

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) welcomes the chance to engage with the development of a Masterplan for the St Philip's Marsh area. However, the opportunities we see do not fall neatly into the three options suggested by the engagement documents.

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) is a consortium of organisations and individuals campaigning for a pedestrian environment that is welcoming, safe, convenient and inclusive. Our comments, therefore, focus on matters affecting the pedestrian environment.

Introduction

The creation of a Masterplan for the St Philip's Marsh area provides a unique chance to set out a strategy for a large area undergoing radical change.

The current engagement offers the opportunity to set the direction for future development based around three key design topics: local centres, open spaces, and movement.

BWA believes that the choices made should reflect a number of key goals:

- Locality – to reduce the impact of unnecessary travel, communities should have easy local access to essential services including food shops, health services, schools and community centres.
- Sustainability – given the global constraints of a changing climate, any new development should seek to minimise greenhouse gas emissions, to allow for raised sea levels and increased flooding, and to reduce the impact of higher temperatures.
- Accessibility – to adopt clear and inclusive design standards for the pedestrian environment that do not discriminate against those with different mobility needs.
- Healthy environment – to minimise pollution that is detrimental to health, and to maximise access to open space and greenery which is beneficial to health.

Our comments

In the following sections, we comment on the suggestions set out in the engagement documents from the point of view of the pedestrian, based on the above principles. We have used the numbering and headings from the consultation webpages.

3. Constraints

It is not clear to what extent the constraints listed should be taken as given.

Lack of public transport is a current problem – but not a constraint, in that much improved public transport can be provided if the infrastructure is put in place and bus services are council-controlled in the future.

A large amount of space is taken by railway infrastructure that supports rolling stock which may be provided differently in the future. Has discussion taken place with Network Rail about future needs? The draft Local Plan Policies Map only highlights railway infrastructure to the east of Albert Crescent – does this mean the railway land to the west might become available for development?

Permeability constraints due to the railway, the river and the Feeder Canal can be mitigated by the provision of more bridges. Has this been ruled out?

Flood risk is mentioned, but it is not clear whether this relates to coastal, fluvial or pluvial flooding. The need to raise the river sides to accommodate higher tides in the future should be included as a significant constraint.

4. Opportunities

Reallocation of space is not just an opportunity, but a necessity if Bristol is to meet its housing shortage. Greater residential provision should necessarily be associated with better transport, local services and green space provision if new residential areas are to be successful.

The opportunities should include locations which could provide better connectivity to surrounding areas. Others have already made suggestions for new bridges which are not shown on the map:

- A pedestrian footbridge over the Feeder Canal to the Iron Works development.
- A pedestrian/cycle bridge linking the new University development to Avon Street.

Beyond these, there should be opportunities such as the following:

- An additional north/south walking route under the railway line to connect the northern and southern residential areas.
- An additional pedestrian bridge across the river from the western end of Paintworks connecting through to Albert Crescent.

5. Land use options

We broadly accept the proposed land use, though would expect to see justification for the relative proportions of each area in due course. For example, is there a need for more commercial space given the developments taking place in the rest of the city centre? How much more open space will be needed? Will the railway and the retail park still occupy the same areas in the future?

10. Local centres

Local centres are essential to reduce the impact of unnecessary travel.

The key factors in deciding where to locate such centres is who needs to access the services a local centre can provide, and how frequently residents or workers may need to access them. If access by walking is to be encouraged, as we believe it must, a local centre should be reachable within 400m of a residence, particularly if it is to serve those who cannot travel far. This would be appropriate for access to retail, hospitality and community services. For somewhat less frequently use services such as a health centre or a cultural venue, greater distances up to 800m may be acceptable.

The proposals suggest there would be just one new local centre. However, with the significant constraint of the railway infrastructure, which splits the area into two, surely there needs to be accessible centres for both the northern and southern areas each side of the railway?

To cater for all needs within acceptable walking distance, we suggest **one larger local centre with full facilities and one smaller local centre primarily for retail and other more local services.**

The distance from Feeder Road to Albert Road along Short Street / Albert Crescent is approximately 600m. The distance between Temple Island and St Philip's Causeway is approximately 1,100m. This would suggest perhaps one larger local centre on Feeder Road, as shown in Scenario One, and another smaller local centre in the central southern area, perhaps near the junction of Albert Road and Albert Crescent.

