

Subject: Comment Received from Public Access
Date: 07 November 2024 17:29:03

Application Reference No. : HPK/2024/0385

Site Address: 28A High Street Buxton Derbyshire SK17 6EU Buxton

Comments by: Kate Dickson (aka MacLean)Creative Heritage Consultants Ltd

From:

The Smithy
Church Street
Buxton
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Submission: Objection

Comments: As a local resident, I pass this property on a daily basis. As a heritage consultant, I am concerned about the erosion of the character and quality of Buxton Conservation Areas through incremental change, sometimes through ignorance of the designated status and sometimes through blatant disregard of the legislation, policy and guidance.

In this case, my husband and I first approached the incoming tenant in July, when they were outside the property, considering the changes they wished to make. We drew their attention to the Conservation Area status, the Council's shopfront design guide on the website (emailing them a link to it) and the existing features of the property, including the corbel blocks to the top of each pilaster and the likely presence of an historic fascia board behind the modern signage. They cannot, therefore, plead ignorance of the historic details or the planning requirements.

When we saw them dismantling the shopfront and pilasters in late July and early August, we informed the enforcement team, and that is what has given rise to this retrospective application.

In the meanwhile, the removed pilasters have been pinned back on (but are relatively modern plywood and in poor condition), the corbels have been retained, and the 1970s shop sign within the historic narrow angled fascia has been revealed. A new red aluminium shopfront has been installed, but because it was measured before the old signage was removed, it is approximately 200mm too short, leaving a large air gap below the historic signage fascia. This has now been covered over with the illuminated sign. The bottom of the glazing has been covered with vinyls illustrating the type of food to be sold in the takeaway i.e. advertising, for which advertising consent has not been sought.

The new shopfront assembly fails to meet the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, where section 72 in respect of buildings within Conservation Areas states that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'. It does not present any public benefit to outweigh the harm caused to the designated asset (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 208), and it certainly does not meet the recommendations in the Council's shopfront design guidance.

The particular issues are:

1. Aluminium shopfront, not timber, and inappropriately postbox red
2. Lack of stall risers and very crudely ceramic tiled step below the shopfront
3. Loss of the recessed doorway, which the removed shopfront exhibited
4. Oversized, flat and illuminated shop sign of a garish design
5. Lack of appropriate repair and reinstatement of historic joinery to each side of the shopfront

6. Illustrated vinyls on the lower section of the glazing, again poorly applied
7. Proposal to install advertising motifs of doner kebabs on the pilasters

In certain circumstances, an aluminium shopfront within a repaired timber portal might be acceptable, but the frame should be a suitable dark colour and the configuration should include stall risers and a recessed doorway.

It may also be possible to attach a larger logo sign over a narrow historic fascia, to increase the lettering size, but the design and any illumination must be agreed with the Conservation Officer.

The Design and Heritage Statement submitted with the planning application includes images of the shopfront in recent years but fails to recognise that the signage shown in each case may not have had planning consent, or that current proposals must be in accordance with current policy. The submitted proposals must be assessed on their own merits. There are good examples of appropriate shopfronts just along the street, however, in the former RBS building, such as Pig and Pepper at 26 High Street. (Unfortunately, there is also a recent replacement shopfront at no 8 High Street, where a retrospective planning application has been submitted, but has not been validated as the application is incomplete and it is not in the applicant's interest to provide the missing information! On the opposite side of the road, the Council's enforcement team regrettably missed the deadline for taking action when the Big Chef and Morfoso Barbers shopfronts at 7 & 9 High Street were reported to them, probably on account of Covid impacts, and these give the false impression that such shopfronts and signage are acceptable.)

The planning department must take a strong stance with this application. The design, materials and illumination are detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area and the application should be flatly refused. (There should be no compunction to work around the recently installed red aluminium shopfront in our experience, the cost of the flat aluminium shopfront, in comparison with the rest of the costs of the fitting out, will not have been particularly significant, so permission should simply be refused and it be replaced.)

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