

Growth & Regeneration Scrutiny Commission

28th January 2021

Public Forum



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Questions

Q1: Anna Haydock-Wilson

I believe we should priorities the well-being of people and planet above all when considering all decisions for change and regeneration. Growth and new development are not in themselves the means to provide new homes and increased equality.

How is the council planning to create environmentally sustainable and genuinely affordable homes in the Cumberland Basin region?

Answer

Any development that comes forward within the Cumberland Basin will, at a minimum, need to align with the Council's Planning Policy which currently requires a minimum of 30% affordable housing and high environmentally and sustainable standards.

Building energy efficient homes, in places that are connected by sustainable travel options, will be key to tackling the housing crisis and meeting our climate and ecological targets.

Q2: Anna Haydock-Wilson

Before you engage with the local community, is there any way you can drop the 'Western Harbour' project title?

It is alienating the local community before you even begin creative engagement as it feels as if you are trying to eliminate Hotwells, Ashton Meadows and the Cumberland Basin in favour of a marketable area.

Answer

The next phase of community engagement will seek feedback from the public on the project. If there is consistent and strong feedback from residents across the City the need to change the name Western Harbour, this will be considered accordingly by the administration in consultation with the WHAG.

Q3: Valerie Steel

In the Arup report there is a table of measures of success for the proposed Western Harbour development. To quote from this - successful solution will: Improve links between communities and reduce severance. A successful solution will not: Result in negative impacts on heritage assets, which should be enhanced as part of the scheme.

The proposed Eastern Option for a four lane road to replace the current bridge completely severs the Cumberland Basin from the rest of the Harbourside area. It would run near to or right past important heritage assets ie. Underfall Yard, Avon Crescent and the bonded warehouse.

Surely on this basis the Eastern Option should be discounted in all future plans for changing the road system?

Answer

It's too early to state a preference for any one option. We will need to balance exactly these competing priorities as potential solutions are developed.

The intention of the highway's engagement was to capture early views on approaches to changing the road network. It was not about selecting a final option. Highway solutions will be considered within a wider place making context in the next phase of the project once a place shaping vision for the area has been developed.

Q4: Valerie Steel

The Western Harbour area as defined on the council's website page clearly includes the Baltic Wharf Caravan park. Why does the Mayor persist in denying this and will the current proposals for a massively overdeveloped site of seven storey blocks be the precedent for the rest of the area?

Answer

The Western Harbour Regeneration Project incorporates land within the Council's ownership that has not yet come forward for development.

Some of the other schemes coming forward in the wider Western Harbour Draft Local Plan Review area, such as the Goram Homes development at Baltic Wharf will be developed in advance of the transformation of the Western Harbour Regeneration Area and be determined through the planning process.

Q5: Martin Rands

As far as I am aware, the Mayor is still only considering three out of the nine or so Arup feasibility study 'Western Harbour' road 'solutions', as being feasible.

He has said that all other options are unproceedable for one reason or another.

All three of these solutions that have not been discarded, are extremely damaging to the City. The Eastern option results in a new dual carriageway being built very close to heritage assets like the Underfall Yard, Pump House, Nova Scotia, Avon Crescent and A Bond warehouse (all grade 2 listed or higher).

The other options result in new roadbuilding and bridge building much closer to the jewel in Bristol's crown, Brunel's suspension bridge, and through Ashton Meadows.

Which other road options might be re-considered, or is the Mayor determined not to budge from the three stated feasible options?

Answer

No options have been preferred. Any which fulfil the competing challenges of removing the ageing infrastructure, the housing crisis, flooding and protecting heritage will be concerned. Your comment highlights exactly how these have to be balanced in any proposal.

The intention of the highway's engagement was to capture early views on approaches to changing the road network. It was not about selecting a final option. Highway solutions will be considered within a wider place making context in the next phase of the project once a place shaping vision for the area has been developed.

The Mayor has publicly stated a tunnel would be a preferred solution, but that finance and engineering constraints probably make it unviable. If any feasible solution came forward it would need considered.

