

Objection by Bristol Walking Alliance to 20/04474/F:
Construction of moving observation cabin in Millennium Square



Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) objects to the proposal to construct a visitor ride in Millennium Square due to its impact on pedestrians passing through and on people, particularly children, enjoying the amenities of the square.

The proposal in 20/04474/F to construct a visitor ride alongside and above We The Curious will have an overbearing and discriminatory effect on people enjoying the public realm in the area of Millennium and Anchor Squares. It will also have a harmful impact on the Primary Pedestrian Route, part of the Brunel Mile, which will be narrowed by the proposed siting of the base. Though we appreciate the ambition and novelty of the proposal, we feel that it is proposed for the wrong place.

Our objection relates to the position, size and potential noise of the ride. Its base, counterbalance and movement overhead will dominate an area used by many people for relaxation, including children who especially enjoy the water features in Millennium Square. Its presence will also be an interruption to and distraction from the many events that are successfully held in the Square.

The base of the ride will sit in a key part of the entrance to Millennium Square, occupying 8 square metres and intruding into one of the main water features used as a paddling pool by children in warmer months of the year. It will visually interfere with both the featured artworks and the sightlines along the shared pedestrian and cycle route that passes through that corner of the Square.



Excerpt from planning proposal showing position of base on route through Millennium Square

The width of the shared pedestrian/cycle route between the Reflection Pool and the quadrant water fountain will be reduced by approximately 1.6m by the base of the ride and a further 0.3m drainage gully. Given the potential presence of families sitting and standing along the edge of the paddling pool, ignored in the proposal, **this reduces the usable width to 4m or less – which is unacceptable for a shared route used by pedestrians and cyclists.** In addition, the base of the ride will obscure movement around the corner of the pool, increasing the chance of interference between cyclists and pedestrians, and so harming this Primary Pedestrian Route, contrary to policy BCAP30 of the Bristol Central Area Plan. The application seems to have ignored the fact that this is a shared use route, only considering pedestrian flows.

Presumably during construction and during the two-week maintenance period each year there will be a **much larger area cordoned off** at the base of the ride to ensure public safety. This will cause more harm to pedestrian and cycle routes passing through this corner of Millennium Square.

The application does not include any visualisations showing the overhead appearance of the ride taken from the viewpoint of people standing or sitting in Millennium Square near the water sculpture and pool.

The counterbalance of the ride will move up and down and rotate overhead in this part of the Square. The passenger pod of the ride will have a radius of movement overhead that will cover more than half of both Millennium Square and Anchor Square. **Together, the counterbalance and the pod will form an intimidating presence above the walking and sitting spaces.** This will be harmful to the amenity of the Square as a public space in what is designated a Conservation Area.

The noise of the ride mechanism may dominate the ambience, including the quieter sounds of the flowing water on the sculpture, so detracting from the current peaceful nature of the Square.

In the application, noise has been assessed for its impact on 'residential receivers', in other words on rooms inside the Ibis hotel on the west side of Millennium Square. **The noise assessment does not evaluate the excess noise levels that will be created in the Square itself near the mechanism.** As well as the continuous noise of motors while the ride is operating, according to the noise assessment the loudest component will be 'loud clicks' as the motor brakes are activated and deactivated. The additional annoyance factor for users of the Square of these loud clicks has not been considered in the noise assessment. If noise levels created by the ride, when measured at the quadrant fountain below the base of the ride, are above the current average ambient noise levels at this point, it will further harm the enjoyment of this space.

We suggest it is inequitable, and possibly discriminatory, to compromise the amenities freely enjoyed by many, particularly families with children, in Millennium Square in order to provide a ride that will only be affordable by a few.

Such a tourist attraction, while providing an exciting feature in the city, should be sited such that it does not harm or detract from existing well-used active travel routes and leisure facilities.

Bristol Walking Alliance
6 December 2020

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