

## ***City Gate project - PM, Piano to hold mystery meeting. Over 1,000 objections to Piano's plans***

Over the next few weeks the Prime Minister will be meeting Italian architect Renzo Piano to discuss "particular points" of the Valletta City Gate project.

However, Lawrence Gonzi would not elaborate, saying only that he was confident that the project would start this year following planning approval.

When contacted, a spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office said it was best not to divulge the nature of these "particular points" at this stage.

The spokesman said that Dr Gonzi would be meeting Mr Piano as the project was of national importance.

Speaking during a party activity, Dr Gonzi said: "God willing we will move forward... In the next few weeks I'm to meet him (Mr Piano) again to conclude certain particular points. I hope that, in the next few months, or even weeks, works will start. Naturally, this would happen after the Mepa planning process is concluded... 2010 will see the start of works on City Gate," Mr Gonzi said.

In the typical style of Sunday morning PN public dialogues, Dr Gonzi yesterday touched on a variety of subjects as he answered questions by The Malta Independent journalist Annaliza Borg.

He explained that during the last legislature, he had approached world-renowned architect Mr Piano to reignite the City Gate project.

Consequently, Mr Piano returned to Malta after his original proposal for City Gate, some 20 years earlier, was rejected following huge controversy mostly surrounding the Royal Opera House.

The controversy was somewhat rekindled last summer when Mr Piano unveiled his new plans for City Gate and the Opera House.

According to the new plans, the new Parliament building will be elevated on stilts in Freedom Square, the Opera House site ruins will be transformed into an open-air theatre and City Gate will be demolished to create a more modest and meaningful entrance, while restoring Republic Street as the capital's spine.

The project is now awaiting approval from the Malta Environment and Planning Authority which received over 1,000 objections to Mr Piano's plans.

Apart from objecting to the plans, many have criticised the cost of the project at a time when Malta is struggling with the effects of the global financial crisis.

Until October last year, the government had paid Mr Piano's office €1,320,000 for the design of the entrance to Valletta, according to recent figures given in Parliament. The cost of the entire project would depend on the value of the work done.

## Comments

Astrid Vella (4 days, 7 hours ago)

@ Raymond Sammut: I'm so sorry I missed the one critical word "my point is NOT that Renzo Piano is the best." – apologies are in order.

When you said "Piano spent a great amount of time among Maltese people in Valletta" I imagined that meant consulting with people, discussing the project possibly with Valletta residents, otherwise what value would spending time among Maltese people in Valletta have? Consulting with professionals and politicians is another matter altogether.

Of course I agree with you that someone like Renzo Piano would not be micro-managed as you describe. However it stands to reason that the authorities would need to commission the project according to their broad requirements, a fact which was confirmed by Piano himself when he held a meeting with a number of Members of Parliament from both sides of the House.

James A. Tyrrell (6 days ago)

@D.Calleja. As you wrote yourself, "there are diverse opinions on this matter and, just because you happen to have one, yours doesn't have to be the right one by default!"

No I'm not of Maltese nationality nor indeed am I a legal alien. Actually sir I'm a tourist, you know one of those people who inject money into your country every year, and indeed I do so every year.

As others have stated here I'm not breaking any laws, I'm expressing an opinion. As a tourist who visits the country to partake of its history I have that right. I don't worship Piano as some architectural God, and to be honest a lot of his work doesn't exactly rock my boat but I respect the fact that his work does have a place in the world. In my opinion though that place is not a beautiful ancient city like Valletta.

You have your opinion and seem to be a supporter of Piano and no doubt Dr. Gonzi and probably neither can do wrong in your eyes. That's the beauty of a free society, like me you're allowed that opinion.

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 1 hour ago)

@ Astrid Vella

You have misquoted me at least twice:

1) "...he himself talked extensively to Valletta residents..."

2) "You say Piano is the best, ..."

Also, "Once they gave him the brief, his role was to interpret it,..."

Are you sure? Come on, Astrid. Please be serious. Try imagine, now. Renzo Piano sitting next to Gonzi interpreting a "brief". Do you really expect me to believe that Piano ever did anything like that? For example, I have recollections of Gonzi making a national announcement of some 20-min duration about building a parliament on the Opera House site with some mickey-mouse library on the ground floor. If what you are alleging were true, then we would be copping a parliament on the Opera House site with a mickey-mouse library on the ground floor. But I am convinced that Renzo Piano takes no brief from nobody.

