

## **Comments by Bristol Walking Alliance on the review of High Streets Strategy**

August 2025

### **1 Introduction**

BWA welcomes the decision by the Economy and Skills Committee to develop a High Streets Strategy. Although no invitation was issued to make suggestions for the strategy, we thought it might be useful to the Committee if we volunteered our ideas.

In the suggestions that follow, we have taken into account the questions that the Council has set itself:

- what are the citywide priority interventions for the council?
- what are the criteria for intervention in a high street?
- what economic development and planning policy/tools should be used to support high streets?

### **2 General comments**

High streets should form part of the Council's strategy to make Bristol a walkable city. Improving the environment for pedestrians in high streets is part of this. This may include pedestrianisation but this is not always feasible. Equally important is improving the walking environment on the routes to and from the high street so that walking to the high street is an attractive option. It is also about the need for high streets to be within walkable distance.

### **3 Specific suggestions for the Strategy**

We suggest the following should be included:

- develop policies that facilitate access to high streets on foot. BWA's '50 Ways' booklet sets out 50 ways in which the walking environment in Bristol could be improved. Ones that are especially relevant to high streets are listed in an appendix.
- help promote such policies via the existing business support channels. Co-ordinate with the Transport Engagement team that deals with businesses.
- review council capacity for high street interventions to improve the public realm – funding sources, council staff resource, cross-functional co-operation. Appoint a High Streets Manager.
- run a programme of greening high streets, in line with the Council's Economic Strategy's priority to "Embed city greening as a key aspect of public realm improvements across regeneration programmes, city centre development and high streets renewal"
- work with the Council's Transport team to align the Strategy with the pipeline of transport schemes, eg Liveable Neighbourhoods
- review the coverage of high streets across Bristol and facilitate new facilities where there are gaps, eg Knowle West
- recognise the value of the 'pedestrian pound'. High street businesses tend to over-estimate the numbers arriving by car and underestimate the numbers arriving on foot, but as the Council's Economic Strategy says "Residents walking and cycling visit high streets more frequently, increasing local spend and supporting local economies." The Council could use the pedestrianisation of Cotham Hill and Princess Victoria Street as evidence that improving the pedestrian environment can be good for business.

Extract from BWA's '50 Ways to Better Walking' booklet

There follows a selection relevant to High Streets.

The full 50 Ways list may be found at: <https://bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk/50-ways/>

**Identify and improve walking routes**

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

**Adopt design standards that are inclusive**

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
9. Audit walking routes, providing dropped kerbs where they are missing, alternatives to steps where possible, and handrails where there are steps

**Develop walkable communities**

18. Audit and improve the provision of fully accessible toilets for public use in areas of high pedestrian footfall [Work with high street businesses to expand BCC's community toilet scheme. Support community initiatives such as the Bedminster Toilet Map.]

**Reduce obstructions to walking and implement enforcement measures**

29. Monitor and improve enforcement of controls against footway obstructions including bins, A-boards, scaffolding, fly-tipping, escooters and overgrown hedges
32. Re-purpose parking bays to remove pavement obstructions e.g. on-street bin collection points, electric scooter parking hubs, electric vehicle charging

**Make walking safe**

34. Segregate pedestrian spaces from all faster moving vehicles

**Make walking pleasant and comfortable**

40. Protect and plant street trees, and provide and maintain other green infrastructure e.g. parklets
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