

Hotwells Community Meeting re Western Harbour – 22 January 2020

Mayor's notes & replies

The first 55 minutes of the meeting consisted of contributions from the community. I noted all the comments I could. Below is a table of those comments and some of the challenges we have been wrestling with.

Comment	Response
<p>G. Saunders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tower blocks are not welcome ▪ Tourism in the area could be undermined ▪ Ecological sensitivity of some sites ▪ Air Pollution needs to be considered ▪ Bristol has a poor track record on major projects inc. Temple Meads. So the chances of failure are high ▪ Wants to simply repair existing bridge 	<p>It is density we're looking for and height will be part of that. But this isn't about tower blocks. Any designs that come forward will have to be in keeping with the area.</p> <p>We recognise the importance of the gorge and the harbour as a core part of Bristol's tourism offer. One of the criteria we've used is to make the waterfront accessible to all. It fits with in a wider piece of work to make best use of the harbour as a Bristol destination. This can be further improved if there are more facilities in the area.</p> <p>We've been working on the ecological emergency since December and declared it on the 4th February. We were determined we wouldn't declare unless the words were backed by a review of our planning processes and done with our city partners. That's what would give this substance. We'll be including bio-diversity/nature targets (alongside climate and economic inclusion) in all our city developments.</p> <p>City centre living presents an opportunity for homes that are a 7-minute bike ride and 25 minute walk from central Bristol (employment, retail, leisure etc.). This is the opportunity to minimise the carbon price the planet pays for Bristol's need to house a growing population. The further away from active travel distance we build, the larger the carbon dependency we build into the city system.</p> <p>We agree Bristol has a poor track record on delivery. We're changing that. From the winning bid for Channel 4 to all the cranes on the horizon, we're getting things done. We can't allow failures of the past to undermine our ambition for the future. We will not be gung ho. The aspirations we pursue will be thoroughly assessed.</p> <p>Repairing the bridge (which includes replacing key parts of infrastructure), costs circa £40m. Two key considerations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If in eight years we then find that the housing crisis has reached such overwhelming levels that we need to revisit this site to build homes and that takes moving the bridge we've wasted £40m. We need to make sure we've done everything we can with this site in anticipation of the way Bristol will be, not just the way it is. This is a critical judgement call. 2. Simply repairing the bridge does not achieve any wider benefit for the city. It would lock in a 1960s layout for another generation.

<p>Anna</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We're not Anti-homes or anti change or anti-social housing ▪ I want to see the development of bonded warehouses ▪ We want social houses ▪ Wants speed, not drawn out ▪ Simplify existing road structure – removing ramps ▪ Need to do something about housing <u>now</u> 	<p>I'm pleased that people at the meeting agreed with the need to build homes of all tenures – including social housing. It is important to get a mix of tenures across Bristol and in every development. Our housing crisis brings many challenges:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not building homes for a growing population in a city characterised by economic inequality will have consequences – the compounding of those inequalities. 2. Building homes brings pressure on the planet in terms of resource use, land use and the energy and transport services the homes require. We have finite land in our city boundary and land for housing comes into competition with employment land, retail land, land for green space. <p>Every option has an opportunity cost. This is what we are grappling with.</p> <p>The future of the bonded warehouses is being explored. I agree it would be great to bring them back into use as homes. This could be combined with other uses such as community or employment space.</p> <p>We are absolutely aware of the need to do something about housing now. We don't want things to be any more drawn out than they need to be. But the urgent need for action must be balanced against the need to get it right: to keep communities with us as we navigate the dilemmas I set out above. And alongside this we need to understand that the challenges and solutions we pursue are inseparable from but not confined to specific communities.</p> <p>Simplifying the road structure by removing one or two of the ramps will not improve the transport network or unlock enough land for homes. This impacts the viability of the development. We believe it's the worst and most disappointing of all options – failing on all fronts.</p>
<p>John</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wrote open letter to the post – is doing nothing a viable option? ▪ What is the starting point: Road or bulldozing whole system? 	<p>No final decisions on the design have been made, but doing nothing is not an option. The infrastructure is deteriorating, the city's housing need is growing, the climate and ecological crisis is building. The need to proactively build the right kind of homes in the places that minimise the carbon price the planet pays is time critical.</p> <p>The decision must be made now because we face this £40m bill to maintain the flyover roads system and bridge. Spending £40m to achieve the <i>status quo</i> and not realising any benefits for Bristol and the local community is a disappointing choice. But more than this, if we spend £40m to maintain the status quo for 25 years then find the housing crisis has got so bad in eight years that we have to revisit this site to build home, we'll quite rightly be asked why we didn't take the action at the time rather than wasting £40m.</p>