Astrid Vella (6 days, 3 hours ago)

PART 2 @Raymond Sammut: I don't believe in making a god out of anyone, no one is infallible. You say Piano is the best, well that was also said of Le Corbusier but that doesn't mean he didn't make high-profile mistakes, due to concentrating on design at the cost of use, including his flagship Villa Savoye which turned out to be uninhabitable and embroiled him in endless legal battles with the owners.

Still, I really don't think this is any shortcoming on Piano's part but relates to Government. Once they gave him the brief, his role was to interpret it, while the Authorities tackle the heritage/cultural issues, or neglect them as the case may be.

Astrid Vella (6 days, 3 hours ago)

PART 1 @Raymond Sammut: I am aware that Piano's assistants consulted with different authorities in Malta, but it does seem hard to believe that he himself talked extensively to Valletta residents and then came out with designs which, good or bad, are intrinsically alien to public taste.

This does make one wonder whether Piano really spent all this time among ordinary Maltese people in Valletta (as opposed to professionals and politicians), as we are being fed many 'facts' which turn out to be less than reliable. We were also given to believe that he began work on the project after the elections, only to find out that he had started three years earlier, with no mention of his commission or of an 80 million euro project in the electoral manifesto.

Surely if our politicians were so sure that this is the best thing for Valletta, they would have been only too happy to announce it in the run-up to the elections? Or is this is an admission that it was already suspected that although necessary, the project as presented would be viewed unfavourably as unnecessarily extravagant.

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 5 hours ago)

@ James A. Tyrrell

A 'more modest' entrance is the opinion of whoever wrote this report. Personally I don't think there is anything "modest" in the Piano proposal. Also, that "Piano spent a great amount of time among Maltese people in Valletta, studying and taking in personally what his predecessors had achieved" is a fact and not my opinion. It's a

fact because it was reported --with the aid of lengthy video clips-- here in The Times. I don't know what Piano "thinks". Nor it's my business to know. However, I have no doubt in my mind about Piano doing his best both for the Maltese people and for our beloved city. For example, I have recollections of Piano explaining how the idea of stilts stems from a desire to maximise space both for parliamentarians and their staff, and for passers-by following the route between the gate and Our Lady of Victories church. Remember that Piano based his designs on the prospect of people "walking" not "driving". The latter is the main strength, were people will be free to walk; enjoying clean air, sun-light, quietude, space and good architecture. Compare that to people driving, beeping horns and parking cars.

D.Calleja (6 days, 5 hours ago)

@James A. Tyrrell

You asked Raymond Sammut..... "if as you state Piano spent a great amount of time among Maltese people in Valletta, studying and taking in personally what his predecessors had achieved, what made him think that a Parliament on stilts or a roofless theatre fitted into the city? Also did he develop such a disrespect for the city during his studies of it that he felt it needed a 'more modest' entrance?

Why????? Should Piano have knocked on your door to hear your opinions?!

It must come as a big surprise to you and others who have taken up this crusade to realise that the world does not revolve around you and your belief ..... as you can see there are diverse opinions on this matter and, just because you happen to have one, yours doesn't have to be the right one by default!

Do you even hold a maltese nationality or are you just a legal alien?!

James A. Tyrrell (6 days, 8 hours ago)

@Raymond Sammut. Raymond if as you state Piano spent a great amount of time among Maltese people in Valletta, studying and taking in personally what his predecessors had achieved, what made him think that a Parliament on stilts or a roofless theatre fitted into the city? Also did he develop such a disrespect for the city during his studies of it that he felt it needed a 'more modest' entrance?

D.Calleja (6 days, 9 hours ago)

@lgalea

In a democratic country everyone gets to have his say and declare his opinion - that is your right and duty as a member of the state. You have always been free to exercise that right even publicly through these blogs!

But, one cannot pretend that his stance is always the right one. That is why we go through the motions of periodically voting-in a government - for the simple reason that a body of legally and democratically elected representatives of the people has to take the final decisions on legislation and programmes.

If anyone wants to have a bigger say and take part in the decision making there is only one way of doing that - propose yourself as a representative and run for the elections.

Otherwise, one can just put in his penny's worth and hope that someone lends an

ear. If one is not satisfied on the overall performance of the government the system provides us with a means of redress - our vote in the next elections. But until such time, the government has a mandate and an obligation to make decisions for the whole nation. Mockery isn't involved in the process!

