
Statement of Community Engagement

Grand Parade & Undercroft, Bath

April 2014

1. Introduction

This Statement of Community Engagement (SCE) sets out the strategy undertaken for consulting the local community with regard to the proposals to regenerate the site of Grand Parade and the Undercroft, colonnade vaults, Bath. This document supports the planning application submitted by Nash Partnership on behalf of Bath & North East Somerset Council.

This document demonstrates that the Council has undertaken appropriate pre-planning application discussions with relevant local stakeholders and the wider community, and actively involved them in the project development process in accordance with guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), legislation in the Localism Act, and Bath and North East Somerset's Neighbourhood Planning Protocol. This Statement of Community Engagement gives details of all consultation activity undertaken prior to the planning application being submitted.

The Council is committed to stakeholder engagement, consultation and communication, and to this end has ensured that local residents and the wider community were invited to give feedback on the proposals prior to a formal planning application being submitted.

2. Policy

The Council can confirm that the public consultation and engagement programme was in keeping with the requirements of:

- National policy and guidance introduced in the Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework
- Bath and North East Somerset's consultation requirements

3. Our Approach

From the start of this process, the Council has recognised the importance of identifying key groups and stakeholders, contacting them at an early stage in the process and trying to resolve any issues well ahead of submission of a planning application.

The principles adopted throughout the process of public consultation have been to:

- engage and involve as many local residents and groups as possible
- present the proposals clearly and honestly
- listen and provide feedback
- be clear about what the applicant is able to change as part of the consultation and why
- be clear about what the applicant cannot change and why

4. Stakeholders

In line with recommendations in national planning policy that applicants seek pre-application discussions with decision makers, the Council and Creatrix PR identified and approached key stakeholders. Progress meetings have been held from Summer 2012 to 2014 with the following groups to facilitate discussions about the proposals:

- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- Bath Preservation Trust
- Guildhall Market Traders
- Empire Residents
- Friends of Victoria Art Gallery
- Federation of Bath Residents Association
- Bath Improvement District
- Bath Tourism Plus
- World Heritage Steering Group

Briefing sessions were also held with:

- B&NES Cabinet
- Liberal Democrats Group
- Conservative Group
- Ward Councillors
- B&NES Planning Authority
- B&NES Heritage Services

5. Public Consultation

5.1 Press Relations

Press releases were issued in October 2012, July 2013 and March 2014, these communicated the latest updates to the local and wider public. Press coverage was received within different mediums, including print and online. A sample of coverage achieved is reproduced at Appendix A.

5.3 Social Media

5.3.1 Website

The Council website has a dedicated page for the Grand Parade & Undercroft project. This webpage has been live since October 2012. The web address is:

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/major-projects/regenerating-grand-parade-and-undercroft>

5.3.2 Twitter

Since October 2012 the Council has also posted updates about the project on Twitter.

6. Feedback

6.2 Key themes

Feedback from the various stakeholder meetings has been supportive, in particular for the Council's objective to bring the Colonnades back into effective use for the public. Notwithstanding this positive feedback there have been a number of key themes that the project team has addressed during the design development. These key themes were:

- Architecture of the Restaurant Receptions on Grand Parade
- Management of deliveries and waste collection
- Noise breakout from the restaurants
- Flood management
- Enhancing the pedestrian environment on Grand Parade
- Can the Bath economy support more restaurants?

6.2.1 Architecture of the Restaurant Receptions on Grand Parade

The appearance of the Restaurant Receptions at either end of Grand Parade has created considerable interest from the stakeholders. The initial concept design had a solid bath stone appearance. The feedback was that these Receptions should have a more contemporary / transparent appearance. The design was therefore developed to provide a glass box with sheet metal roof; however the general feedback on this design was that the Receptions were disconnected from the existing architecture of Grand Parade and The Colonnades. The proposed design therefore is an elegant combination of bath stone, glass and sheet metal roof.

6.2.2 Management of deliveries and waste collection

Detailed consultation with the Guildhall Market Traders and the Empire Residents identified concerns about how and when the new restaurants would be serviced without adversely affecting the existing operations. Particular concern was raised about using Boatstall Lane and the impact this might have on the East Gate. In response to this consultation the design has included two large lifts – one to service each of the restaurants – plus dedicated waste storage areas within the restaurant demises.

6.2.3 Noise breakout from the restaurants

Understandably the Empire Residents have been eager to know what noise impact the new restaurants will have on their area. A specialist acoustic consultant was therefore appointed at the start of the concept design stage to make sure the configuration and materials used for the

restaurants will not have an adverse impact. A separate report is provided as part of the planning application to explain what measures have been taken.