	<p>The starting point is the question: How can we realise the best outcome from this window of challenge and opportunity?</p>
<p>Charlotte</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whatever development comes forward, reducing air pollution should be the aim ▪ Will not be subject to CAZ ▪ Will take cars from Dowry Square ▪ Reduce car dependency 	<p>We're taking ambitious steps on air quality through the Clean Air Zone, we've also introduced 77 biogas buses to replace diesel and will sign a bus deal that will put us on course to 100% biogas buses.</p> <p>Air quality is also about the right homes in the right places. Central locations reduce car dependency. Western Harbour is a seven minute bike ride and 25 minute walk from the city centre. The initial thinking is to build homes that do not each have a car, but make use of share vehicle ownership or the public transport system that passes directly by. It's supporting the need of a growing population through non car dependent housing locations.</p> <p>Reducing car dependency can only be done through building in locations where people can use sustainable travel options.</p>
<p>Berliner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Park areas ▪ Need to credit green spaces (housing crisis drives action) ▪ Schemes thought about for many years ▪ Wants to protect parks 	<p>Parks and greenspaces are critical to the city as city lungs and an investment in mental and physical health, the climate and ecological emergency. Any development will need to reflect that. Our challenge is wrapped up in the need to house, move, employ and service a growing population on the back of an existing housing and inequality crisis, in a city with a finite land supply facing competing demands and a target of reaching carbon neutrality by 2030 to meet the climate and ecological emergencies.</p> <p>This is an opportunity to reclaim land lost to a piece of 1960s roads infrastructure. We can turn this into something more useful, providing homes in a place that brings with it a much higher likelihood of active travel and public transport options.</p> <p>The scheme has been thought about for many years and was suggested decades ago. This is symptomatic of Bristol – a city that hasn't delivered on homes or transport while the needs of a growing population have continued to build up around it. We're transforming the council from an organisation consumed by conversations with itself into one that focuses on working with and delivering for the city. Hengrove Park is an example of another development opportunity that was talked about for years but only now is coming through. We cannot allow the mistakes and failures of the past to undermine the ambition to excellence for the future.</p>
<p>Clayton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People asked to look at specific proposals ▪ Housing Crisis v Environment/Heritage ▪ Wants a constructed process with 	<p>Because we are at such an early stage there is little detail to share. What we do have is a clear understanding of the challenge faced by the city, a good idea of the difference between what the land is currently being used for and what it</p>