Q6: Martin Rands

I came to Place Scrutiny Commission in July 2017 to ask about Avon Crescent, and why the shared space scheme that was integral to the Metrobus AVTM planning consent had not been built out. And why the re-routing proposal that was consulted on in September 2016 had been cancelled personally by the Mayor. In Marvin's answer, it states " The City already suffers from significant congestion, therefore closing more roads at the current time will only add to this pressure as it reduces the overall road capacity which is in conflict with the current mayoral priorities. " £50,000 C.I.L. money which was earmarked for re-routing at Avon Crescent is still festering in the Area Committee bank account (I hope).

Avon Crescent is temporarily closed to motor traffic due to the collapse of the Chocolate Path and Harbour Railway (incidentally, Cumberland Road should also have been strengthened as part of the Metrobus AVTM planning consent, which would have prevented the collapse). When Avon Crescent re-opens, it will return to being a speeding taxi and motorbike (and potentially bus route), at least (assuming Cumberland Road becomes westbound only to all other than bus lane users) Avon Crescent is now used by huge numbers of walkers and cyclists as part of 'Harbourside Walk' and as where the Ashton Avenue Bridge Cycling/Walking route connects with the highway.

Why after all these years, has neither shared space nor re-routing been delivered? And when will it?

Answer

It's agreed that Metrobus would have been an opportunity to look at much more significant issues of aging infrastructure in the area as priority.

Western Harbour project is an opportunity to look at the connectivity of the whole western end of spike island – not only taking Avon Crescent in isolation.

The intention of the highway's engagement was to capture early views on approaches to changing the road network. It was not about selecting a final option. Highway solutions will be considered within a wider place making context in the next phase of the project once a place shaping vision for the area has been developed.

Q7: Stephen Wickham

I note that the "moving forward" narrative for Western Harbour now starts with new officers a time line based in Summer 2018 with healing the divisions of the August Roads options engagement, However it is mis described as a consultation which those present were keen to stress it was not. However in April 2019 "New protection for Open Spaces" Consultation the prior elimination of all green spaces inside the expanded western harbour redline from each of the three wards pages surely represents a democratic deficit? Does the commission agree?

This includes Butterfly Junction in Hotwells and the Dame Sylvia Crowe designed Wooded Hill and open meadow around Brunel way in Southville.

Answer

Agree that it is important to accurately define the early engagement work, so thank you for highlighting the contradiction in that wording.

The draft local plan says that development at Western Harbour will include high quality public open spaces incorporating green infrastructure and public realm improvements. The next phase of engagement and subsequent future consultation will shape the approach to open space alongside other aspects of the regeneration of the area.

Q8: Stephen Wickham

Land eliminated from the consultation is keenly used for exercise in the three Covid lockdowns to date by residents of Southville Bedminster and Hotwells and Clifton. Surely this isn't right for building on?

Two attachments re the timeline:



BCC Timeline Sept Western Harbour
2020 WHAG (frame (Timeline Rearward E)

Answer

The draft local plan says that development at Western Harbour will include high quality public open spaces incorporating green infrastructure and public realm improvements. The next phase of engagement and subsequent future consultation will shape the approach to open space alongside other aspects of the regeneration of the area.

Q9: Sue Otty

Western Harbour development;

Is it definitely the case that the question of what might happen to the road system will be subservient to the kind of development that is agreed?

Answer

No conclusions on a road network have been made. All options for road changes will be considered as the project progresses and more local and citywide engagement takes place.

The intention of the highway's engagement in 2019 was to capture early views on approaches to changing the road network. It was not about selecting a final option. Highway solutions will be considered within a wider place making context in the next phase of the project once a place shaping vision for the area has been developed.

Q10: Suzanne Audrey

Background

With regard to Bristol City Council's 2019/20 External Audit, extracts from the Review of Governance Arrangements for Bristol City Council's Subsidiaries relate to the ability of members of the Audit Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), and Cabinet to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Concerns were raised about poor access to information, poor record keeping, lack of transparency, and an inappropriate balance between legal and commercial sensitivities.