If only one local centre were to be provided, it would be best placed centrally, giving equal access from all parts of the Masterplan area.

We would also expect the Masterplan to identify the **location of primary and secondary schools.** While there is a new secondary school on Silverthorne Lane, it is not clear where new or existing primary schools that would serve the new residential communities would be located. Identification of the location of schools is important so that traffic-free walking and cycling routes to those schools can be provided.

11. Open spaces

Central and inner areas of Bristol have very little open space per person. The emerging Local Plan suggests that this will get worse, with a 36% decrease to 7.75 sq metres per person in the centre and a 12% decline to 11.53 sq metres in inner urban areas, compared with Natural England's target of 30 square metres per person (currently achieved city-wide). The 12% decline in inner areas assumes there will be an increase in open space in a few areas, as set out in the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy. These include the St Philip's Marsh area which only has one existing green space at Sparke Evans Park.

The development of the area, including all the individual developments within it, should be aiming to provide additional green infrastructure and open space proportionate to the increased needs of the residential population being proposed, both here and in areas nearby. This includes green infrastructure as set out in Local Plan policy BG1 and space for recreation as set out in Local Plan policy GI A.

We would expect to see two kinds of green space provision:

- green destinations, providing space for recreation and leisure
- green corridors, motivating and enhancing active travel and leisure routes

Where green destinations are concerned, we strongly support the calls made by the Bristol Civic Society in its response to the emerging Local Plan for a detailed assessment of open space needs in central and inner urban areas. **A large area for recreation** is almost certainly needed somewhere. We cannot judge whether that proposed in Scenario Two is of sufficient size or in the best place

In relation to green corridors, our main request would be that **all primary walking routes through the area are tree-lined.** This is one of the best ways of encouraging walking as a means of travel. The shading provided by deciduous trees is important in summer, particularly when the temperatures are increasing, and helps to keep pavement temperatures lower. Trees can provide shelter from spring and autumn rain. They are also acknowledged as keeping air pollution under control and in boosting physical and mental health. This is in addition to their value as a carbon sink.

The proposed scenarios appear to split the provision of green space into mutually exclusive categories.

Scenario One is based on a green corridor along the river, which is likely to be beneficial to river ecology and provide leisure walking, but leaves many walking routes across the centre without greenery.

Scenario Two focuses on open spaces suitable for recreation, but again does not address significant walking routes.

Scenario Three does focus on green travel corridors, with Albert Crescent as a green active travel route linking north and south of the area, which we would support. It also proposes the route along Albert Road, which forms the spine of the southern residential area, should be a green corridor. We hope that this would not be compromised by the amount of road traffic along this route.

In order to support the goals of sustainability and a healthy environment, there needs to be green space provision for relaxation, for recreation and for travel.

12. Movement

For movement, we fully support the objective of reducing car dependency and encouraging walking, cycling, and public transport. We see the way to achieve this as including:

- Short and direct walking routes to local services
- Direct and traffic-free walking routes to schools
- Bus stops, with frequent services, within at most 400m of residences or workplaces
- Segregation of walking from other modes of travel, including cycling
- Level pedestrian priority crossings of minor road junctions
- Assisted pedestrian crossings at least every 400m along busy roads
- Tree-lined primary pedestrian routes to encourage walking

The choice of primary and secondary pedestrian routes through the area will depend largely upon the location of services, including the location of major and minor local centres and of schools.

In all three proposed scenarios, bus routes are restricted primarily to Feeder Road to the north and Albert Road (or 'New Albert Road') to the south. This makes sense from the point of view of access constraints and also of running frequent services on any given route. It is not clear to what extent the routes proposed provide frequent connections into the city centre without changing buses.

All three scenarios propose minimising HGV impact on residential areas by providing access to the industrial estate from a new railway bridge linking to St Philip's Causeway. We support this design.