<p>transparency not cloak and dagger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No new bridges but wants guarantee that every new home is social housing 	<p>could offer the city, the £40m bill to extend the life of the road infrastructure by 25yrs, and clarity that there is a need to move the existing road network to release the area's potential.</p> <p>We also have the intention to make this to be an open conversation – hence the earliest possible engagement, before the development of significant detail. As the plans develop we will share as much as we can to keep residents informed.</p> <p>The balance of the housing crisis and failure to build verses the impact on the environment is the key challenge Bristol will face for the decades to come. We must minimise the carbon price we pay for this growth. Cities have historically grown (designed and undesigned) without regard to climate change or ecology. The result is that living a low impact life is hard work, even for the committed. We need to change this. We need to build the right kinds of homes, in the right places, served by low carbon energy sources and carbon-free transport options. This will make low impact living the easy norm, even for the uncommitted. Hearts and minds are great but that only takes us so far. We need help to build new city systems. That's what we want to deliver as we build new homes.</p> <p>Without significant changes in national legislation or support, it would be impossible to have every home as social housing. In any case, we don't see that as desirable and it potentially creates social segregation and ghettos. We want to bring forward mixed communities with a variety of tenure to prevent the social problems we face coming out of the past.</p> <p>The £40m figure is based on estimates by our transport engineers and processed through the Treasury's green book process for accuracy.</p>
<p>Annie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traffic, Noise, Pollution ▪ CAZ Needs to be a top priority for people in area ▪ Wants social flats/not expensive flats ▪ Lose Garden Centre 	<p>I agree that we have to look at how we reduce noise, air pollution and carbon emissions, and we've taken a lead with our CAZ.</p> <p>Building homes in locations that don't need private cars, and then not providing space for private car parking will help with this.</p> <p>Bristol City Council is the landowner for most of the site and will therefore be in a strong position to ensure a good proportion of affordable/social rent homes.</p> <p>I've met with the Garden Centre separately and will continue to discuss how they can be part of the conversation and part of the future development of Western Harbour.</p>
<p>Resident</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What happens to traffic on Portway? 	<p>We do have influence over the Portway. For example, our outline CAZ plans impacted the Portway. But it is true that</p>

<p>Someone said we have no influence.</p>	<p>Highways England need to be involved in the development of any proposals.</p> <p>The Portway is an important route connecting South Bristol to Avonmouth and the M5. It's also a road of critical importance to North Somerset. And we will work with Highways England to ensure its resilience.</p>
<p>Trudy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diversity of the people who use the area ▪ Brunel built bridge – why not a tunnel? 	<p>One of the key benefits we believe can be realised is to make this part of the harbour an accessible destination for the whole of the city. I've spoken about people from Bristol's suburbs and estates that do not get to visit or enjoy the harbour or suspension bridge. I met a group of our work experience students recently and asked them when they have last visited the harbour, bridge or gorge. Some of these 15 year old Bristolians hadn't seen that part of Bristol for five years. Two couldn't remember ever visiting. We can do something that makes this iconic area of Bristol available to all.</p> <p>A tunnel remains my first preference. We are told the costs are considerably higher and the engineering incredibly difficult – with challenging gradients, tunnelling under mud and the potential impact on the river bank ecology. But I will keep this option alive until the very end as we look at every option.</p>
<p>Dominic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Costs high + length of time needed for work ▪ Doesn't want a 4 lane carriageway – we already have one 	<p>The length of time of the development is a challenge, which is why it's so important to engage people and build the conversation now so that we can get it right. This is a major scheme and the plans, costs and financing are by definition challenging to line up. It will require an alignment of relationships between local government, national government and private sector finance. Again, the nature of the model will be a major piece of work that requires time.</p> <p>I would like to remove cars from the living space, hence my personal preference of a tunnel as the best option if it is possible. If it is not, we must come up with a solution to free the land for development. This would mean moving the current four lane road – not adding another. The location is of this moved road is the big question.</p> <p>It is important to keep in mind that this is about serving the needs of our growing population while building out car dependency. If we build homes further out, we build in an increased likelihood of car dependency, some of whom may drive through Hotwells as they travel into the city centre for jobs, retail or leisure.</p>
<p>Heather</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pollution and Traffic is taking homes and business away 	<p>It is clear that the 1960's road network did damage to the community. It was designed at a time when fewer people owned cars and we were not facing a housing crisis, growing</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How much social housing will be built 	<p>population and climate and economical emergencies.</p> <p>We now have an opportunity to improve the layout and build homes in a place that reduces car dependency – minimising the impact on air quality, congestion, and carbon price the Bristol and the planet pays for our growth.</p> <p>We own the land and so will have significant control over any development and can ensure appropriate levels of much needed affordable housing.</p> <p>We need mixed and balanced communities with a variety of tenures attempt to make sure the communities are resilient and diverse.</p>
<p>Alistair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greener, denser city being disagreed with says this is a car centric development ▪ Wants green infrastructure to be built – suggests we haven't 	<p>The development will not be car-centric. The location and design combine to enable us to bring homes forward that do not need cars. It's just that the major piece of infrastructure dominating the area is a road. It has to be moved to free up the land. And a route has to be protected because it is a major access route for Bristol South and North Somerset to Avonmouth and the M5.</p> <p>We do need to build as centrally as possible. This is the opportunity to build new homes with reduced/minimal car dependency, build the flood defences in sympathy with the aesthetic of the development, place homes/customers next to the centre and North Street (helping in the face of the retail crisis), and turn this part of the harbour into an accessible destination for all of Bristol.</p>
<p>Resident</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arup eliminated options with same score ▪ Doesn't want gorge bridges 	<p>The ARUP report is initial review of what could work in the area – it is not a formal option or recommendation but just a starting point for the thinking. The next step was to highlight the high level choices to people (summarised in the three options) to start the conversation.</p> <p>Given the impact it would have I am not a fan of the Gorge bridges either – although someone suggested it is possible for beautiful bridges to be designed. I would prefer tunnels. But if we cannot have tunnels we need to decide whether we agree on the nature of the challenges Bristol needs to take on (housing crisis? Growing population? The need to reduce the carbon and ecological challenge coming from the need to house, employ and move that population?); if the land currently serving the flyover has a role in helping us meet those challenges; and if it does, we need to examine the nature of that role and what needs to happen to enable it to help us.</p>
<p>Martin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The development will cost millions 	<p>It will be a costly development. But that's related to the nature of the development and relates to the point I made</p>

