

Bob Goodman statement

As a Fellow of the RICS I speak tonight about the legalities of Listed Building Consent. Weeks ago this Council prosecuted an individual for carrying out work to a Listed Building without Consent, yet I have found many areas where this Council are doing exactly the same.

The Council compulsorily purchased two Listed properties in Wellington Buildings in 2016 because the owners had let them fall into disrepair and the Council's own department undertook the repair work.

My first involvement was when a member of the public contacted me as a Cabinet Member to ask why concrete tiles were replacing clay tiles without Consent. I asked the question and apparently the contractor had "made a mistake". The pantiles were put back and I thought no more of it.

At that time, despite significant works being carried out, no Listed Building Consent had been applied for. Last year, I surveyed an adjoining house and what I saw was extremely disturbing. I looked at the Consent and found many discrepancies. I wrote to the Chief Planning Officer about those areas, which included cement rendering to walls, cement pointing to walls, blocking up windows incorrect door details, gutters and downpipes in aluminium and not cast iron etc.

It was confirmed to me all my observations were correct and Consent had not been Approved.

I also indicated, from photographs taken before and after that the ceilings of lathe and plaster were replaced with plasterboard and, indeed, this is the only part of the work I have exposed to the Council that they have made no comment on; why!

I have emails confirming all the work will be reinstated by the Council, unless Listed Building Consent can be obtained. In a recent Scrutiny Panel, an Officer said that the work being carried out will be ADL and that is quite bizarre bearing in mind when the Council's own department finished the works and they could not sell it, the buildings were transferred, by a long lease, to ADL.

I even asked the question, why did ADL's solicitors not investigate why Listed Building Consent had not been obtained and I was told that was not for the Council to comment on – it is ADL. The fact is ADL is a wholly owned company by the Council seems to be irrelevant.

I would estimate that the cost of work will be in excess of £200,000 and we as residents have to pay.

I met senior staff with Councillor Blackburn and was promised that there would be a fully independent inquiry, with no involvement by the Council. Several months later I was told that this would not happen because an investigation had happened in 2018.

I have not been sent those investigations and if that is correct, Officers at that time decided that it was appropriate not to carry out reinstatement works nor to suspend Officers who had carried out these criminal acts and basically not inform the Administration.

I fully expect English Heritage, Bath Preservation Trust and Local Architect/Surveyor will want answers.

There should be a fully independent inquiry held in public, so the facts of this deplorable episode are out in the public domain. Depending on the findings, action should be taken against all Council Officers who have tried to sweep this under the carpet.

These criminal acts are not going to go away. We have recently seen the Post Office debacle. Just like Mr Bates v the Post Office, I am not going away.