

13 May 2014

Mr C Carrington
Built Heritage Manger
Property & Asset Management
Blackpool Council
81 Central
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Blackpool
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Dear Mr Carrington

Bispham Methodist Church

Following instructions from the circuit stewards I write further to your letter dated 15 April in connection with the inclusion on the list of buildings to be considered by the Committee for a recommendation to the government for listing.

Due to a series of unfortunate occurrences I have only just received this instruction and having been unable to contact you on this eleventh hour I have not had sight of any documentation that would indicate why the church has been included in the list. Non-the-less I wish to make representations on behalf of the Church to express their objection to such. The church has recently closed and it is the intention of the circuit to sell the premises. This will probably involve redevelopment and some draft proposals have recently been sent to Gary Johnston. My involvement in the redevelopment proposals is the main reason why I have been asked to submit this representation. I am perhaps the only person available – not very flattering! Given more time we would have taken advice from a heritage consultant and provided a more informed response. Indeed I would ask that you allow us further time in which to make such a response, even just three weeks, enough time for you to be able to consider our position prior formulating your presentation to the Committee meeting scheduled for 09 June.

My initial thoughts:

The original building is rather typical of many of the Methodist Churches built around the beginning of the twentieth century in this area. Indeed I am aware, through having worked on many of them that most are of superior quality – Anchorsholme Methodist Church, The Mount Methodist Church – two of rather similar character to Bispham but of greater architectural interest.

In addition however Bispham differs to all of the others; Bishpam Methodist Church is characterised by unsympathetic extensions, one of which obscures most of the original building from public view. The other extension, a 1970's affair that reminds me of the Station pub opposite the former Blackpool North Station, further detracts from the original. Other extensions to the rear (due east) are little more successful. I assume that all this is being considered for listing.

The listing of the complex doesn't of course mean that all these extensions have to be preserved. However the mere fact that even part of this complex has to be preserved might well prevent any profitable development which would in practical terms mean the preservation of the very worst parts of this complex. That might in some way preserve the character of the area but it would at the same time have the affect of detracting from it. Change can be a very positive way of improving our environment.

In respect of highway safety, whilst I don't consider the current parking arrangements for the complex to be particularly unsafe, I would foresee that if I was to design such a development

as this from scratch that Highways would be looking for substantial improvements in road safety. Therefore preservation of the current site and possible occupation with a similar use would negate the opportunity that we are currently presented with for a safer environment, a net improvement in safety.

We currently have an opportunity to remove this rather poor collection of buildings from the site and substitute it with an attractive housing scheme that would represent a very positive change in the locality. I would therefore ask the Committee not to recommend this church for inclusion in the list and instead allow us to enhance the area with a quality project more suited to this residential area.

I once again ask that you allow us more time to prepare a more informed submission.

Yours sincerely

Chris Hewitt

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