

Updated: Modern Palace Square street furniture approved despite objections



Adds statement by the Valletta Rehabilitation Project

The Planning Authority has approved the installation of modern lighting and street furniture at Palace Square in Valletta, despite objections from the Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee.

The committee had found that the designs are not compatible with the historic piazza. It objected to the lampposts and eight central benches and noted that lighting should emphasise the important buildings at the perimeter of the square.

The Mepa Planning Directorate has still recommended approval, arguing that the general design, although anachronistic with the architecture of the surrounding buildings, was considered to be acceptable as it would not compromise the historic backdrop.

"The proposal is seen as merely introducing modern design elements which are clearly identifiable as being part of a contemporary scheme at upgrading this urban space. The street furniture proposed is considered as emphasizing on the architecture of the baroque/neo-classical buildings on the perimeter by the contrast it is creating. At the same time the minimalist designs are not interfering with the more elaborate buildings such as the Grand Master's Palace and the Main Guard."

The directorate also argued that the benches were being recommended as these would allow for a place to stop and rest in what would soon be the largest and most important piazza in the centre of Valletta (since Freedom Square is to be built over). "The seating area will promote the use of the piazza as an informal meeting place and not just a place of transition from one location to another, thus further consolidating the rehabilitation of this urban space."

A representative of the Valletta Rehabilitation Project also agreed with the proposal, saying it would be better to have a few high lighting fixtures than having the square cluttered with lampposts.

The proposal was approved by all members except one. The Opposition representative voted in favour.

Mepa also granted permits for the street furniture, and a water feature, on condition that all items can be removed without harming the newly laid lava slabs. Some three quarters of the square has been paved with the slabs. The whole rehabilitation project is due for completion in November, transforming the square from a parking lot into a pedestrianised area.

VRP WELCOMES APPROVAL

The Valletta Rehabilitation Project in a statement welcomed Mepa approval of street furniture for Palace Square.

It said the square was being given back to the people and its designs were aimed at fulfilling current needs within a historical context.

The VRP said the baroque facades around the square were being restored and the lava slabs was such as not to deflect focus from the buildings, The water feature would be flush with the ground and could be covered, so that the square could continue to be used for national activities such as parades. All other items of street furniture could be easily removed.

The benches would be made of hardstone and steel, thus continuing the theme selected by Architect Renzo Piano in his own projects.

The VRP said that in order to avoid having to install 12 lamp posts for adequate lighting of the square, there would be two high fixtures each with five lamps. The fixtures will also host wi-fi and CCTV.

Comments

Joe Fenech (2 hours, 23 minutes ago)
This project could have done with MUCH more trees!!!

Joe Fenech (2 hours, 27 minutes ago)

Mario Bonnici:

You're right! In Freedom Square we need LESS cluttering and more space with geyser fountains, trees, etc. Having a parliament 'in the face' aligns it with totalitarian architecture.

Mario Bonnici (7 hours, 20 minutes ago)

The project looks nice. Well done.

But why don't we do the same with Freedom Square instead of building a huge parliament??

Joe Fenech (8 hours, 1 minute ago)

Those complaining about the modernity should wake up and realise they're living in the 21st century!!! Nehhu din il-mentalita immuffata!

Stefanie Boyd (9 hours, 50 minutes ago)

The lights are way too modern for the Palace square!

J. Falzon (17 hours, 30 minutes ago)

@ Hector Mamo

I think you are rushing slightly my friend

A "Beautiful" City, doesn't have to be a modern city, it just has to be a "Well Maintained" City
In my humble opinion, first there should be the repainting of ALL black covered buildings, restoration of all pre-1970 buildings(St.Elmo is a MUST), cleaning of ALL roads and organised litter service(and harsh penalty for littering)

THAT'S how you make a "Belt Sabiha", not by putting new lights(Which don't fit in to Valletta's Historical sites...)

F. Zammit (1 day, 20 hours ago)

For all those who as usual criticise everything the Government proposes, please note that even the Labour Party representative who sits on the MEPA Board, Roderick Galdes, voted in favour of the street furniture proposal.

Jean-Pierre Aquilina (1 day, 21 hours ago)

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

C Cassar (1 day, 23 hours ago)

Looks fantastic. However, I really hope that a professional maintenance plan is put in place and that the square is patrolled 24x7 in order to deter litter bugs and associated issues. Maintenance over the years often costs more than the original budget for the refurbishment, so I hope that this has already been planned.

a attard (1 day, 23 hours ago)

Those lamp posts do not blend with the area and simply downright ugly..... really ugly.....