6.2.4 Flood management

The siting of the restaurants alongside the river has obvious flood management issues which have been interrogated with the Environment Agency. The proposed solution is to raise the restaurant floor levels above the 1:100 year flood level (see separate report submitted as part of this planning application). This principal has also been interrogated as part of the Historic Building Assessment with input from the heritage stakeholder groups.

6.2.5 Enhancing pedestrian environment on Grand Parade

During the project viability stage the feedback from many stakeholders was that Grand Parade has greater potential as a destination subject to developing a new solution for vehicular traffic. Some stakeholders were keen to see Grand Parade pedestrianised; however the sheer volume of buses using Grand Parade on a daily basis meant this idea was not feasible as part of this project. The project team has however made some significant improvements to Grand Parade by introducing the two restaurant receptions, changing the carriageways, enhancing the pavements and de-cluttering the street furniture. Having said that, the design still has adequate provision for buses and loading bays.

6.2.6 Can the Bath economy support more restaurants?

The principle of redeveloping the site for use as restaurants was generally accepted, with many welcoming this use, although a small number of respondents were of the view that the Bath economy cannot support more restaurants. A specialist property agent was therefore appointed to soft market test how attractive restaurants in this location might be. The feedback to date has been encouraging. It should be noted however that the Council Cabinet has stated that pre-let agreements for the restaurants must be signed before a construction contract can be awarded.

7. Conclusion

From 2012 to date there has been extensive consultation with stakeholders about the viability of the project and subsequently the design development. There has also been wide spread communication about the project through public channels including the media, Council website and social media.

Appendix A: Press Coverage

Bath Chronicle, March 17th 2014

Restaurants needed for new Grand Parade and Undercroft scheme



Restaurants needed for new Grand Parade and Undercroft scheme

Comments (20)

A £5 million project to transform the neglected Grand Parade and Undercroft into a new exclusive dining quarter for the city has moved a step forward.

Bath and North East Somerset Council is now looking for formal approaches by restaurants interested in the new venue.

As part of the scheme the two restaurants created in the development have to pre-let before the council will start the renovations.

Situated below Grand Parade the two new restaurants will have al fresco dining, overlooking Pulteney Bridge and the weir. Grand Parade will be transformed with the introduction of two new foyers providing greeting areas and lift access to each restaurant. In addition, a new stairwell leading down to the Colonnades will also be installed.

Leader of the council, Councillor Paul Crossley, said: "There are exciting possibilities for businesses who want a breath taking and unique location for their restaurant. The redevelopment of the Colonnades is

something which is particularly exciting given their riverside location and important place in Bath's commercial history."

A planning application for the development is due to be submitted in April.

Leisure property specialists Fleurets has been appointed to act on behalf of the council to attract restaurant tenants to the development.

Kevin Conibear, from Fleurets' Bristol office said: "Restaurant demand for Bath is always exceptional, due to the popularity of the city and the visitors that it attracts, coupled with limited restaurant availability. The Colonnades is unique and will offer riverside dining within the heart of the city. The image of Pulteney Bridge and the Colonnades defines Bath and is one of the most recognisable aspects of the city and this really is a great opportunity for restaurateurs to acquire trophy sites."

Speaking at a Resource Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel meeting, property director for B&NES Tom McBain, said the development had received 18 expressions of interest from restaurants last year. He said the successful chain would be an exclusive name.

"This will be somewhere you have to book several weeks in advance."

Councillor Roger Symonds (Lib Dem, Combe Down) said the scheme was brilliant.

"The people of this city, both people who have been here a long time and new people, will welcome this."

But some members of the scrutiny panel criticised the consultation process.

Councillor Charles Gerrish (Con, Keynsham North) said: "I am disappointed that the council does not follow the example of developers engaging with the public before there's a planning application.

"I think this is such a major issue as far as the city is concerned we should engage with the public before submitting a planning application."

Mr McBain said there had been extensive consultation with stakeholder groups and there would be a public exhibition once the planning application was submitted.

It is anticipated that the restaurants will be available for occupation in early 2015.

For further information contact Kevin Conibear or Stuart Parsons on 0117 923 8090.

Read more: <http://www.bathchronicle.co.uk/Restaurants-needed-new-Grand-Parade-Undercroft/story-20820405-detail/story.html#ixzz2wVF95evT>