

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) welcomes the proposals contained in the draft Bristol City Centre Development and Delivery Plan.

In this response to the consultation, we give our reactions to the overall vision, the six themed strategies which support it, the Broadmead Placemaking Plan and the Castle Park Masterplan.

Overall Vision

When we gave our initial comments on the proposed plan in May 2022, we highlighted a set of general measures we would like to see included and identified some areas for specific improvements.

We are happy to see the draft plan addresses many of the issues we raised.

We strongly agree with the overall vision, and have been pleased to see how it focuses on opening up the City Centre to use by everybody and for a wider range of activities, including leisure and residential as well as retail.

Themed Strategies

Of the six themed strategies put forward to achieve the plan, our focus is on those that can provide a better environment for pedestrians. In particular, we can pick out topics under several themes which we fully support and commend for their inclusion in the plan:

- **Movement and Connectivity**
 - improve accessibility
 - support sustainable patterns of travel
 - reduce the impact of vehicles on the public realm
 - provide more pedestrian priority spaces and streets
 - reducing the severance created by busy roads
 - significantly improved high quality new crossings
 - minimise conflict on the riverside pedestrian and cycle route through Castle Park
 - consolidate bus stop groups to accessible locations within easy walking distance
- **Public Realm and Open Space**
 - a network of safe, high quality, linked, accessible public spaces, play spaces, green streets and parks
 - healthy communities and a climate resilient city centre, with spaces which prioritise people over vehicles, and which are safe and welcoming for all
 - scale and form of new development should complement the character and street level experience
 - key public spaces and streets to be sunny and comfortable by ensuring new development minimises overshadowing and wind tunnelling

- activities for visitors and local residents with opportunities for play, recreation and relaxation
- enhance pedestrian priority 'green streets', with increased vegetation, tree coverage and sustainable drainage
- new open space is provided as an integral part of new development to meet the needs of new residents
- open space increased by 40 per cent by creating enhanced and new open spaces and transforming under-utilised space
- two new play areas in Castle Park, as well as incidental play spaces throughout the city centre
- Green Infrastructure and Nature
 - Create green corridors through the city centre by reallocating vehicle space on streets for pedestrians, cyclists, species rich planting, tree cover and sustainable drainage
- Land Use and Development
 - Increase the diversity and intensity of uses in the city centre to ensure it is active and busy throughout the day and into the evening
 - Promote development which supports a healthy living environment with the right mix of homes to create a balanced community
 - Provide new community, cultural and leisure facilities, open spaces and local retail (including fresh, affordable food) to support new residents
 - Broaden the range of ground floor uses to ensure public spaces are active and vibrant

While pleased with the direction set by the overall strategies, it is the details of their implementation that will determine whether they are successful or not.

The current plan goes into more detail on two areas: Broadmead and Castle Park. The following comments therefore relate to these two sections of the plan.

Broadmead Placemaking Plan

We comment on specific proposals and then on some general points applying to the whole Broadmead Plan area.

Nelson Street and Green Infrastructure

It is proposed that Nelson Street is included as part of the Linear Street Garden that provides connectivity from Quay Street through to Cabot Circus. In the street hierarchy, it is identified as a Primary Pedestrian Route. For this to be successful, there are sections where the pavement needs to be widened and made more welcoming, with pedestrian priority crossings at junctions. We would also want the Nelson Street cycle route to be fully segregated from pedestrian footways.

While it is proposed that buses will be removed from Nelson Street and relocated to Union Street, it is still intended that Nelson Street, entered via Christmas Street, forms a vehicular access to parking, mobility hub, taxi ranks, servicing and deliveries.

It is not clear how it will be possible to successfully integrate all these travel modes along Nelson Street with the desire to enhance the green infrastructure in the restricted space available.

We suggest that Nelson Street should be made pedestrian priority, with no through traffic and time restricted access for servicing.

Despite the streets surrounding Nelson Street having been excluded from the scope of the Broadmead Placemaking Plan, we believe they deserve attention to achieve this goal. For example, traffic could largely be removed from Nelson Street by making All Saints Street two-way and having a single junction for through traffic to cross between Bridewell Street and All Saints Street. This route would be used by traffic that might currently need to get to the Nelson Street car park or along Fairfax Street to the current Galleries car park and future proposed mobility and logistics hub. The north end of Fairfax Street and Silver Street would also become pedestrian priority with only restricted access.

