



Bath Heritage Watchdog

contact@bathheritagewatchdog.org

APPLICATION NUMBER: 18/03334/FUL

ADDRESS: Street Record, Milsom Street

PROPOSAL: Erection of 24 temporary retail chalets along Milsom Street and 2 mobile catering pitches for 18 days for the Bath Christmas Market.

CASE OFFICER: Tessa Hampden

DATE: 22 August 2018

COMMENT: OBJECTION

Bath Heritage Watchdog objects to this application.

It is recognised that the annual Christmas market is popular with visitors and brings a substantial number of people into the city.

In recent years there has been increasing concern over the number of chalets and the overall impact that the market has on the normal operation of the city and for residents.

We do not consider that the market should be expanded into Milsom Street, which carries Bath's reputation for high quality shopping in what some consider its 'generally haphazard, untidy and highly commercial appearance'. The attractiveness of the quality shops in listed buildings will not be enhanced by what will be regarded as wooden sheds in the street outside, and it will only need a couple of adverse comments in Tripadvisor to ensure that the footfall in the permanent shops will be reduced for far longer than the Christmas Market is in place. It is perhaps worth mentioning that House Of Fraser has been in the news for trading difficulties, and so far Jolly's has escaped the closure threat. It will only require a few reports of reduced trade and that position could very quickly change.

Extra stalls were installed in Union Street in 2017 which did cause additional congestion but as the area was pedestrianised, this was limited. This proposal involves the complete closure of Milsom Street to vehicles. This will preclude the disabled from accessing the area by removing essential parking places. It also will involve the relocation of the Park and Ride bus service from Lansdown, resulting in those who might use the Park and Ride being set down away from the stalls that they might be interested in. It should be noted that this Park and Ride service is very popular for the elderly and less mobile who use it to access the Post Office and Waitrose. In addition it is a popular commuter drop off point. An alternative terminus is unlikely to be so convenient for both groups.

One factor that appears to have been overlooked in the planning application is the need to restock the permanent shops. Delivery lorries are often seen parked to unload replacement stock, and closing the street to such deliveries will give rise to grievances from shops who rely on such deliveries. No thought has been to the impact on traders in Green Street and New Bond Street who would normally be served by vehicles that gain access via Milsom Street.

There is also the additional factor of the cable and service runs associated with the chalets. Although these are generally safely handled they are visually intrusive and present an extra hazard to pedestrians with mobility problems. In our opinion the location of the chalets service runs, plus the extra people around the chalets, could deter those just wishing to shop in the established outlets, who will be unaccustomed to making their way through crowds.

The location of the toilet facilities down by the Abbey maybe considered to be too far away by some. Additional toilets should be considered nearer the application site (if Approved)

Given the large number of vacant retail units in this location, notably the virtually empty Milsom Place with its courtyard area, and also the west side of Broad Street which is largely empty, and even possibly The Octagon, could or should consideration not be given to filling these empty spaces with a sort of 'pop up shop' Christmas Market set of traders, thus making the shopping area look less derelict and avoiding closing Milsom Street in order to clutter it with chalets. This alternative approach is far more compatible with the aim expressed in the Placemaking Plan to encourage "retail development that improves the shopping offer and enhances the reputation of the city centre". The reputation of the city centre is not going to be enhanced by closing the primary shopping street to deliveries in order to hide the view of the permanent shops by placing wooden chalets in the sight lines.

The adage 'quality not quantity' needs to be taken on board.