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 10 hours ago)

@ Anthony Pace Gouder

Thanks for pointing at Pier Luigi Nervi. I enjoyed reading about this Italian engineer-architect. He specialized in reinforced pre-fabricated concrete. Incidentally, in a much earlier article here on The Times, I had suggested that the new Parliament on one side of the gate and the new Law Courts on the other side of the gate could be built using pre-fabricated concrete. Just after I submitted my comment on this board today, I remembered that comment I had made and thought it was a silly suggestion. But you have proved me wrong just 10 minutes ago. After all, my original suggestion was, thanks to the Pier Luigi Nervi philosophy, a perfectly valid one.

In regard to the list of credentials of Renzo Piano --that I have listed here-- my point is not that Renzo Piano is the best. He may not be the best, I cannot tell. What I can do is recall that Piano spent a great amount of time among Maltese people in Valletta, studying and taking in personally what his predecessors had achieved. This is the one credential I failed to add in my list, and the one most important of all.

Anthony Pace Gouder (6 days, 11 hours ago)

@ Raymond Sammut

GIEH IR-REPUBBLIKA JONQSU MA DIK IL-LISTA ., b'hala ringrazzjament GHALL-KAPULAVUR TA' BIEB IL-BELT !

Mhux ahjar taghmel ftit ricerka u ssib ghall xiex sewwa sew gie onorat !

B'DAN IL-KEJL X'MISSHOM INGHATAW PERSUNAGGI LI GHAMLU OPRI T'ARKITETTURA FERM AKBAR ,bizzatej nsemmi lill - PIER LUIGI NERVI ..

Veru tassew kullhadd xortieh .

Igalea (6 days, 11 hours ago)

D.Calleja

democracy? Did you mean The Mockracy?

Raymond Sammut (6 days, 17 hours ago)

Some of the credentials of Renzo Piano:

AIA Honorary Fellowship, U.S.A. (1981)

Royal Institute of British Architects Gold Medal, England (1989)

Cavaliere di Gran Croce award by the Italian Government, Roma, Italy (1989)

Kyoto Prize, Inamori Foundation, Kyoto, Japan (1990)

American Academy of Arts and Letters Honorary Fellowship, U.S.A. (1994)

Goodwill Ambassador of Unesco for Architecture (1994)

Premio Michelangelo in Roma, Italy (1994)

Praemium Imperiale, Tokyo, Japan (1995)

Erasmus Prize, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (1995)

The Pritzker Architecture Prize, The White House, Washington, U.S.A. (1998)

Architect of the National Academy of San Luca, Rome, Italy (1999)

Officier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur, France (2000)

Leone d'Oro to the career, Venice, Italy (2000)

Premio Leonardo, Palazzo del Quirinale, Rome, Italy (2000)

Wexner Prize, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A. (2001)

“While his work embraces the most current technology of this era, his roots are clearly in the classic Italian philosophy and tradition, equally at ease with historical antecedents as well as the latest technology, he is also intensely concerned with issues of habitability and sustainable architecture in a constantly changing world.”(Pritzker jury)

Some comments on this board in reference to Renzo Piano's proposal are simply disgusting.

Anthony Pace Gouder (6 days, 18 hours ago)

What style of Governing is this ?

Whereas in the last legislature theirs was a PRIVATE MEETING (?) this time , it's a MYSTERY MEETING ! Very strange happenings , indeed .....but NO OBJECTIONS at all , as long as this will produce POSITIVE RESULTS .

in respect of the numerous sincere complains and the constructive criticism voiced ,regarding this project .

I smell some major alterations in the pipeline !

Hopefully , COMMON SENSE will once again prevail , for the benefit of one and all .

James A. Tyrrell (6 days, 23 hours ago)

@ Joseph Cauchi. Joseph I'm one of the “usual suspects.” I'm speaking for myself Joseph but I'm sure what I'm about to say will ring true with most of the objectors. I couldn't care less who's in Government. To be honest I don't think it makes a great deal of difference as they are all the same, promises, promises, promises leading up to an election and then to hell with you for the next 4 years or whatever.