Civic Avenue

The proposed Civic Avenue, along Merchant Street and its continuation towards St James Barton roundabout, is a positive move to make better north-south connections across Broadmead and on into Castle Park. It is an opportunity not only to add much needed green infrastructure, but also to provide attractive civic spaces for new residents and to encourage cultural and community events.

Our main concerns here are how connectivity will be provided to Castle Park and to St James Barton roundabout. We cover each of these in subsequent sections.

Union Street and Bus Stops

It is proposed that Union Street will form the central public transport route through Broadmead, allowing other parts to be pedestrianised. It will be made two-way, with bus routes entering and leaving via Rupert Street and Wine Street. This will require relocation of bus stops from The Horsefair, Penn Street and Broadweir.

It is also suggested that Union Street has a segregated southbound (uphill) cycle lane. We would strongly oppose the location of bus stops alongside cycle lanes, requiring the use of cycle by-passes between the footway and the bus stop. The potential conflict between cycle / scooter users and pedestrians accessing a bus stop is a serious safety concern in such a busy area. This would therefore rule out bus stops for southbound buses being sited on Union Street. The illustration of Union Street (Part B, pg 103, Fig 80) shows no bus stops! There may be a similar contention between bus stops and cycle routes along Wine Street, particularly as some bus stops may need to be relocated here.

We therefore would like to see a more detailed plan of bus stop provision to ensure that all bus routes that pass through or around Broadmead are within at most a 400m walk for pedestrians (the distance from Union Street to Cabot Circus is around 400m) and do not require cycle by-passes.

Newgate and Broadweir

We think it is an excellent idea to enhance this area for pedestrians and to introduce a segregated cycle route. A new cycle route should help ease congestion on the well-used existing cycle route through Castle Park, though its use is likely to depend on provision of a 'supercrossing' of Temple Way via Castlemead.

The provision of a 'Park Edge', by partially merging Newgate with the square north of St Peter's Church in Castle Park, seems a positive way of better connecting Castle Park and Broadmead. However it will be important to get the details right such as priority at crossings, accessible gradients and adequate directional signage.

Toilets and other public amenities

It will be critical that 24-hour **public toilets** are available and accessible across the area. It will not be sufficient to rely on the goodwill of businesses such as cafes to cater for all toilet needs.

We are encouraged by references to the importance of free, accessible and inclusive toilets, but these must not only be provided near St Peter's Church in Castle Park but also in the Broadmead area, such as near the mobility hub or at central community spaces.

Other public amenities such as **recycling/waste bins** will need to be incorporated into the public realm. Commercial bins should be stored away from public spaces. Both public toilets and better waste management will particularly be important in order to manage a more vibrant night time use of the area.

Mobility Hub

The overall approach proposes a **mobility hub**, central to Broadmead and accessed via Fairfax Street, that will provide disabled parking, taxi rank, pick-up/drop-off areas and e-scooter and cycle parking. However, there are no further details of this given in the Broadmead Placemaking Plan. Such a facility should be seen as essential, and the Broadmead Plan must be more explicit in how such a mobility hub can be provided.

Easy pedestrian access to the hub must be provided from all directions, particularly for the disabled including those using mobility aids such as wheelchairs or mobility vehicles. It must not be a hidden afterthought. We hope that future proposals for the Galleries will be more explicit in how a mobility hub will be integrated into their plans. However, we would like to be consulted on the details *before* they are embedded in a planning application for the Galleries.

It is not clear how the different modes of travel that must access the mobility hub can be segregated if they are all to share access via Fairfax Street.

Whilst the CCDDP states an intention to move parking to the perimeter roads of Broadmead, siting the mobility hub in Fairfax Street will draw in motor vehicles - taxis, blue badge vehicles, pick up/drop off by any vehicle, servicing vehicles for St Peter's Square. This could lead to quite significant numbers of vehicles in Fairfax Street causing congestion.

In addition, exit from the mobility hub along Fairfax Street onto Broad Weir will conflict with the pedestrian flow along Merchant Street across to Castle Park.

Even if disabled parking is provided in the mobility hub, it may be necessary to provide additional disabled parking bays in the area. We expect this to be decided in consultation with disability groups such as Bristol Disability Equality Forum and WECIL.

Impact of building mass and height

It is welcome to see discussion of **building heights** in the document (Part A, pg 57). Broadmead currently contains building of modest height, leading to good levels of light within the public realm.