All three scenarios propose that, wherever the new (large) local centre is located, it is pedestrianised with through traffic passing by on its the edge. We support this design.

It is not clear to what extent residential car ownership will be supported by provision of parking. This should be a well-connected area that, like other inner-city areas, should focus on public transport and active travel. The residential areas should also be designed as low-traffic neighbourhoods with measures to prevent through traffic.

7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15. Choice of scenarios

In our comments above we have pointed out what we see as the advantages and disadvantages of the different scenarios. They do provide a useful way of presenting many of the options.

However, we do not believe it is appropriate to ask people to select just one of the scenarios under each of the local centre / open space / movement headings. Each scenario brings some positive aspects as well as negative aspects to the overall design.

More Detailed Proposals

BWA will look forward to engaging at a more detailed level on plans for St Philip's Marsh in the future, including the identification of primary and secondary walking routes.

As a guide to the more detailed kind of planning that we believe should be undertaken in due course, we highlight in the Appendix below some of the relevant actions from our publication [50 Ways To Better Walking](#).

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Appendix

Relevant actions to be considered in drawing up the St Philip's March Masterplan, taken from the BWA publication [50 Ways To Better Walking](#).

Identify and improve walking routes

1. Identify and promote key walking routes into and around the city centre, and between and within neighbourhoods, using clear, consistent signage
2. Incorporate 'pedestrian priority' design features at side-road junctions as part of road improvements e.g. continuous pavements, raised tables, road markings, road narrowing
3. Provide safe, convenient pedestrian crossing points along key routes and at least every 400m along main roads
6. Audit and upgrade pedestrian routes across the Feeder Canal, River Avon, River Avon New Cut and the Floating Harbour

Adopt design standards that are inclusive

7. Adopt and publicise clear and inclusive design standards for the pedestrian environment
8. Ensure footways are wide enough to provide safe and convenient access for people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and walking aids, and people with pushchairs
11. Work with equalities groups when developing transport schemes and making changes, including temporary changes, that affect the pedestrian environment

Develop walkable communities

13. Develop and implement Liveable Neighbourhood schemes in consultation with local people
14. Make use of the Healthy Streets approach in the design of transport schemes
15. Implement School Street measures to restrict motor vehicles during school drop-off and pick-up times
17. Require improvement of the pedestrian environment in the planning process for new developments
18. Audit and improve the provision of fully accessible toilets for public use in areas of high pedestrian footfall

Connect walking to public transport

19. Ensure everyone is within a 10-minute walk of a frequent public transport service
20. Ensure bus stops are appropriately spaced and located to meet the needs of pedestrians, are well lit, have seating and shelters wherever practicable, and provide accurate real-time bus information
21. Provide clear signage for people walking to and from public transport interchanges

Count, monitor and share information about walking

23. Identify walking as a separate mode of transport in travel reports, policy documents and transport planning; do not conflate 'walking and cycling' or subsume walking in 'active transport'
26. Set ambitious targets to increase walking and report progress on an annual basis
27. Designate and monitor separate budgets for walking

Reduce obstructions to walking and implement enforcement measures

32. Re-purpose parking bays to remove pavement obstructions e.g. on-street bin collection points, electric scooter parking hubs, electric vehicle charging
33. Position street furniture such as benches, signs and lampposts, to maximise the useable footway width and remove redundant street furniture

Make walking safe

- 34. Segregate pedestrians from bicycles and e-scooters on key walking routes
- 36. Adopt a 'Vision Zero' safe systems approach to road safety using street design in transport schemes with the aim of eliminating all deaths and serious injuries
- 37. Ensure key walking routes are well-lit with sufficient oversight, and prioritise 'active frontage' in planning applications

Make walking pleasant and comfortable

- 40. Protect and plant street trees, and provide and maintain other green infrastructure e.g. parklets
- 42. Develop and maintain a network of 'green' pedestrian routes across the city
- 43. Work with communities, developers and businesses to improve streetscapes by providing benches, lighting, interpretation boards, and public art as appropriate

Provide walking information

- 46. Include walking destinations and timings on information panels at key points in the city centre and in neighbourhoods, building on the work of Bristol Legible City