The only thing, which concerns me, is the beauty of the city and the desire for that beauty not to be totally ruined by stupid plans. Especially when I hear people using the excuse, ‘We've waited 60 years for this so lets get on with it'. You're talking about the future of your country's capital for God's sake not the rebuilding of a supermarket!

The fact that this matter is of such importance to Malta is the reason why one man should not have been given the brief. This project should have been laid before a selection of architectural firms and then the resulting plans put to a public referendum and may the best man win.

Joseph V. Grech (1 week ago)

@Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi - please - for the sake of Valletta - do not go ahead with the ridiculous theatre without a roof! Also listen to reason and do not build the parliament on the site chosen. Ask Mr. Piano to revise his plans to produce a theatre for Valletta. Possibly the site of the bombed theatre can be united to the site earmarked for the new Parliament.

Also. dear P.M. is the time right to begin the project? An ailing tourism, uncertain business prospects...I very much doubt it!

Going roughsod over the wishes of the Maltese is certainly not recommended.

George Debono (1 week ago)

@J Azzopardi

RE viable alternatives put parliament where it was originally intended opposite where it is now...

RE qualitatively good: YES We need a decent cultural centre or, at the very least, a badly needed opera/concert hall/theatre for the performing arts. Here are the opera houses in

Erope (quite apart from 1000s of theatres, concert halls etc etc ) Austria 7, Belgium 4, Czech Republic 4, Denmark 2, England 8, Estonia 1, Finland 1, France 26, Germany 49, Greece 3, Italy 52, Poland 12 , Portugal 2, Romania 5, Scotland 2, Slovakia 3, Slovenia 2, Spain 11, Sweden 6, Switzerland 8, Wales 1,

And we in Malta - nothing !! Soon we'll be a bunch of peasants.

Re The project has its faults - Too many faults !!! Exactement! Mon Ami (if you'll excuse my Spanish....\)

G

Astrid Vella (1 week ago)

@ G C Forte: the traffic management that was proposed months ago and never surfaced again, showed St Mark's street as access to the Marsamxett side of Valletta. St Paul's street and the Grand Harbour side would still be accessed from Castille. However, as I believe Arch Martin Xuereb had pointed out, the only good thing to come of the present City Gate, the linking of the two sides of Valletta across the gate, is now to be lost. In order to, say, drive from St Paul's Street to South Street, one will have to exit the City, go round the War Memorial, down past the Excelsior and re-enter through St Mark's Street and up Old Bakery Str.

Can you imagine the exhaust that will be released as vehicles rev up Old Bakery Str towards South Street? The health of the residents is going to be impacted, and yet there is no talk of a Social Impact Assessment. This at a time when we're trying to reduce vehicle emissions due to health considerations and Climate Change!

Those who are not comfortable with this project can object on:

[http://www.faa.org.mt/objection\\_letter](http://www.faa.org.mt/objection_letter)

Steve Sant (1 week ago)

N.Calleja

I agree, hold a referendum?

Simple majority should sort out the mice from the men?.

g.c.Forte (1 week ago)

@ Astrid Vella.....If a person is proposing St. Mark street to be the main entrance to Valletta, I must say that he do not know what he is talking about. I wish to ask, if so, imagine a gas delivery truck, wants to turn right from st. Mark str., going up Old Bakery Str.,to deliver in Melita str., South str., and the rest. Mind you, if from South str., wants to deliver St. Paul`s str., from where he has to pass? Dear Astrid, it is like the song " There`s a hole in the bucket ", because every street needs the other. I hope that straight street is not in their plans.

cecil herbert jones (1 week ago)

Will it not be both interesting and important, besides being ethically and politically correct to listen to what the opinion of the World Heritage Committee is on this project? I for one value Valletta's status as a World Heritage City and don't wish to hear, one fine day, that it might lose this standing.

Charles DeMicoli (1 week ago)

Parliament building on stilts - necessary due to global warming and the rising sea level. Soon we'll have to raise other buildings on stilts - maybe that's what they were really planning at St. John's... If God forbid, this abomination goes through, we'll have to find a new name to replace "Valletta City Gate" with a more apropos title, like "Piano's Passage" or "Renzo's Rift" or "City Bridge, once known as City Gate" or "City Slit" or "City Breach", etc, etc ... And, oh, Joseph Cauchi et al: I have no ulterior motive, I just dislike this horrible design, period.

