



c/o Southville Centre, Beaufey Road, Bristol, BS3 1QG

[www.greaterbedminster.org.uk](http://www.greaterbedminster.org.uk)

## **Neighbourhood Plans: Will Greater Bedminster be Ready to Influence its Future?**

### **Background**

Bedminster (BS3) is a key strategic area in South Bristol, but the poor reputation of South Bristol (deserved or not) does not afford Bedminster the 'spin-offs' the area should benefit from, eg its proximity to the city centre, its rich historic past, important sites of interest and lively culture. An important aspiration therefore is to assert Bedminster's unique character and make it a destination linked to both South and Central Bristol: a district for art, street entertainment, a café culture, quirky shops and community activity.

Bristol has set itself the task of being one of Europe's top 20 cities. Bedminster can either go along for the ride or actively seek to influence its own future as a contribution to the Bristol Vision.

It is therefore proposed that GBCP

- Work towards a Neighbourhood Plan as outlined below;
- Involve public agencies such as Bristol City Council and private agencies such as the Bedminster business community as well as its network of voluntary and community organization in this process;
- Discuss the boundaries of a neighbourhood plan area;
- As part of this process hold a 'Neighbourhood Planning Conference' in 2013.
- Does not, at least at this stage, register as a neighbourhood planning group under the Localism Act.

Of course, passing a resolution is easy. Success will come only if we can mobilise residents, businesses and agencies across the partnership area.

### **Building the Neighbourhood Plan: 1. Business Improvement District**

GBCP's main current project, Bedminster Town Team, relates to the re-invigoration of its retail streets. These streets are important because

- they are a significant source of goods and services within easy reach of residents;
- they offer employment to large numbers;
- they are where 'community happens', ie they offer formal and informal meeting spaces and shared activities.

The Town Team process has involved us in planning ahead, ie thinking realistically about preferred futures. Among the things that we have done are preparing ideas on greening the street environment; improving signage and parking; considering the balance between pedestrians and other traffic types and developing an arts programme to attract visitors. A full list would be very long. We have been able to start work on some of these things, but the transformation of our retail corridor is a long term task.

The Town Team Project has three key purposes:

- encourage the c450 very different businesses to collaborate together to improve their environment rather than attempt to operate in isolation;
- encourage more people, especially local ones, to visit and use the area by making it safer, brighter and more exciting;
- encourage new investors to come to Bedminster and open attractive businesses.

The first phase of this project will end in March/April 2013 when, hopefully, traders will vote to establish a Business Improvement District (BID). The Bedminster BID will be a partner within GBCP and will generate nearly £100,000 pa to be invested in the improvement of the retail streets. This income and the increased clout of an organized business community will, over time, secure many of the aims identified in the course of this project.

### **Building the Neighbourhood Partnership: 2. Outside the Main Retail Corridor**

Walking distance from the BID (say 500-600metres) includes most of the largely residential space between the Avon New Cut to the north and the railway line to the south and west (see map). What should be the housing policies and greening strategy in these communities? What should be happening about through traffic, parking, walking and cycling? What community facilities would we wish to protect and encourage? What innovations would we resist? How does schooling fit in and what can be done to promote good health and reduce social isolation?

Of course, economic circumstances will largely determine the future of this area, but, can we be more than playthings of The Market? On the principle that 'history is made by the people who turn up', we should attempt to influence development, where we can.

As with the Bedminster BID, we do not start with a blank sheet. Much work has already been done around, for example, the improvement of green spaces and interventions to make walking more attractive. There is a well- established annual arts programme. Our strong links with BCC and other public agencies make it much easier for us to influence proposals coming from them, but only if we take the issue beyond 'nodding'\*\*\*.

Sections within UWE have indicated a wish to work with us on some of these issues. There may be other allies out there.

### **Building the Neighbourhood Partnership: 3. The Other Side of the Tracks**

Linking the Retail Corridor and its residential hinterland is fairly straight forward. However, three areas in GBCP lie outside this main area (see map). Should they be included in the general planning process or do we need to make special arrangements for them? If so, what?

**a. Bower Ashton:** The lead residents' body is the Bower Ashton Residents' Association although the neighbourhood includes institutions such as Ashton Park Secondary School and the Bower Ashton Campus of UWE.

