

FOBRA COMMENTS ON PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS IN THE HIGH STREET AND ORANGE GROVE

1. FoBRA represents 25 traditional residents' associations in central and outer areas of Bath. We also have as affiliate members the two student unions at the two universities, the Bath Bus Users' Group and the Bath Independent Guest Houses Association.

2. FoBRA strongly supports the Public Realm & Movement Programme. We do not want to see it watered down. The High Street is one of the most chaotic spaces in Bath, and we are pleased that the Council is seeking to improve it.

3. We welcome:

- the increased width of pavement at the southern end of the High Street, where pedestrian usage is very heavy.
- the lengthened 'narrow lane' outside the Guildhall for pedestrians to cross the High Street.

We see these as helping to reverse the hierarchy on the streets of Bath, to put pedestrians before cars.

4. We are content with:

- the three bus stops opposite the Guildhall;
- the loading bay and disabled bay opposite them outside the Guildhall
- the new 'proposed controlled crossing facility' at the NE corner of the Abbey.

5. We assume that OTTBs can continue to stop on the 'bus stand' proposed at the SE corner of the High Street.

6. We agree with other commentators that there need to be coach stands on both sides of the High Street for Continental and UK coaches. Bath benefits from visitors, and in future more of them will have to arrive by means other than private cars.

7. We also agree with the concern that has been expressed about the right turn into Bridge Street from the High Street, which is held up by traffic waiting to drive through the bus gate. Congestion here is a problem for cyclists as well as vehicles:

- we question whether the roadway needs to be marked as a bus lane at the north end of the High Street, given that the bus gate doesn't operate 24 hours.
- We suggest it might be better to reverse the proposed disabled bay and parking bay outside the Council's Payments Office, so that smaller vehicles provide less obstruction to others trying to turn right.
- We think the phasing of the traffic lights could be improved, to allow more vehicles to flow northwards.

8. We are dismayed by the objections of some businesspeople to the taxi rank in Orange Grove. Taxis provide an important public service to residents and visitors, and their customers include young people needing a safe means of getting home in the evening. These people should not be stigmatised.

9. If there is a problem of bad behaviour among taxi drivers, the solution is to require them to pay for a marshal, as at airports, to manage the queue. If customers have to bear the cost, so be it.

10. As a last resort, if there is not enough space for all the legitimate users of the High Street and Orange Grove to stop there, we would suggest investigating two alternatives:

- Taxis should be able to use part of the bus stop in Orange Grove in the evening, when their trade is busiest; or
- A taxi rank should be instituted on the eastern side of Grand Parade, where the existing bus stops and OTTB bus stand take up a large amount of space.

11. In any case, there should be a further attempt to rationalise deliveries to local business and offices (including the Council's). The freight consolidation initiative should be promoted in the area, and the Council should investigate limiting deliveries to specific hours of the day.

Federation of Bath Residents' Associations
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