Astrid Vella (1 week ago)

Those who are not comfortable with this project can object on:<http://www.faa.org.mt/objection> letter RE: - An open-air theatre which can only be put to very limited use - The building of Parliament at Freedom Square which violates the Structure Plan which says that Parliament is to be accommodated in the palaces and auberges of Valletta - Lack of a traffic management scheme; it is being proposed that traffic should enter through St Mark Street and turn UP Old Bakery Street, which will cause a huge increase in toxic fumes - Lack of public consultation, our right as EU citizens.

Astrid Vella (1 week ago)

@ Joseph A Borg: Malta is already on the map, for its unique World Heritage Site. We welcome attracting more tourists with a Piano design for a building we'll be able to use, a theatre with a roof, but to waste all those millions in a period of economic crisis on an extravagant new parliament and a useless theatre that will be a white elephant is really an insult to all those who have lost their jobs or are struggling to cope financially. It really is a case of 'Let them eat cake'. @ D Calleja: in urging the Government to move on, do you realize that you are urging it to break both Maltese and EU legislation?

SAVIOUR DEGABRIELE (1 week ago)

CAN SOMEONE TELL ME HOW MUCH THIS (BIEB IL BELT ) IS GOING TO COST ME

Charles Sammut (1 week ago)

@ J Xuereb What you disgracefully term "gemgem", are mostly valid points and suggestions by people who do not have a vested interest in this ridiculous project.

J. Xuereb (1 week ago)

@N. Calleja I totally agree with you, yes certain Maltese are NEVER happy and all they do is criticize and gemgem!!! The project should move on otherwise we'll get stuck if we had to listen to all these negative Maltese gemgem!!

N.Calleja (1 week ago)

If the PM had to give in to all those objecting to the project, we would have 400,000 versions of how the Valletta entrance, the Opera House and the New Parliament would be. And even so there would be others who would object to all of them!

Maltese gemgem that what we are!!

Joseph Cauchi (1 week ago)

It is so blatantly obvious that there is a concerted effort to hinder all progress done by the present government, as can be seen by the "usual suspects" in these columns.

These “usual suspects” are not objecting to the project per se, but rather for other ulterior motives.

Anyone with common sense knows what these ulterior motives are; and as long as this government does not get the things rolling, “they” (the usual suspects) would have achieved their objective!

These “objectors” are pleased to have the status quo and are doing all in their power to hinder and create all sorts of obstacles possible.

This project has been in the offing for the past sixty years, and after all these years of discussing and discussing, it seems now we are about to put words into action; but wait a minute!

Will the “usual suspects” succeed in their mission?

JC.

R.Buhagiar (1 week ago)

To all involved in the decision making regarding the project - do not rush and listen to what the people are saying. No need to say more.

Albert Buttigieg (1 week ago)

Assuming we can afford to spend so much money, how much more beneficial would this expenditure be, were it to be invested in restoring Valletta's Auberges, forts and bastions? I heard Dr Gonzi state that he wants to create work for plasterers, electricians, etc. If this is an exercise in generating work for the construction industry, would not this restoration work create just as much employment opportunities, perhaps even more? And once completed, would not these restored palaces be more of an attraction to locals and tourists alike, with the gains that their spending power would generate?

Some weeks back I had the pleasure of attending a Baroque concert at the Manoel Theatre performed by the National Philharmonic Orchestra. Even this performance was marred by a vehicle driving up the road with a noisy silencer. What would such incidents do to a performance in an 'open-air' theatre?

George Vella (1 week ago)

@ Dylan Olivier

I fully agree with your suggestions.

James A. Tyrrell (1 week ago)

I think it's absolutely disgusting that €1,320,000 has already been paid to this so-called world-renowned architect. Paid for what exactly? A Parliament building on stilts, which is going to look totally inappropriate in Valletta. A theatre without a roof, which will end up not in use most of the year due to weather and noise. And of course the destruction of the city gate.

People get what they deserve I suppose and the Maltese people have certainly got that by voting this bunch of environmental vandals into Government. Valletta's World Heritage Status will sadly become a thing of the past thanks to Gonzi. Does it make sense to any Maltese person that the entrance to their capital should be 'more modest and meaningful'?

Your beautiful capital city is going to be turned into a joke and no doubt a lot of people will skim off a lot of money along the way. People are waking up to the fact that they can no longer sit back and allow their environment to be destroyed. I would have thought the protection of your capital would have been worth protesting for.

