

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPEAL full statement of case

The letter below to the Camden Heritage and Conservation officer was sent by me shortly before I received a refusal. It provided my best comprehensive explanation of why I believed that piecemeal improvement of the existing steps (which the officer had suggested) was not a reasonable proposition. I attach it herewith as my "full statement of case" because it includes the best arguments I can make.

I will only add that before sending the letter I conducted an exhaustive analysis of how one might attempt further piecemeal improvement of the existing stair with Gordon Dawson, a London carpenter of outstanding ability. I have used Mr Dawson on every job I have done in the past 35 years that required his knowledge of historical context, exceptional craftsmanship, and great sensitivity to adjacent work. I have employed him without fail on listed building works such as for this same pub about 16 years ago, where he carried out most of the installation and restoration carpentry then undertaken by me with a previous listed building consent.

Mr Dawson told me that he believed there was no way the unsafe condition of the stair could be improved by means of further attempts at levelling and extending treads and risers. After doing some measuring, he was unable to see how that could even be undertaken. If it was in some way possible, he believed, the outcome in appearance would be appalling. He concluded by telling me that no competent carpenter would accept the assignment.

-- Nathan Silver, 6 July 2017

NATHAN SILVER ARCHITECTS

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28 April 2017

APPLICATION 2017/1658L, LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR THE SEVEN STARS STAIRCASE

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your email response of 25 April to the Heritage Statement that I submitted on the Seven Stars Listed Building Consent application. I do wish the application to go forward, because I believe the proposal is reasonable and should be acceptable. To summarise:

1 The landlord and leaseholders wish to continue to maintain this splendid building in its original use as a public house.

2 Though the building's 1602 (or thereabouts) staircase was undoubtedly created for access to private accommodation on the floor above, it now additionally needs to be used by the public for access to toilets. That among other things was deemed acceptable when I was granted listed building consent for alterations in 2001.

3 Despite the staircase's not meeting contemporary design standards, its position and configuration are primary attestations of the building's antiquity, and they must be preserved.

4 The steps themselves are not original, but have been replaced one or several times, most recently—in my expert opinion—sometime between 1880 and 1950 with an uncraftsmanlike construction subject to noticeable and worrying deflection. The irregularity of the steps is probably unrelated to historical antiquity, and has repeatedly proved hazardous to users within the 16-year experience of the present pub leaseholder.

5 As sporadic minor accidents to users continue to attest, ad hoc attempts made in the past to regularise the steps with extra tread surfaces and tread depth extensions haven't solved the problem of their irregularity, but they have made the stair look provisional and ramshackle. There is nothing true to heritage in the carpeting or plastic covering that it requires.

6 In sum, piecemeal improvement of the existing steps is no longer a reasonable proposition, and there is no historical justification for continuing to maintain a poor replacement. For those reasons I am applying for consent to a new staircase built with fine workmanship and historically appropriate materials that will follow the ancient staircase configuration. I argue that that will be a better representation of the pub's heritage, and it will best allow the public to use it safely and thereby maintain the pub's superb continuity.

As I believe that my application has been carefully thought about further after your kind attention with comments and my further submissions, I now wish the application to be formally considered. I hope that on balance I have been able to persuade you and other Listed Buildings officers of its merits. If it is denied, the leaseholder is prepared to put up with the delay while I take the matter to appeal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Silver". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nathan Silver RIBA

[Nathan Silver](#) MA (Cantab) B Arch (Columbia) MAE RIBA / chartered member / client adviser