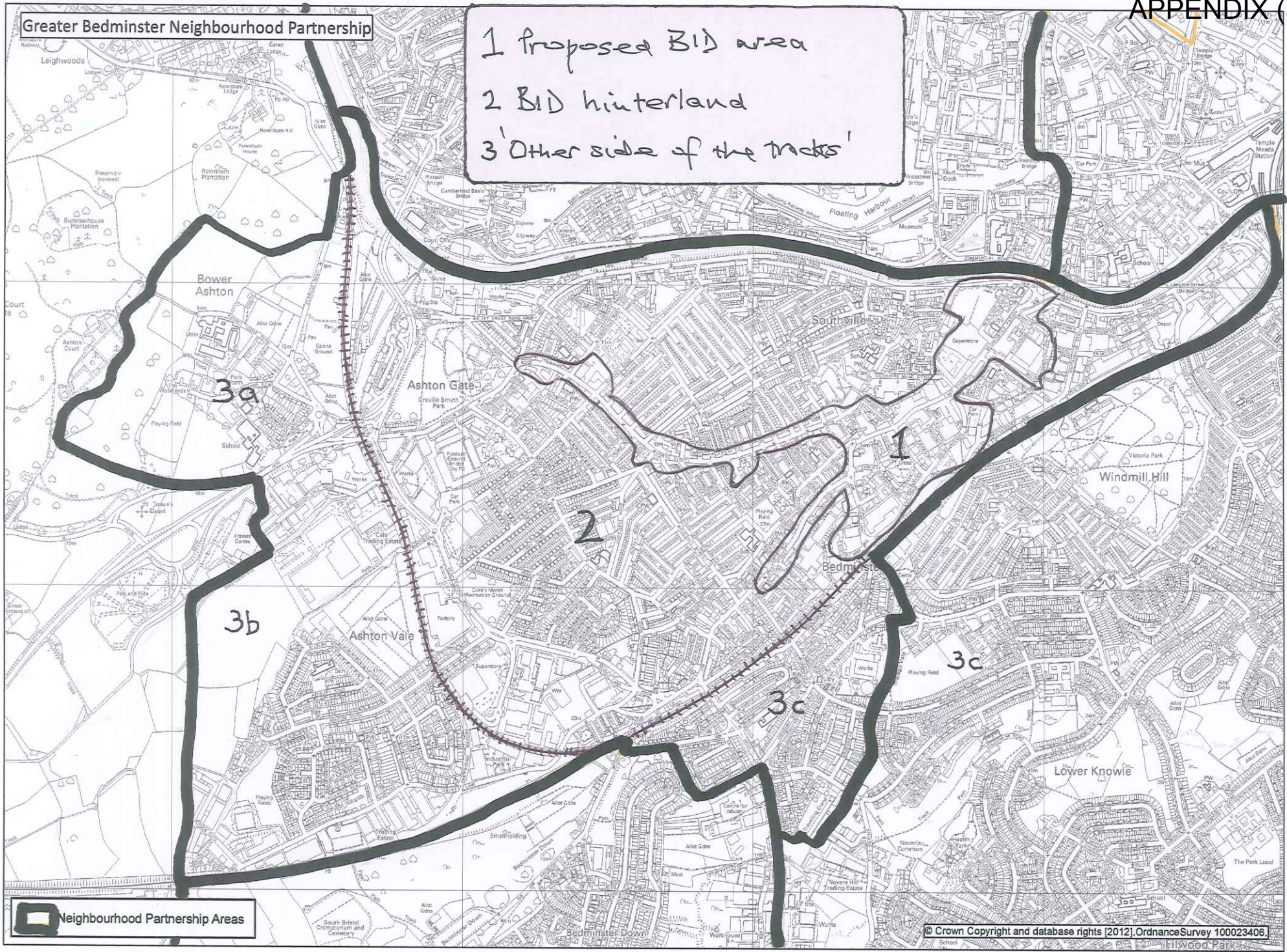
**b. Ashton Vale:** GBCP is linked to several groups in this urban village, but there is no overall lead organization. Establishing one might be a useful first step.

**c. Marksbury Road Area:** the lead organization here is the Marksbury Area Community Association (MACA), but there are several others. An added complication is that only part of this area is in Bedminster ward (therefore GBCP) while the other is in Windmill Hill ward and thus outside our jurisdiction. We would need to discuss collaboration with our neighbouring partnership.

We need to talk to groups in these neighbourhoods and see if and how they wish to proceed.

Ben Barker,  
January 2013

\*\*\*'nodding' – this is a phrase used by some community activists arising from experience with well-funded regeneration projects. The suggestion is that representatives of agencies descend upon projects to secure a share of funding. The role of community representatives is thus reduced to 'nodding' support for 'official' proposals. Fortunately, the chance of us having significant funding to attract 'vultures' is slim indeed. Greater Bedminster is an 'average' neighbourhood, ie too rich to attract much government funding and too poor to rise unaided with an economic tide.



Greater Bedminster Neighbourhood Partnership

1 Proposed BID area  
2 BID hinterland  
3 'Other side of the tracks'

Neighbourhood Partnership Areas