



## Bristol Walking Alliance public forum statement: transport and city design

1. The Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) is a consortium of organisations and individuals which campaigns to improve the walking environment. We are concerned by proposals to:

- cut discretionary transport expenditure;
- transfer transport staff to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA); and
- disband the City Design Group.

No details of the likely impact have been given, but the proposals seem certain to have an adverse impact on walking. All expenditure on walking is discretionary. We owe recent improvements in Bristol's walking environment in large part to transport and city design officers.

2. The proposals seem likely to involve:

- **conflict with the Council's declared priorities.** In the Bristol Transport Strategy 2019, the Council committed to making walking: "... safe, pleasant, accessible and the first choice for local journeys and combined with public transport for longer journeys". In its current Corporate Strategy, it pledged to increase the number of people travelling actively to work by walking and cycling;
- **conflict with public and councillor priorities.** The recent Quality of Life survey revealed that transport was respondents' main concern. At January's Full Council, councillors called for a pause in implementing proposals relating to the strategic transport and city design teams;
- **loss of expertise.** BWA has had frequent contact with both transport and city design officers. Accessible and knowledgeable, they have overseen significant improvements in the walking environment, for example in the City Centre, the Old City and the Whiteladies Road. Traffic has been reduced and the public realm visibly improved. Their multiple skills and knowledge of Bristol cannot be replaced easily by external consultants and more distant, inexperienced, WECA staff;
- **loss of Bristol focus.** In its strategic planning WECA has often appeared dominated by Bristol's surrounding authorities, with little regard for Bristol. It has encouraged roadbuilding rather than sustainable transport. We have doubts about its current capacity to deliver. We fear ceding further transport responsibilities to WECA now will be bad news for walking in Bristol. It may make sense in the longer term;
- **loss of impetus on current plans.** The City Design Group is involved in several initiatives, such as the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the preparation of design guides, that should protect and improve the walking environment. Similarly transport officers are engaged in initiatives such as Liveable Neighbourhoods, school streets, and pedestrianisation;
- **loss of future opportunities.** Government funding often depends on the preparation of speedy and convincing bids. Local environmental improvements often depend on making good use of the community infrastructure levy (CIL) from developments. When the Government is putting increasing emphasis on design and Bristol has plans for many major developments, the city will need the capacity to bid for central funds and to make good use of CIL. This capacity will come best from staff employed by the council. Consultants are more expensive and less flexible. They anyway need an intelligent 'customer' to oversee them.