



Bath Heritage Watchdog

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APPLICATION NUMBER: 13/04571/LBA

ADDRESS: Street Record, Lark Place

PROPOSAL: Alteration to include the re-location and re-paint of the Mile Marker.

CASE OFFICER: John Davey

DATE: 20 December 2013

COMMENT: OBJECTION

Bath Heritage Watchdog notes the revised drawings and the revised Statement History dated 11/12/2013, but maintains its OBJECTION to the proposals.

In the Statement History is an extract from a map of 1885 which somewhat inconveniently has been marked by a red line to define the site. However by using a photo editing process to remove red, there is a black dot which indicates that the mile marker was then in its current position, the same position that Ordnance Survey marked in 1902.

The document continues to treat the mile marker as something only “of historic value” when it is in fact listed in its own right and therefore by the definition in the Heritage Act is of national importance. To avoid any further attempts to sidestep the milestone's importance, this is from the English Heritage record:

Name: MILESTONE APPROX. 4M EAST OF NO.8 CORK PLACE

List entry Number: 1394763

Grade: II

Listing NGR: ST 73649 65216

Milestone. C1800. Cast iron panel set onto limestone post. Inscription reads '1 Mile from the Guildhall BATH'. Similar milestones are located on the London Road, on the Upper Bristol Road and on Widcombe Hill (q.v.).

This milestone is thus one of four in Bath and is no less important than the other three.

The Statement History document takes up the information provided in Watchdog's previous objection that the wall in which the milestone is mounted may have had wartime repairs, to suggest that this may have resulted in "excavating the ground away". This is wishful thinking. The land on the site side is considerably higher than on the street side and this would have protected the milestone, the lower part of the wall and its footings. With nearly 19,000 bomb damaged buildings to repair in Bath, there is no likelihood that more work than was strictly necessary to ensure pedestrian safety would have been carried out on a non-residential wall. A "make do and mend" style of repair (which would explain the use of cement rather than lime mortar) is all that would have been contemplated, retaining as much of the existing structure as possible.

Besides, because the current position of the milestone is exactly where it is shown on the 1885 and 1902 maps, all the evidence points to the fact that the milestone has never been moved. If Brunel could dig a 2-mile tunnel from both ends in 1841 and have the two shafts meet to an accuracy of three quarters of an inch according to his diary, then there is no doubt that on open ground the exact measurement of 1 mile was entirely likely, and Ordnance Survey could map it accurately. As English Heritage noted in their consultation response, "*The significance of a milestone such as this is largely its location at a certain distance from the point it marks*", and therefore moving it **any** distance no matter what that distance is, is harmful to its significance. The English Heritage comment on moving it 6 metres not greatly altering its significance is also used out of context. That comment was made on the possibility that the milestone is not in its original position, and all the evidence shows that it is significant where it is currently located, which is the original position.

It is also disingenuous to suggest that the general public objection was to moving the milestone 6 metres, when the text of the objections makes it clear that the objection is to moving the milestone at all. Repairing and repointing the wall can be undertaken with the milestone in its current location, and it should be.

The summary points out that there are problems associated with moving the site access. That is not a material consideration for this application. Planning permission does not have to consider whether a development for which permission has been granted is able to be built or not, in the same way that permission does not imply any compulsion to build what has been permitted. The applicant's assumption that milestone is only a heritage asset rather than a listed building as defined by the appropriate Act is the applicant's mistake, and it carries no weight in a listed building application even if refusal (which is clearly indicated because the significance of the listed building depends on its exact location) requires minor changes to a development already permitted. Similarly the poor quality of its current setting is irrelevant when the setting can be refurbished and improved while it remains in the current location.

Finally, we wish to record our strong objection to having our earlier comments misquoted in the revised document in order to justify the unacceptable. Our measurements were not made on “the 1930s 1:1250 scale Ordnance Survey map” but from an older and larger scale map using the printed mile/chains/feet scale which because it is printed on the same sheet would have the same level of accuracy as the streets shown, and the accuracy of plus or minus 8 inches (10cm) is due to the inability to determine whether the left margin, the right margin or the centre of the milestone indicates the exact distance. It is also irrelevant what the current distance is or which part of the Guildhall was the origin of the measurement. At the time the milestone was first erected, its position reflected the measurements made at the time, and our Ordnance Survey check was merely to show that it would not have been installed anywhere else than where the 1885 and 1902 maps show it. Its significance is in exactly where it is positioned, not how the modern world would measure it today or whether a 1.7 metre difference is significant today. Quoting from the Ordnance Survey website does not justify moving the Grade II listed milestone from where it was erected.

The works, by virtue of the unnecessary relocation of a listed feature is considered to be detrimental to the special architectural and historic interest and character of the listed asset and adjacent listed buildings contrary to S16 and S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 12 “Conserving & Enhancing the Historic Environment” of the NPPF and Local Plan Policy BH2 and BH6 and should be refused.