	<p>earlier about the number of homes and the scheme's viability.</p> <p>It's important to keep in mind that there is a cost to doing nothing/maintain the status quo. On the one hand, extending the life of the road system for 25 years costs £40m. On the other, a failure to deliver homes in the face of the growing population will compound the housing crisis. And the failure to deliver homes in locations ideal for active travel areas where we can deter private car ownership will increase the pressure to deliver homes in other places where car dependency will be greater.</p>
<p>Mary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecological impact on Ashton court, Avon Gorge and Ashton Meadows ▪ Ecology v Development ▪ Advisory group Not from Environmental background ▪ Environment agency + planning ▪ Perception that things are done to the community not with ▪ Road acts as relief for M5 + airport expansion 	<p>We are balancing several challenges – ecology vs development is a good example. Building homes in a climate emergency is one of Bristol's biggest tasks for the next few decades.</p> <p>I am a member of the Mayors Migration Council and we have representation from the C40. I was in talks last week. Mayors and climate/migration activists are becoming increasingly aware of the need to deliver on equality, housing, jobs and social needs. The concern is that if these needs are not met, we will create the conditions for a reactionary, populist politics that comes with the message of protecting people through stronger borders and rolling back environmental measures that undermine employment. It's critical we are ahead of this. It's one of the reasons I stress the interdependence of homes, environment, jobs and equality.</p> <p>Our challenge is to bring forward development that helps people to support nature? The answer will be in the lifestyles the development offers, both within itself (green walls, gardens, food growing and the protections and proactive development of habitats), but also in how it interacts with the wider city (is it in a location that adds, minimises or reduces pressure on our city's energy, transport, water, food systems?)</p> <p>Perceptions are difficult things. They can of course be accurate. They can also be the result of legacy.</p> <p>I can only say that we committed to coming to the community at the earliest possible time. This is actually "pre-process". This has been in order to collect the views of people to set the trajectory of the scheme. We will work to ensure that the community are engaged in the project – including our work to get to a shared understanding of the city challenge, our motivation for looking at this site and ensuring we all realise the full benefit for the city. This process is about surfacing ideas and concerns and getting them on the table. The Environment Agency and Highways England will be key partners in developing plans.</p> <p>The roads do interact with the M5 and the airport. That's why we have to be very careful in how they are handled. We want to have fewer cars on our roads, but until that is the case, we have to manage what is. The ability to manage capacity and</p>

