

Grand Parade and Undercroft – Cabinet Meeting 8 May 2013

Representation

My name is Anne Robins. I live at The Empire and represent the committee of the Empire Owners Association. The building is not an hotel.

The committee was consulted in October, and some development welcomed but many concerns documented; we have not seen evidence that they have been considered, so cannot support current proposals and request consultation.

Viability and Options Report

The report both puzzles and concerns us.

It states the opportunity is viable if delivered in four Phases, but covers only the viability of Phase 1. Are the Phase 1 financials for the minimum or maximum scheme? There are no footfall predictions, nor likely opening hours. Is there adequate contingency?

For Phase 2, we query assigning market rental income solely to the developer. There are no financials. When will there be a viability report?

It recommends Phase 2 paralleling Phase 1, but does Phase 1's success depend on Phase 2 or *vice versa*?

It focuses on benefits with little on implications, such as those for other businesses in Bath, and for residents. Would restaurants bring in mainly new customers or would existing ones lose business? There are implications for deliveries, waste, ventilation, fire barriers, noise, transport etc.

The relocation of 20 car parking spaces is included among objectives; logically this is an issue to be addressed, not an objective.

Street markets on the bus routes of Grand Parade, Orange Grove, and High Street could be highly dangerous, and undue proliferation of routine street markets could lead to our resembling the third world, rather than a World Heritage City.

Specific Considerations for residents at The Empire

We are disappointed that Phase 4, which could add so much to heritage and river views, has become very distant.

In Phase 3, the case for 2 additional storeys in Newmarket Row is not made. Height and design would be key.

We may well support development of the Colonnades, once details emerge. However the maximum scheme includes 'restaurant/leisure'. If this is code for a nightclub or casino, we oppose it.

We do not see Boatstall Lane as a feasible access route either for pedestrians or deliveries.

Safe and clear access to our underground garage is essential, but this right of way is shown as 'circulation/seating'; an oversight? Also it would be unsafe for pedestrians and Empire drivers to try to co-exist at the gated entrance point. There is no turning space in the lower lane so normal delivery vehicles cannot be used. Any trolley type alternative would cause problems of early morning or late evening noise, or conflict with garage users. Parade Gardens seems the sensible access.

We do value the covered market and support its being upgraded and expanded internally in Phase 2, but oppose the re-use of the Guildhall car park as a routine market.

The car park is unsightly, with over 25 waste bins, so could be improved. However there are many factors to consider, including waste and noise. Also access for regular painting of the Empire, and for Fire Brigade attendance at the back of it, the market, Guildhall, and Undercroft, are all essential. The Empire first floor garden requires deliveries, and the peace within it highly valued.

Finally the rear of the Guildhall is an important heritage vista which should not be obscured routinely by stalls.

Conclusion

So while some development will be welcome, current proposals are not. We ask for communication and consultation so that we can be constructive ongoing.