

Full Council

10 January 2022



Report of: Director Legal and Democratic Services

Title: Petition Debate – ‘No more building on green spaces in the City of Bristol.’

Recommendation

That Full Council debates the petition and refers it to the Mayor / relevant Cabinet member for a formal response.

Summary

Under the Council’s petitions scheme, where a petition has 3,500 or more signatures from people who live, work or study in Bristol, the petition organiser can request a Full Council debate.

The Council has received a petition with the title ‘No more building on green spaces in the City of Bristol’.

The petition organisers have requested that Full Council debates the petition.



Details of the petition

1. The wording of the petition is as follows:

Petition title / subject: **'No more building on green spaces in the City of Bristol'**

Petition wording:

We, the undersigned, call upon Bristol City Council to halt any further development on green spaces in the city.

In February 2020, Bristol City Council proudly declared an Ecological Emergency in response to escalating threats to wildlife and ecosystems. There has been a worrying decline in numbers and diversity of wildlife in the city and more widely in recent years, with 15% of British wildlife now at risk of extinction.

The declaration was jointly made by Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol and Ian Barrett, CEO of Avon and Wildlife Trust, at a city council Cabinet meeting.

This declaration came with much fanfare, but in the meantime, we see an alarming increase in developments on valuable green spaces and yet more green spaces are under threat. **This flies in the face of the Ecological Emergency declaration.**

Green spaces within the city that have recently been lost, impacted or under threat include:

Bonnington Walk open space

The Northern Slopes

The Western Slopes

Ashton Vale

Brislington Meadows

We are thankful for the recent vote in favour of the Golden Motion, passed by councillors in September 2021. It was widely supported by Bristolians and councillors alike, and showed acknowledgement of the commitment to protecting more green space. However, we are still witnessing the loss of Brislington Meadows and potentially The Western Slopes too, which is still listed as a development site under Goram Homes and subject to a private developer application, despite city-wide public outcry. It is an absolute travesty that we are seeing these highly biodiverse and ecologically important urban green spaces potentially destroyed and where mitigation strategies would be completely futile.

We are therefore continuing to question the commitment to saving green spaces by those in charge of our this city and hence why this petition is being presented today.

This massacre of green spaces appears to be unrelenting and needs to be stopped NOW!

Furthermore, Bristol City Council needs to LISTEN to residents. So called "public consultations" are anything but; decisions are often seemingly already made and the consultation with the public merely a tick-box exercise. There have been too many instances where views and concerns arising from supposed "public consultations" have been completely ignored.

We do not deny that the City of Bristol has a housing crisis due to an increasing population and unregulated university expansion, but the solution is NOT to continually build on valuable green spaces. Once they are gone, they are gone for good and no amount of “bee-boxes” or “wildflower patches” can make up their loss. Many people who have signed this petition do not own their own home, but still understand the importance of protecting our green spaces. This petition is asking for better use of brownfield sites and redundant previously developed buildings/areas - we want less luxury apartments and offices and more genuinely affordable homes on these non-green space sites and we want solid commitment from our elected leaders to see this acknowledged.

We call for the overwhelming support for the Golden Motion and the content of this petition to be prioritised urgently within a review of the Local Plan. We urge planning committees to seize the opportunity to make decisions with this extended protection for green spaces.

STOP BUILDING ON VALUABLE GREEN SPACES!

2. The petition has been organised by Martyn Cordey
3. The petition has secured 7366 signatures to date, 3751 from Bristol residents. Verified as of 20 December 2022.
4. The Full Council is asked to debate the petition.
5. Under the petition scheme, the petition organiser is permitted up to 5 minutes to present and speak to the petition. The petition scheme allows a further period of up to 15 minutes for discussion of the petition by councillors at the Full Council meeting.
6. The Full Council has agreed the following in relation to dealing with petitions with over 3500 signatures: The topic of the debate should be referred to the Mayor/Cabinet, or other relevant body with the petitioner’s views and Full Council’s views.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the debate, the Full Council is recommended to refer the petition to the Mayor, in order that the Mayor can consider his response, in liaison with the relevant Cabinet member.