

<b>APPLICATION NO:</b> 20/01223/CONDIT	<b>OFFICER:</b> Miss Michelle Payne
<b>DATE REGISTERED:</b> 25th July 2020	<b>DATE OF EXPIRY :</b> 19th September 2020
<b>WARD:</b> Lansdown	<b>PARISH:</b>
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	ABF Pension Trustees LTD
<b>LOCATION:</b>	The Quadrangle Imperial Square Cheltenham
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on planning permission ref. 19/01436/FUL to allow for minor material changes to the approved public realm improvements scheme

## REPRESENTATIONS

Number of contributors	<b>7</b>
Number of objections	<b>7</b>
Number of representations	<b>0</b>
Number of supporting	<b>0</b>

20 Grosvenor Road  
Gloucester  
GL2 0SA

**Comments:** 3rd August 2020

Comments from Cheltenham Art in the Park (AITP)

### Executive Summary

The proposed variation of condition 2 signals the end of Cheltenham AITP in the Imperial Gardens as the design for art stands is in no way fit for purpose. But Cheltenham AITP recognise the benefits to the landscaping of the gardens and would still support the plaza scheme if option 2 below is supported by the Cheltenham Borough Council.

Cheltenham AITP and its representatives remain open to discussing this matter with all parties.

### Background

The Cheltenham Art in the Park exhibition celebrated its 50th continuous summer exhibition in 2019 and the organising committee would like this showpiece event to continue into the future supporting the vibrant cultural environment of Cheltenham, its residents, visitors and of course its artists.

In 2018 SF Planning Ltd met with AITP a number of times, listening to our concerns with regard to the approved development's impact on the AITP exhibitions.

From the original Design and Access Statement we could see that SF Planning Ltd have listened to our initial views and that their original proposal could allow AITP to continue into the future and remain adjacent to the Imperial Gardens.

SF Planning Ltd had provided a proposal that:

- incorporated the outputs from our initial discussions
- offered us the opportunity to join with them in developing their design which we welcomed and remain committed to do
- that improved the environment and facilities available to the users of the Imperial Gardens

We did have some concerns over the proposal which included:

- how the bespoke exhibition stands are to be erected
- how their provision will be managed
- how space can be provided for stewards and sales
- whether the proposed stands are capable of protecting exhibited paintings from adverse weather
- any costs to AITP that may arise from utilising this space
- when the construction project would be complete and the facilities are to be made available.

Despite these concerns, but based on the provision of 23 exhibition stands in a linear layout as shown in their Design and Access Statement, AITP supported the development.

## The Proposed Variation of Condition 2

On the 23rd July 2020 AITP received correspondence from SF Planning informing us of their proposed changes and they kindly provided an architect's impression of a new layout. This suggested significant changes to the original plan which included:

1. The exhibition stands were no longer in a linear format, but grouped in 3's boxed around 5 trees
2. The number of stands had reduced from 23 to 15.

AITP voiced its initial concerns over these changes to SF Planning and agreed to continue to discuss the design with SF Planning.

On the 28th July SF Planning informed AITP that they were submitting the revised scheme and on the same day AITP received the notification from the Planning Team Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) indicating the revised scheme had been submitted on the 24th July.

From the evidence of the aforementioned timeline it would appear that the decision to submit the revised scheme with a reduced provision for AITP had been made before any consultation with AITP.

For decades AITP has held an annual open-air art exhibition in the Imperial Gardens on land owned by the CBC and it is this location that would be used by the owners of the Quadrangle building to expand their refurbishment of the building to include the new plaza.

The exhibition which lasts 4 weeks provides screens for over 100 local artists of all standards and experience to display and sell their work. The AITP committee; organises a land use agreement with the CBC, purchases the necessary insurances, sets up stewarding rotas, provides any furniture & fittings and arranges the construction of temporary scaffolding which provides 22 screens with an enclosed stewarding enclosure. Then for the 4-week exhibition the committee members oversee the exhibition and the sales.

The original scheme of 23 stands was based on our desire to maintain the 22 screens we currently provide but also to account for covered space for our daily stewards, so whilst we accept that SF Planning's client would like to reduce the number of stands on cost grounds, the change does mean a 32% reduction in available exhibition space for AITP.

The move from a linear layout to a set of 3 stands boxed around 5 trees also means that stewards cannot view all of the stands and this has significant security issues for AITP and any other exhibition users. A linear arrangement even in a street format (where stands are facing each other), allows stewards or any exhibiting artists to view all screens and prevents the theft of paintings.

If AITP concede the reduction in display stands as a necessary compromise from the original design, then the layout suggested remains an issue. This design is unfit for the purpose of displaying art for AITP and any other artist who may wish to exhibit on more than one cluster of stands.