Unfortunately, the mysterious appearance and sudden disappearance of the Temple Quarter Member Working Group report with the papers for the current meeting for G&R Scrutiny (28 January 2021) do nothing to inspire confidence.

Question

Are members of the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission confident that arrangements for audit and scrutiny of the plans for Temple Quarter and Temple Island do not repeat the problems of poor access to information, poor record keeping, lack of transparency, and an inappropriate balance between legal and commercial sensitivities?

Answer

First of all, I would like to apologise for the late publication of the report. This was due to the fact that we wanted to hold the first meeting of the cross-party working group in time for it to report for this meeting today. It is my oversight that I didn't allow time to meet the publication deadlines.

The report, our first, was drafted at the weekend. The draft was published in error before being finalised but this was quickly rectified and the correct version is the one now available.

Addressing your wider point, I do expect that this cross-party group will be able to fulfil its functions, which are to inform and guide the regeneration of the area and to report on the progress to this Commission and the Cabinet.

Our meetings will be private and the reports written will be a synthesis of the discussions; this is to reflect the fact that discussions will explore matters that are at a very early draft stage.

Q11: Suzanne Audrey

Background

The Temple Island Position Statement indicates Bristol City Council is 'continuing to prepare works packages for enabling works to the site', and that 'negotiations with L & G have been protracted partly because of the complexities associated with the island site'.

Question

A great deal of money has already been spent on enabling works relating to Temple Island. Please can you provide information about 'the complexities associated with the island site' and any costs to Bristol City Council of further 'enabling works'?

Answer

The full extent of enabling works is still being determined. The complexities include undertaking further investigative work to establish the full extent of residual contamination associated with previous uses on the site, and the most appropriate routes for pedestrians and cyclists which will be determined through the planning process. The cost of enabling works remains capped at the level previously reported to Cabinet.

Statements

S1: Suzanne Audrey

With regard to Bristol City Council's 2019/20 External Audit, extracts from the Review of Governance Arrangements for Bristol City Council's Subsidiaries relate to the ability of members of the Audit Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), and Cabinet to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Concerns were raised about poor access to information, poor record keeping, lack of transparency, and an inappropriate balance between legal and commercial sensitivities.

Audit Committee

Concerns have been raised relating to access to confidential information, because a proportion of papers were viewed to be commercially sensitive and, as such, could not be easily viewed. This has since been discussed by the Audit Committee and a response provided by the Monitoring Officer as to the legal basis on which the Audit Committee have access to information.

In order to discharge their responsibilities, the Audit Committee should have sight of issues relating to the Council's governance arrangements. **We recognise that information which is commercially sensitive cannot be publicly available and access needs to be restricted, but the Council needs to find a way to balance the legal and commercial sensitivities to enable Audit Committee to operate effectively.**

Cabinet and OSMB

- **Arrangements for communicating key inputs to Cabinet from the Shareholder Group and Bristol Holding Limited, as well as the outcomes of scrutiny from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), were inadequate.**
- **...the information and papers provided at the January 2020 Cabinet did not clearly state the risks faced by BE [Bristol Energy], or provide sufficient robust information to enable Cabinet to make an informed decision.**
- the report from Bristol Holding Limited stated that both BE and Bristol Holding Limited remained concerned that it would not take much to drive BE into a situation that may require additional shareholder funding and/or collateral. **As this report was included in exempt session, it was not contained within the main body of the papers provided to Cabinet but was included within the appendices and, as such, its messages were more difficult for Cabinet to consider.**
- The situation has been compounded by the fact that **some information and decisions, such as decisions made by the Shareholder Representative (Deputy Mayor), are not routinely published. In our opinion and based on practice elsewhere, we consider that these decisions could be published by the Council.** This approach, which restricts access to information, some of which does not need to be confidential, is **creating concerns that the Council is not as open and transparent as it could be** and should now be addressed within its governance arrangements.
- **Despite the concerns raised by OSMB, Cabinet approved BE's business plan for 2019/20**
- **Cabinet papers did not record that OSMB were consulted and the outcome of that discussion.**
- **The approval of BE's business plan by Cabinet was agenda item 18 of 22, of which there were 14 key decisions including the Council's 2020/21 budget. Our review of the webcast identified that**

there were no questions or comments made and the business plan was approved without any challenge.

