representative of the prevailing height.

The claims of a reduced height is really based on optical illusion rather than fact. There are still two additional storeys set back from the main façade in James Street West and one on the Charles Street facade which whilst hidden from view in the immediate vicinity, will be clearly visible from more distant views. The scale of the façade itself is wrong because the storeys themselves are each oversized such that four apparent storeys forming the main façade are the height of the six storey building further along the street. It was to negate such over-scaling that the Building Height Strategy requires acceptable heights to be "defined in absolute metres" rather than by the number of storeys.

The same Building Height Strategy requires new developments to be the same scale as nearby listed buildings:

'Buildings should take their design cues from nearby Georgian buildings in relation to scale, site coverage, built form, grain, rhythm, roof detail and form, materials and colour'.

Yet this proposal dwarfs both Charles Street and Green Park Station. This is something which English Heritage and the Georgian Group have both raised in their previous objections.

The other criticism is that the building still occupies the site right up to the pavement edge, which coupled with the over-height storeys will make it too massive, almost overpowering for passing pedestrians. It actually resembles a flagship department store which is completely out of context in this area. The hopes of restoring the historic grain of Kingsmead Street some time in the future will be blocked by this building.

Whilst it is good to see revisions, and these are an improvement on the previous design, in no way can these amended proposals be seen to go anywhere near addressing the crucial issues raised by ourselves, English Heritage, the Georgian Group and others. The proposals are still an over-development of the site, wholly unacceptable by virtue of height, scale, mass and design, they fail to meet Local Plan policies D2, D4, BH1 and BH6, and should therefore be refused.