



BATH PRESERVATION TRUST

Stadium for Bath Feedback Questionnaire July 2018 - BPT Response

The **Bath Preservation Trust** was set up in 1934 to safeguard the historic city of Bath. Bath is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the only complete city in the UK afforded World Heritage Status. The purposes of the Trust are:

- to encourage and support the conservation, evolution and enhancement of Bath and its environs within a framework appropriate both to its historic setting and its sustainable future, and
- to provide educational resources which focus on the architectural and historic importance of the city.

The Trust receives no statutory funding and is supported by visitor income, grants, legacies, donations and around 1400 members who share a passion for the city and its environs.

The Trust also runs four accredited museums in Bath and has the support of over 200 volunteers.

1. One of our priorities is the regeneration of the riverside. Do you support the riverside regeneration proposals?

We strongly support riverside regeneration and the creation of the 'River Room' is a pleasing idea. The landscaping of the 'Rec-side' riverbank needs to take into account what role it is intended to perform in the WHS public realm, with an appropriate contrast to the formal gardens opposite and with a maintenance regime which is sustainable and compatible with flooding and heavy public use; while continuing to use some soft landscaping and trees to break up the space and the façade behind.

We note that the stepped down approach, for flood capacity, leaves the riverside unfenced. While BPT's preference, purely visually, would be for the unfenced approach, there has been considerable public concern relating to riverside safety which has looked to fence the whole of the riverbank. It is unclear what approach is compatible with the flood requirements and we feel this issue should be addressed early.

We note that much of the riverside regeneration illustration highlights elements of public benefit which are, however, not under Bath Rugby or even the Rec Trust's control, and should not therefore be factored in as compensatory public benefit for the potential

'harm' of the stadium at this stage. This includes the bridge to Parade Gardens, the removal of the Radial Gate, and the reconfiguration/omission of the Beazer Maze. We believe that the scope of any future planning application should be made clear in any future presentations (by shading or making recessive those elements which are merely nice-to-have rather than part of Bath Rugby's intentions or capacity to deliver). Without commitment from the Local Authority at this stage, these elements of 'public benefit' may not be delivered. We would nevertheless encourage partner discussions should take place at an early stage to take advantage of any opportunities offered here. Bath Preservation Trust, as freeholder of the Beazer Maze, which is covenanted to stay as public open space in its current configuration, has a direct interest in that aspect of this discussion.

2. *What are your thoughts on the concept designs of the new Stadium For Bath?*

Our primary response is that those areas in which BPT will have most interest, the views into and across the Rec, the height of the stands, the actual visual appearance, and the roofscape, have not been addressed in these concept designs and therefore it is not possible to assess their impact on the historic environment. Without this we cannot give an informed view on the concept designs.

With that caveat, we have the following observations.

- All of the concept designs use the colonnade as the key design principle. While we appreciate that this responds to the colonnades opposite and there is sense in this approach, we would have preferred to see an alternative design approach to consider. We would expect to see more of the design journey and how a particular solution has been come to, whether other design approaches/façade articulation has been considered and discounted, and why.
- The colonnade approach could appear heavy. We would like to see a lighter touch and more transparency. This leads us to be more supportive in terms of materiality of those designs which suggest a lighter touch and a degree of physical transparency at the higher levels, and the use of Bath stone only where appropriate. Other materials should be more directly considered to achieve the appropriate lightness of touch. We note by comparison that the new (Wilkinson Eyre) designs for the Compton and Edrich stands at Lords (illustrated <https://www.lords.org/news/2018/may/mcc-unveils-spectacular-designs-for-new-compton-and-edrich-stands-at-lords/>) demonstrate how to increase capacity while maintaining transparency to short and long views.

3. *What are your thoughts on the various proposed uses within the scheme including food hall, short stay car parking, conference and banqueting event space?*

Our understanding is that the raised pitch was motivated by the desire to lift the pitch out of the flood plain and using a hybrid pitch that would be sufficiently robust to be used by the community on non-match days: and the various voids and spaces created by this then offer a variety of economic opportunities. In relation to the car park we can see that it solves one of the challenges presented by traffic to the Rec and offers a facility for the Town on non-match days; we would expect to see by way of 'quid pro quo' the removal of other above ground parking areas in and around the Rec (by the turnstiles and on adjacent land) to improve the visual amenity. We would also expect that a car park should only get permission if INDEPENDENT modelling suggests its net impact is neutral or positive on the

City Centre. Wider public benefit could also be achieved if more of the city centre, particularly around Bog Island, were as a consequence pedestrianised.

The other offers are clearly part of Arena 1865's business model and are mostly outwith the BPT's remit. The question for the City is the extent to which this would represent an additional amenity or merely displace services from other economically active parts of town. We note that comparators were made to eg Spitalfields, which are not comparable in terms of available population and footfall; we would encourage business modelling on the basis of a thorough understanding of the Bath market and for that economic model to be transparently shared. We believe it would be a mistake to be over-optimistic in financial projections for a retail offer at a time of considerable turbulence in the retail sector in Bath and beyond.

The conference and banqueting space, at the upper levels of the West Stand in particular, must not be allowed to dominate the design of that area and compromise the need for some visual transparency of the stadium to the hills beyond and the creation of sightlines and eyecatcher 'gaps' in the structure.

4. What are your thoughts on the opportunity for the community focused East Stand in the stadium development to provide wider benefits in terms of sporting participation and addressing specific social needs

We are concerned about the apparent proximity of the new East Stand to the listed Cricket Pavilion; the setting of this heritage asset would be compromised if the stadium were that close.

In terms of design of the East Stand as it faces the Rec, this must not be a 'forgotten' elevation but should be designed positively in a landscape context.

A permanent East Stand is only justifiable if there are permanent facilities and spaces for use by the community and the charitable sector. There is reference to office space and facilities being provided free. This would undoubtedly be attractive but it sounds an offer too good to be true! It may be appropriate for the Guild Hub, as an existing Bath co-working environment, to be contacted about their experience of the co-working model in Bath. Until there is a greater understanding of what the availability might represent it is hard to comment further.

5. Any other comments?

We are unable to tell as yet whether Grimshaws have been able to match their undoubted understanding of the historic context with a design that respects, conserves and enhances key elements of that environment. It is therefore crucial that there is further consultation on design before finalising a planning application.