- Membership of the Shareholder Group is set out in its terms of reference, which was developed by the Council. In addition to the Deputy Mayor, the Group should [*include*] at least two members of the Cabinet in addition to the Deputy Mayor... Our review of the minutes identified that **only one member of the Cabinet attends in addition to the Deputy Mayor**
- **...the Council did not have effective risk management arrangements in place.**

S2: David Redgewell, David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside

We would like to raise the following issue; the need for progress on North Somerset Council joining WECA Mayoral combined authority following legal advice that progress can now be made between WECA mayoral elections. To ask what progress is now being made with the WECA scrutiny commission on the reform of WECA mayoral combined authority governance.

Public accountability of the Planning and Housing board, the Transport board Public transport forum Scrutiny meetings - the need to move the full public transport function from the city and county of Bristol, Banes Council and South Gloucestershire Council.

The need when North Somerset joins to set up a railway executive and a division to oversee a light rail system for Bristol and Bath city region.

We also need to make progress on a devolution deal on a light rail system for the Greater Bristol Bath city region and money for Temple Meads station public transport interchange facilities and money for Temple Quay and St Phillips Marsh.

Money to develop public transport network in North Somerset Council park and ride at Weston Super Mare metro bus from Bristol to Nailsea and Clevedon.

Work to stations for disabled access at Weston Super Mare transport interchange facilities and disabled lifts.

Full disabled access to Nailsea and Backwell station and Weston Super Mare to Locking Banwell, Winscombe new road and metro bus route to Cheddar and Wells bus station.

Powers to precept the for public transport service railway bus services and ferry services.

We need to make progress and holding the Western Gateway partnership to scrutiny account and the Western Gateway transport board.

The allocation of housing and affordable housing is very important in all four Greater Bristol authorities.

We would like to see progress on the city region governance by the growth and Regeneration Commission and WECA Mayoral Scrutiny Commission.

On the budget we would like certainty that budgets are transferred to WECA Mayoral Transport Authority to operate supported bus services in south Bristol link to south Bristol hospital East Bristol network and North Bristol network from Shirehampton and Avonmouth Lawrence Weston Westbury on Trym to Southmead hospital bus station to Bristol Parkway Bradley Stoke and Thornbury.

It's very important WECA mayoral transport authority has a revenue support budget and money for phase 1 of metro west from Severn Beach St Andrew Road Avonmouth Dock, Portway Parkway Station, Shirehampton, Clifton Down Redland, Montpellier, Stapleton Road Lawrence Hill, Bristol

Temple Meads Keynsham, Oldfield Park, Bath Spa Freshford, Avoncliffe, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge Westbury, Warminster or Frome.

On public toilets we need to see a budget - this is very important in view of the temporary toilets in Queen Sq and the harbour with disabled access.

We need a budget for public toilets with disabled access in our city centre and shopping centres and parks - any capital raised through sales of toilet blocks should be reinvested in new public and community toilets.

On Covid-19 we need to see more patrols on the Greater Bristol and Bath bus network by Police and Covid-19 marshals especially with an attack on a NHS Nurse on a bus travelling into central Bristol; [the nurse] was spat at by a passenger with a scooter. This issue is being investigated by the Avon and Somerset police.

We need Covid marshal patrols on the bus and local rail network with the Avon and Somerset police and the British transport police and port police.

We are very concerned about lack of progress on Portway Parkway railway station.

Network rail western routes and WECA mayoral transport authority have not started work on this project with First Great Western railway. The Department for Transport grant runs out on 31st of March 2021 .

Of course money is needed to regenerate the Governor and Bristol and Exeter hotel and the derelict buildings in the High street around Castle Park - these are long term projects along Newfoundland Road corridor that need attention.

The need for a transport plan for Severnside Bus links from south Bristol via the south Bristol hospital link and the Portway and Portway Parkway station to Severn Beach Cabot Park and the St Andrews Road station area.

