

STATEMENT A4 – Stephen Bond

Dear Councillors

I am writing in support of this application for a unique glass viewing cabin at We The Curious.

For context, I am a heritage adviser, including to UNESCO, Government departments, agencies and local authorities, and provide heritage training, including to Historic England officers. I am advising the applicant on this scheme.

Officers have recommended you refuse this application for one reason: harm to the significance of heritage assets in its environs.

It is accepted by all parties that less than substantial harm to the significance of some heritage assets in the vicinity will result from Arc. In my professional opinion, there are two questions to consider:

What level of harm is involved?

By far the greater part of the significance of each and every heritage asset (including the Cathedral) will remain unaffected by Arc's presence and operation.

In short, it is for this reason that the heritage statement and addendum place the level of harm for each heritage asset as midway or lower on the sliding scale that is 'less than substantial' harm. This has to be the correct analysis, in the circumstances..

Do the benefits outweigh the harm?

It is very evident that Arc will deliver a range of exceptional public benefits that includes considerable heritage benefits. In my view, those heritage benefits have been undervalued by Historic England and officers.

In terms of heritage enhancements, I agree with comments from both the Dean of Bristol Cathedral, the Very Reverend Mandy Ford, and the Cathedral's highly-respected historian, Jon Cannon, who welcome the proposals.

As the Dean said: "A flight in Arc will show a fabulous new view of the Cathedral to visitors and the people of Bristol, which...will become a vital addition to our promotion of the Cathedral, its history and its mission. The Cathedral has successfully navigated 860 years of change and we need to look to the future, embracing whatever the 21st Century will bring, welcoming beneficial changes like Arc."

And, as Jon Cannon said: 'the elegance, attenuation, and relatively temporary nature of the [Arc] structure, plus the fact that it only intrudes on any view for brief periods of time, mitigate [harm].'

Yours faithfully,

Dr Stephen Bond