

## Valletta's two main squares in a state of chaos next year

Valletta's two main squares – Palace Square, otherwise known as St George's Square, and St John's Square – will be in a shambles for most of next year due to huge projects, which, if current applications to Mepa are approved, will be embarked on.

All through the past week, including yesterday, attention was focused on the still-to-be revealed plans by the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation for a huge extension of the museum with, so far, only Din I-Art Helwa not being totally against the idea.

But what is envisaged for Palace Square, it seems, is far more than just creating around 50 car spaces in an underground garage. Sources spoke of a e16 million project, again so far un-revealed, with a space for a restaurant and other subterranean works.

Some NGOs, like Flimkien ghal Ambjent Ahjar, have argued against the St John's project and in favour of the foundation and the government utilising some unused palaces across the road in Merchants Street. But, apart from other intrinsic reasons, there may also be another reason why the government is not going along this way: the government is actively thinking of releasing some fine buildings in the area to be turned into boutique hotels, something that Valletta is in dire need of.

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