We need the Henbury loop to operate to Avonmouth and St Andrew's Road.

Severn Beach Station needs a car park and Pilning station needs rebuilding for the new development.

S3: Dennis Gornall, Chairman Cumberland Basin Stakeholder Group, Chairman Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Association

This statement is submitted on behalf of both the Cumberland Basin Stakeholder Group and the Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Association.

The proposals to develop a space or spaces at the Western end of the Harbour has now been talked about for over 3 years and maybe more. As all members of the Commission will know the emphasis initially was all on the road network and possible changes to it. We are pleased that this focus is now taking more of a back seat while thoughts are given to how to engage properly with the whole idea of development in this area which will of course include the issue of roads and other transport facilities. There are of course many issues about development in this area that will cause concern to different people. What is very clear is that there is no getting away from the fact that there are two very significant buildings on the North side of the river and one on the South side, namely the Tobacco warehouses that surely must form a "central" and significant element of any development in this area. However we understand that there are at this stage no plans at all, even in outline, for these buildings. Nor have we found any evidence that there are proposal options for the use of these buildings which

might be put forward to start any conversations, consultations or engagement processes regarding them.

This we think is quite extraordinary given the influence that such buildings might have on the creation of community – or communities – in the area of Western Harbour. We are not proposing, of course, that the Council determine such usage without consultation and without engaging with the City and with the near-by communities to seek ideas. However we think by now some options would be being formulated and available for discussion.

We feel we cannot emphasize enough the centrality of these buildings to the thinking that must come forward for any developments in this area.

S4: Councillor Jerome Thomas

Re: Western Harbour Update



One of the well used green spaces in the Western Harbour area where Bristol's Labour Mayor Marvin Rees is proposing to build high rise luxury flats.

- 1) While welcoming the development of affordable housing in the city there has been no satisfactory process put forward by Bristol's Mayor for achieving this in the most appropriate way and weighing up the costs of benefits of a range of different sites. He appears to have predetermined that the Western Harbour area is the right place to build substantial numbers of new flats, in spite of the significant constraints and costs of building in this area.
- 2) While the Mayor has proposed a process of consultative creative engagement in 2020 for the Western Harbour area, as early as 2017 he was in the Far East selling his proposals for high rise luxury flats including in the well used green space pictured above.

- 3) His consultation now only extends to those whose views he appears not to find challenging. He rules out local councillors being part of any early stage consultation process along with important stakeholders such as English Heritage and the Environment Agency.
- 4) The Ekspan report of 2012 highlighted the state of disrepair of the Plimsoll Bridge in Cumberland basin and the relatively affordable cost of refurbishing it. The Mayor appears to be misrepresenting the financial sums involved in the refurbishment of the bridge and could be wasting valuable time by failing to look after this crucial part of the region's transport infrastructure. I believe it is likely that the refurbishment of the Plimsoll Bridge combined with some road improvements in the surrounding area is likely to be the most appropriate way of addressing the challenges and opportunities of this area.
- 5) We now need a genuine process of consultation on Western Harbour and not one where the answers are predetermined in an undemocratic way.

S5: Councillor Jerome Thomas

Temple Quarter Cross Party Working Group

I welcome the cross party working group on Temple Quarter as it gives an opportunity to scrutinise important decisions before they are made, and contribute to better joined up planning of these important and potentially exciting new developments.

Integration of bus services into Temple Meads redesign

As part of the Temple Island works it is essential to see a systematic approach to the integration of bus services and bus stops into any proposals. This should involve meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders such as the bus companies.

There is a significant opportunity if good planning takes place to improve bus services into the city from East Bristol and significantly improve the integration of bus services with rail services at the region's most important transport hub.

Temple Island proposals

I am concerned that Bristol's Mayor still considers it appropriate for the council to fund the building of a new office block on Temple Island, via a long lease with the Mayor's preferred partners L&G. This proposed transaction presented high potential financial risks to the Council even before Covid struck. Now it needs to be considered even more carefully.