Problems still exist from the original design that SF Planning assured AITP could be discussed with their architect. Whilst the current Covid 19 situation may have prevented a face to face meeting, no steps have been taken to arrange a virtual meeting between the architect and AITP to discuss the following:

- The screens on the stands need to be deeper to accommodate a sufficient volume of paintings and to provide safe fixing for large works.
- The stands are better located immediately adjacent to each other to offer protection to most of them from adverse weather.
- The roofs on the stand appear to be shallower than those AITP build each year and again this would risk damage by poor weather.

There are perhaps better options for the proposed new layout, one of which would be to locate the stands in space adjacent to the new low brick wall which is provided as the boundary to the main planting.

A single line of stands adjacent to each other, abutting the brick wall starting from the corner with the pavement off the A4015, following the wall to the point where the ramp begins. This could provide approximately 12 stands (24m) and a further 5 or more of the 15 stands in the proposal that face the wall could remain, thereby providing a minimum of 17 stands.

The attached sketch AITP 200801 shows the locations suggested.

## Conclusions and options

1. AITP was made aware of the original Quadrangle project and the submitted plaza scheme by the CBC because this removed the land that we occupy each year for our exhibition, we can therefore conclude that in some part the reprovision of space or even facilities for AITP to continue is a desire of the CBC and this is why we were originally consulted.

Both the CBC and the development project team have voiced support for re-providing an exhibition space for AITP and we are very grateful for that. However, that commitment has not been kept by the development project team and their design has eroded to the point where a viable art exhibition space is no longer achievable. A reduced number of stands designed in isolation by the project team does not signal a co-operative approach or any consideration that AITP has any importance to their scheme or to Cheltenham.

If the CBC decide that this scheme is approved as submitted, then AITP believes this proposal does not meet AITP's needs or those of other artists wanting to exhibit and the AITP committee would like to meet with the CBC to seek alternative locations within the Imperial Gardens for AITP to site its self-built screens and stewarding facilities.

2. AITP is willing to compromise on the number of stands, if a linear design can be provided as suggested above:
  - i. The provision of space for stewards remains an issue and unless something is specified in the design AITP would lose a further stand to this need. Alternatively, AITP could provide a small domestic gazebo that would be erected on a daily basis and removed each evening. Even so, this means that AITP could lose up to 7 screens and will have to reduce the number of artists exhibiting, or extend the exhibition to 5 weeks.

- ii. Unfortunately, we cannot rely on dry weather every day of an open-air art exhibition, so the stand design requires further work and must take account of the fact that they are being used to display art in the open air.
- iii. Despite promises from the project team that AITP would be consulted on the design of the stands, this has not happened to date, so AITP would ask the CBC to ensure that this requirement is entered as a condition of planning consent.
- iv. If the CBC agree that the linear design suggested above should be pursued then this and the minimum requirement to provide at least 17 stands designed with input by AITP should be entered as a condition of planning consent.
- v. How the provision or renting of the stands is to be managed is unknown and AITP should be treated as a favoured customer and guaranteed access to all of the art stands it requires for the same 4+ weeks every year in preference to other potential users.

## Recommendation

Option 2 above is recommended to ensure that the plaza scheme is completed to the benefit of the Imperial Gardens and its users and visitors, which includes Cheltenham AITP.

### **Comments:** 12th August 2020

As you are aware we have submitted the attached comments to the revised design of the Plaza scheme. Here is a version associated with our suggested layout referenced in our submission (available to view in Documents tab). The areas highlighted in yellow suggest where stands could be erected in a line and how some of the stands suggested by SF planning could also be utilised.

### **Comments:** 24th August 2020

Cheltenham Art in the Park Committee comments on revised plans received by the Council c. 17th August 2020.

The Cheltenham Borough Council each year grants Cheltenham AITP the use of land in the Imperial Gardens for 6 weeks; to set up, exhibit and take down our temporary exhibition stands and the Stewards enclosure. Each year AITP builds 22 stands (screens), builds additional stands for displaying its banners and builds a circa 10 feet square waterproof enclosure for two stewards to oversee the exhibition and to manage sales.

We note with interest the new design from SF Planning which incorporates some of our ideas outlined in our submitted objection. Unfortunately, once again this change has not involved direct consultation with Cheltenham AITP and therefore this design still does not enable us to operate our annual open-air exhibition as we have for 50 years.

- The provision of only 15 art stands reduces our exhibition capacity by 32% which limits the number of artists being able to exhibit and the cash flow from screen fees and sales levies that funds the exhibitions.
- There is no provision for a stewarding facility.

The Plaza scheme was originally presented to us as an improvement to the Imperial Gardens whilst providing the facilities for Cheltenham AITP because the land used by AITP each year which has been provided by the Cheltenham Borough Council for the scheme, would no longer be available to AITP.

The initial scheme providing 23 art stands offered something we could have probably developed and worked with, but since then there has been no engagement with AITP in its development or design, and so we get the sense, that having obtained consent, the latest designs are only paying lip service to the original ideal, and there is no real commitment to reprovide a viable facility for Cheltenham AITP.