Joseph A Borg (1 week ago)

@ Dylan Olliver: there are many who want a change. personally I liked the original project as it put Malta on the map. This new one is ok as without the parliament vandalizing the open space.

My problem with the current design is that it's not bold enough!

Valletta doesn't have enough space for a proper modern theatre. A proper theatre should be part of the the long term project in rehabilitating Grand Harbour, opposite Valletta.

Joe Borg (1 week ago)

"When contacted, a spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office said it was best not to divulge the nature of these "particular points" at this stage.

The spokesman said that Dr Gonzi would be meeting Mr Piano as the project was of national importance"

If this is truly a project of national importance, what is so secretive about it? The people want to know!

D.Calleja (1 week ago)

This is the price one has to pay in a democracy - nothing ever gets done because you'll always find the whingers and 'experts' telling you that they know best.

I say just go ahead and do it and ignore the hysterics and tuntrums - let them stamp their feet and spit out their dummy and bawl as hard as they want. They can't always have it their own way because THAT would not be very democratic now, would it?!

Stop the procrastination and draw the line! Lets move on for god's sake . . . nothing will ever gets done in this blessed country if one pays too much attention to objectors because there will never be a shortage of opposition on such matters. You will always hear the same comments on how the money can be better spent or how it can be done better!! If you're convinced that it's the right decision then DO IT and move on to something else!!!

J Azzopardi (1 week ago)

Can any of you so forcefully objecting to this project give some viable alternatives which are remotely as inventive, conceptually valid, and qualitatively good as the proposals of Renzo Piano. He has given the project the breath of the new millennium which, if Valletta is to remain a living city, should be present in all projects. The project has its faults but opposing it outright on conservative or political grounds is simply stupid. Valletta needs this project and Dr Gonzi is being very courageous in pushing it through.

Dylan Olliver (1 week ago)

PLEASE dr gonzi, take notice of what the people want. Unless you haven't realized, people would like the Opera House rebuilt as it was, an appropriate Gate and not a breach and Parliament built over the Main Guard.

Carmel Cilia (1 week ago)

When I see the great amount of opposition this project has succeeded in generating and at the same time hear the prime minister saying that the project would start possible within weeks I cannot but say that Malta is being governed in a dictatorial manner. I would like to remind Doctor Gonzi that it was a nationalist administration that gave us the ugly Valletta Entrance we have today. Why should it be so hard for him to consult and accept the people's decision. I knew politics was dirty but never to such an extent.

Charles J. Buttigieg (1 week ago)

Why did this article nicknamed the Gonzi/Piano discussion as 'Mystery Meeting'? Is it to soften the more appropriate term 'Secret'? Where is the transparency which our Prime Minister talks so much about? We, the people, are funding this project and therefore have a divine right to be kept current at all times. No secret meetings.

j.spiteri (1 week ago)

Bet that they will be discussing a shopping mall alongside the new parliament so that the Gonzi/PN will save a few votes from the disgruntled nationalist shop owners in the current city gate arcade. No mystery whatsoever.

Claire Busuttil (1 week ago)

Mystery mtg??????? we are going to pay for this, so the least the government can do is inform us of everything

Edwin Mifsud (1 week ago)

To date there are only 2 delisted World Heritage sites.

1) Arabian Oryx Sanctuary (Delisted in 2007)

2) Dresden Elbe Valley (Delisted in 2009)

Renzo will soon add the third.

(Gonzi please just call Piano's plan some expensive firewood and conclude the matter.)

d.attard (1 week ago)

when i see the extent to which political games have degenerated, I wonder if it is just me getting old and wiser to the games grown-ups play, or if indeed all beef has been taken out of the equation and we are left with spinning limbs...

Lawrence Fenech (1 week ago)

Maybe they will think twice and scrap this dishonest project.