GiovDeMartino (2 days, 1 hour ago)

How very clever was Aesop when he recounted the fable of the Miller and his son driving their donkey to the market.! It is simple unbelievable how difficult it is to please anybody.

Hector Mamo (2 days, 1 hour ago)

Prosit tal-inizjattiva u ejja ha mmexxu! Iktar ma jkollna Belt sabih malajr ahjar!

Timothy R. Chilvers (2 days, 2 hours ago)

Just another barren slab of concrete! Obviously, Valletta authorities are the enemies of trees. Just think how much nicer the square (and Merchant and Republic Streets) would look

if they were lined with trees - and also what a help to climate control. A step towards reforesting Malta, perhaps. I despair of our stone-age vandals.

Galea. L (2 days, 2 hours ago)

Close encounters of the fourth kind.

Totally alien light fixtures which do not harmonize with the rest of the buildings.

Another rape with the approval of MEPA

Charles Micallef (2 days, 3 hours ago)

It does look stunning and exceptional on this image and look forward to see this project complete !

Lisa Galea (2 days, 3 hours ago)

The lighting is perfectly acceptable. For those who want something more adequate to old buildings may I suggest the old fanali. Any volunteers for a kebbies? A candle would obviously cost less and will be closer to the Baroque feel some have argued for in this blog.

Chris Ebejer (2 days, 3 hours ago)

Lamppost a kitsch copy from Vienna - cut & paste to Valletta.

If this is how serious design plans should be incorporated then we have no idea what a holistic planning design is. A decent urban planner with a sensible approach towards history should suit better than an interior designer!

Quote TOM:

"At the same time the minimalist designs are not interfering with the more elaborate buildings such as the Grand Master's Palace and the Main Guard."

If the austere mannerist facade of the Place building is considered by these art intellectuals as ELABORATE then these persons must not be at the planning authority but should be better sent to a course of classic architecture.

D Buttigieg (2 days, 3 hours ago)

We are never satisfied - if it was neglected shame on the government - if something is being done shame on the government too. We have too many experts !!!!

I LIKE IT - AHJAR MINN PARKING AREA ZGUR

L Gusman (2 days, 3 hours ago)

If I am not mistaken, the paving used is the same as the one used in Merchants Street and in other parts of Valletta. Did this paving pass through the accessibility testing through the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities because it is a real nuisance to walk on this paving let alone persons with decreased mobility trying to walk on this paving which has no levelling. We have seen a lot of people falling down because of the paving. Please be sensible and do proper paving before it is too late.

R Ferriggi (2 days, 4 hours ago)

Somewhere I have read that the lamp posts look very similar to others in Milan. Don't know if it's true but if I'm not mistaken the designer works in Milan!!

J. Tonna (2 days, 4 hours ago)

JUST BEAUTIFUL. I like it.

What I don't like is the colour used for HSBC Block, as it does not match the rest of the buildings in the square.

Anthony Paris (2 days, 4 hours ago)

"The Planning Authority has approved the installation of modern lighting and street furniture at Palace Square in Valletta, despite objections from the Cultural Heritage Advisory

Committee." So what's new? Mepa seems to approve proposals which are objected to by public bodies, and reject proposals when there are no objections.

john micallef (2 days, 4 hours ago)

@ Joe Grima.

You are perfectly right.

Antoine Spiteri (2 days, 4 hours ago)

Can someone tell me why the lamp posts are modern? when Valletta is known as World heritage. In Zejtun in front of the church they have 2 lamp poles which although they are new they suits well with the place since the shape of them its gothic and seems old. And where is the old fountain? Is it going to be left out? By the way maybe I seem negative with my comment.. I am not against the project but against the street furniture. Thanks Antoine from Valletta

Christian Ellul (2 days, 4 hours ago)

Beautiful!! Let's not be scared of mixing modern concepts with classical architecture!

Manuel Miallef (2 days, 4 hours ago)

OK - now do it. Don't just talk about it... and dream. DO IT! enough planning - Action please

Joe Tabone (2 days, 4 hours ago)

It looks like an alien landing site.

Pamela Hansen (2 days, 4 hours ago)

The lampposts are completely out of synch with their surroundings. Awful. How can they be anachronistic and still not compromise the historical backdrop.

Why have a Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee if it is ignored? MEPA is a sham.

Mario Mercieca (2 days, 5 hours ago)

At last something modern in our ageing island...keep them coming

Joe Grima (2 days, 5 hours ago)

If the end result will be as smart as this artist's impresion then the "new" square will be very smart indeed, a tourist attraction in its own right. Let's hope that after it is launched we will learn how to keep it in the condition into which the rennovated sqaure was born.