Unfortunately we feel we must continue to object to this version of the plaza scheme and if the decision is for it to continue without providing fit for purpose facilities, we must seek help from the Cheltenham Borough Council to find an alternative location in the Imperial Gardens where we can continue providing our own temporary exhibition stands.

The Cheltenham Art in the Park committee remain open to discussing with all parties on how our requirements can be met, either with the developer's project team, their architect or the Cheltenham Borough Council planning team.

It is with our sincerest regret that at this point our objection stands.

9 Arthur Bliss Gardens  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL50 2LN

**Comments:** 10th August 2020

I support the improvements to the building and surrounding area contained in the original approved scheme. Previous engagement to maintain a facility for Art in the Park had been very good and the approved scheme allowed this important event to continue. Art in the Park has operated for over 50 years and is a significant attraction bringing people in to the town. I object to the revised scheme as it makes it impossible to continue with Art in the Park in the future and this results in a loss of a significant community facility. The revised scheme fails to provide any justification for the changes and does not represent an improvement on the approved scheme. The only reason for the change is to reduce complexity and cost for the developer. The revision also fails to highlight the loss of amenity created by the changes. As the scheme is inferior the developed should be required to complete the works in line with existing approved scheme.

19 Kimberland Way  
Abbeymead  
Gloucester  
GL4 5TW

**Comments:** 1st September 2020

I am writing to say that the new design from SF planning still only has provision for 15 stands and has no water proof area for a Stewarding Facility. This will mean a big reduction in people being able to Exhibit at this long standing Exhibition which has always been an asset to Cheltenham.

Therefore my objection still stands to this scheme.

**Comments:** 7th August 2020

I am writing to object to this proposal, as a long standing Exhibitor and supporter of Art in the Park, I find the plan not fit for purpose because it reduces the original Art Stands and the layout is not good either. This is such a shame after all the years we have been showing and is a great attraction for visitors to Cheltenham.

Mill Cottage  
Dancing Green  
Ross On Wye  
Herefordshire  
HR9 5TE

**Comments:** 12th August 2020

As a regular exhibitor at Art in the Park Cheltenham I am very disappointed with the new proposal for the exhibiting space for future exhibitions. A reduction in screens will mean a smaller exhibition and I struggle to see how the new proposed layout would work with regards to security and adverse weather conditions.

It would be a great shame to lose the AITP annual exhibition, not just for the artists but also for the local community and visitors to the town. Cheltenham has a great cultural heritage and I feel AITP significantly contributes to this each year.

2C School Road  
Bishops Cleeve  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL52 8BA

**Comments:** 12th August 2020

As a long term supporter of and contributor to Art in the Park, I am very concerned that the proposed variation to the layout and number of exhibition stands will make it very difficult, if not impossible, for Art in the Park and other potential exhibitors to display their work securely and effectively. The three-sided stands which are now suggested may also prove to be a hazard to visitors and pedestrians.

4 Pear Tree Close  
Woodmancote  
Cheltenham  
GL52 9TY

**Comments:** 12th August 2020

Representing Southam Art Group, one of several local art clubs in the Cheltenham area which have been welcomed as participants by Cheltenham AITP in recent years.

The planning permission proposal in its latest incarnation excludes the possibility of any workable exhibition in future. In order for proper stewarding to take place and the security of the artwork to be maintained, stands MUST be sited in a linear manner. I therefore object to the proposal and its clear implication of the ending of a much-loved and enriching annual event in Cheltenham's cultural life.

I find it deeply disturbing that, despite assurances being given that appropriate consultation with AITP would take place, this has signally failed to occur.

**Comments:** 24th August 2020

I write to add further to my previous objection.

Whereas the developer has now tweaked the concept to provide a linear character to the proposed display stands, the number of these is patently inadequate to the needs of the annual exhibition. It appears that AitP is being asked to accept a dramatic cut in its size and a

consequent impoverishment of the "spectacle" provided down to something approaching that of a village fair.

The AitP committee could be forgiven if it were to decide that enough is enough and that commercial interests have won out over the needs of the local community and fifty years of tradition.

Were this to be approved by CBC, it would imply strongly to the casual observer that the Council is very happy to involve itself with events of national and international importance via "festivals" and the like but has scant regard for local artists who may be struggling to make a reputation.

2C School Road  
Bishops Cleeve  
Cheltenham  
GL52 8BA

**Comments:** 26th August 2020

I have looked at the new proposal from the developer and would like to comment further:

Whilst the suggested change back to a linear position of the run of display boards is an improvement on the initial variation application, the number of units still does not provide AitP with sufficient space for an effective and secure exhibition.

Cheltenham Borough Council should continue to support locally organised events, such as AitP which draws visitors to the town for four weeks annually, and insist that the developer adheres to the original, approved, plans, which gave scope to AitP and to other potential exhibitors.