Ray Mangion (1 week ago)

We have been here before. This is a country with leaders who do not listen to their people. 1000 objections? thousands more, but ignored or used petty excuses that objections were sent late. An objection is an objection. It's disgusting that the people did not have any say in these plans. No wonder so many talk about corruption being rife and allowed to thrive. If Mepa allows this permission to go ahead, well say no more! Malta is getting quite a name for such a title. Where is Unesco and WHO? Letters of concern about our Heritage have been written? Or is this all a game?

g.c.Forte (1 week ago)

@ Astrid Vella.....Taking just one point from your comment regarding the diversion of the traffic. I have been saying that if Pope Pius V. road, will be abolished, traffic entering Valletta will be impossible, especially deliveries of goods to shops. It will be

a stupid idea to use the roads on the out skirts of Valletta, to enter to supply the deliveries.

wally vella-zarb (1 week ago)

Dear Mr Laiviera, please do not insult the great Salvador Dali! ;-)

Frans Sammut (1 week ago)

@Victor Laiviera

Nice one, Vic. Best portrait of the whole project I have come across to date. Vacciano piano, as the Italians say, regarding projects of such national import.

Alexander Azzopardi (1 week ago)

1000 ftit

if mepa contained to accept objections I bet there would be much more than double

Astrid Vella (1 week ago)

It is of grave concern that the PM is announcing the commencement of the Piano Project within the next few weeks or months. Have consultations been held with UNESCO regarding the effect on Valletta's World Heritage Status? What about the fact that:

- There has not yet been any public consultation
- There has not been an Environment Impact Assessment
- No traffic management plan –one of the most worrying aspects of this project -has been made public.
- What about the Structure Plan clause which says that the Parliament has to be accommodated in a palace or auberge of Valletta? The Structure Plan was passed by Parliament and is legally binding.

WHERE IS THE LEGALITY? All of the above are either EU Directives or local legislation. All are being ignored. No wonder we are a land of law breakers if this is the example given by the very people who wrote and passed the laws! This smacks of the St John's Cathedral attempts to rush the project past the public, or another pre-decided permit like the Freeport one.

Anyone who wishes to object to an open-air theatre and lack of consultation can do so on: [http://www.faa.org.mt/objection\\_letter](http://www.faa.org.mt/objection_letter)

g.c.Forte (1 week ago)

Dear P. M. Gonzi.....Scrap the whole project, it does not matter the money we have spent already, money easy come easy go. The most important thing is that you do not spoil City Gate like they did both parties in the past. Two things I wish to see..... First use Maltese architects, ( but with all the respect not Mr. R. England and co.), so we give a chance to the others. Secondly if the plans of Mr. Renzo Piano will be accepted, a honest and serious referendum will be held, so in the future our children will blame the people, if they do not like the project.

S. Mifsud (1 week ago)

It's easy for Gonzi to go for the most expensive option out of our tax money isn't it? But then there's insufficient funds to offer all Maltese children a free fresh fruit a day!?? I'm all for giving City Gate a facelift but do we have to splash out as though money isn't a problem?? The PN have long lost my vote as they have emerged as being callous, irresponsible and highly corrupt!

victor pulis (1 week ago)

'City Gate will be demolished to create a more modest and meaningful entrance'  
????????????!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Laurence Zerafa (1 week ago)

Perhaps, during this meeting, the question of a public library beneath parliament building at ground floor level, as suggested by Mr Renzo Piano himself, will be revisited.

On the 22nd of June 2009 Mr. Piano was quoted in an interview on the Times of Malta (A magic city in a magic island) as saying that "But even here, there has been a lot of listening going on. The building will not only house Parliament but a public library too, as suggested by a group (MaLIA [www.malia-malta.org/](http://www.malia-malta.org/)) that joined the fray when controversy sparked over the Prime Minister's declaration that the new House of Representatives would be built on the site of the ruins."

For some unknown reason, by Saturday 27th June, when official plans were unveiled, Renzo Piano's idea for a public library had disappeared completely.

MaLIA, the Malta Library and Information Association, still thinks that a public library on this prime site is the ideal location from where to entice more people to use libraries, which are one of the keys to reach our national target of becoming a knowledge based society by 2015.

Laurence Zerafa  
Chairperson MaLIA

Victor Laiviera (1 week ago)

The roofless theatre, the gateless gate and the building on stilts.

One could almost see it as a Salvador Dali painting.

Charles Sammut (1 week ago)

"When contacted, a spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office said it was best not to divulge the nature of these "particular points" at this stage.

The spokesman said that Dr Gonzi would be meeting Mr Piano as the project was of national importance."

Ahna ahna jew m'ahniex? If the project is of national importance, why does the prime minister not want to divulge the nature of these particular points?

In a perverse way I hope this project materialises so that we will have something concrete to remind future generations of the pathetic style of administration practised by GonziPN.

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