If new developments with the excessive heights recently approved in Bristol are allowed, the streets in the Broadmead area could become dark, windy canyons. A tall building strategy must provide strong guidance against the delivery of tall buildings that block natural light, lead to oppressive micro-climates and would defeat any attempts to introduce green infrastructure at street level.

The CCDDP should provide more explicit detail on the impact of building mass on overshadowing and wind tunnelling in order to set strong guidelines for development.

Castle Park Masterplan

The Castle Park Masterplan goes into rather more detail than the Broadmead Placemaking Plan, but even so it will depend on getting the details right to be successful.

St Mary Le Port

Given that the St Mary Le Port development has already been granted planning permission, we will not repeat the comments we made on that. It is worth reiterating, though, that we would like to see further details of associated changes to the public realm along High Street and Wine Street, including the provision of adequate pedestrian crossings on the gateway routes.

Park Gateways

While we generally agree with the desire to make better connections between Castle Park and Broadmead, especially along the key north-south routes of Union Street and Merchant Street, we are less sure about the proposals for extensive new terracing to reach the north-east corner of the Park towards Penn Street. Such terracing, being north-facing, could only be an attractive place to sit in mid-summer. It potentially still presents a barrier to those who are not able to manage steps or steep ramps, and it is also unclear how it could be introduced without significant loss of mature trees.

The proposed step-free routes (Part B, pg 128, Fig 111) include the potential for lifts to overcome significant level differences. This implies introducing buildings within the north-east corner of the park to accommodate the lifts and their mechanisms – something that might lead to unacceptable further building development in this green corner of the park.

Water-level Walkway

A water-level walkway alongside the floating harbour is a good idea in principle, particularly if it provides a secondary pedestrian route under Bristol Bridge to Welsh Back. We would have reservations about a walkway that was a cul-de-sac as it could potentially feel unsafe and invite anti-social behaviour.

Areas needing further work

Within the CCDDP area, but outside the Broadmead and Castle Park areas of focus, we would hope that further work can proceed to integrate adjacent areas with the overall vision.

The Old City has already been greatly improved by pedestrianisation, and, assuming the approved plans for St Mary Le Port come to fruition, should then become better connected with Castle Park.

The connectivity of the following areas need further work.

St James Barton roundabout

The 'Bearpit' has been explicitly excluded from the Broadmead Placemaking Plan. It would seem particularly important to consider how the connectivity provided along the new Civic Avenue in Broadmead could extend across the St James Barton roundabout.

This connectivity is complicated by the geography. The road level of the roundabout is well above that of the Broadmead thoroughfares. The lower level walkways in the centre of the roundabout are closer in height to that of The Horsefair street level.

Cabot Circus and Castlemead

While it is proposed to improve permeability to the north and south of Broadmead, there is a need for increased permeability and route legibility to the west, through Cabot Circus and past Castlemead to Temple Way and beyond.

The effectiveness of the route east from Broad Weir will depend on providing a 'supercrossing' across Temple Way, as shown in the pedestrian and cycling maps. It should also require segregation of cycling and walking routes along the Castlemead cut-through.

Fairfax Street and All Saints Street

The area between Nelson Street and Wine Street, which includes Fairfax Street and All Saints Street, is outside but adjacent to the Broadmead Placemaking Plan area.

Earlier, we suggested restricting traffic along Nelson Street with a single two-way through route for traffic along Bridewell Street and All Saints Street. This suggests Fairfax Street and All Saints Street should be brought into the overall Broadmead Placemaking Plan.

On-road Parking Allocations

While we support the removal of private vehicles as much as possible from the CCDDP area, it will be important to allocate sufficient space for parking for: the disabled, e-scooters, e-bikes, cycles, and car club cars (with EV charging). It is not clear that the mobility hub on Fairfax Street can provide sufficient parking for the future needs of visitors, workers and particularly the new residents of Broadmead.

The space for e-scooters, e-bikes and cycles must not block pavements or require travel across pavements to reach them. On-road parking bays should be provided instead.

Envisioning Movement Flows

Many of the decisions about public realm infrastructure need to be based on predicted flows of movement across the different travel modes: walking, cycling, scooting, buses, taxis, shared vehicles, deliveries etc. We believe this should be an important part of the next stage of planning.

Because of the significant changes in use being proposed for Broadmead, it will not be sufficient to simply extrapolate from current usage. Instead we would like to see a vision-led approach being used to set out the desired mobility in a liveable Bristol and then using footway, cycleway, bus lane and general road capacity as a means to achieve it.

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30 September 2023

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