	maintain flow will be two critical considerations.
<p>Jeremy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flooding – building on floodplain ▪ Boat traffic might increase in the future 	<p>We are working through plans to engineer increased flood defences. The project offers the opportunity to do this sympathetically – as part of any development, instead of intrusive barriers.</p> <p>We’re committed to a thriving, working harbour. You can see this through our support of the Albion dry dock. We are undertaking a wider piece of work at the moment with the aim of enabling Bristol to realise the full values/benefits of the harbour. It will ensure any plans maintain a navigable waterway.</p>
<p>Sarah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome new housing – get rid of bridge ▪ Quality of design is needed bridge can be wonderful ▪ Thus could be opportunity to consolidate by building green homes and do something think big with aim of recap roads out of city centre. If build new bridge it needs public transport 	<p>We will be aiming for a high quality design that helps make this an accessible destination with strong connectivity. As we have grown our reputation as a city with ambition and a commitment to deliver, we have become increasingly attractive to developers. This brings challenges, one of which will be people coming with speculative and inappropriate proposals that are not aligned to our city’s culture and values. But it also brings opportunities. It gives us access to the investment we need to deliver thousands of homes, and it gives us the opportunity to be more choosy about the people we agree to work with.</p> <p>We want local residents and partners in the city to help us imagine what good is so we can take that into our master planning negotiations.</p> <p>Public transport improvements will be essential to any plans, but this area itself will be in an active travel area with easy access to employment in the city centre, minimising the carbon cost of any homes and the transport they need.</p>
<p>Adrian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What would Clifton wood look like with tower blocks ▪ 2500 homes too much ▪ No high rise 	<p>We’re not anticipating huge tower blocks – we’ve been saying Wapping Wharf not Canary Wharf. But we are talking higher density. Again, this is a product of the need to house a growing population, in homes in locations that minimise the price the planet pays for that growing population. More immediately, it reduces the pressure on urban sprawl.</p> <p>As we bring forward plans we’ll consider the number of units on the site based on the footprint available.</p> <p>The challenge we face as a city is if we don’t put homes here, we’ll have to put them somewhere else. And that will likely be further out with increased car dependency.</p>
<p>Kim</p>	<p>We do face a climate emergency. But the reality of this</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cant reconcile 24 hrs of climate reality with this ▪ Talk with Highways England to stop M5 traffic coming down Portway ▪ Bridge or tunnel, costs and engineering ▪ Refurbish existing bridge ▪ Costs of demolition and removal would be high 	<p>doesn't not take away from the housing crisis and the socio-political crisis we face resulting from our entrenched inequalities, segregation and low levels of social immobility. Failing to meet the social crisis will not only be morally wrong, but I fear we will create conditions for a reactionary politics that "defends" populations against migrants, action on climate and other scapegoats identified as threatening identity and livelihoods.</p> <p>It's at a time of such great complexity coming out of competing challenges that we need to be clear of our values, especially where these values are likely to come into conflict with each other. It doesn't mean we don't truly hold both values. In fact the opposite is true. Failing to state these values makes them vulnerable to being unconsciously sidelined. If realising one of our values comes at some cost to one or more of our other values, we need to be fully aware. It is our statement of values that puts us in touch with the trade offs we are making and the consequences of our decisions.</p> <p>We are in constant communication with Highways England about the M5 and its relationship with Bristol. We don't control Highways England, but the conversation will continue.</p> <p>Every major development (demolition, site preparation and construction) is expensive. This is why the mix on the site (market housing, affordable housing, retail etc), the financial support we might get from government and the scale and type of any private sector investment is so important. In one way or another, the scheme will need to be judged a good return on investment.</p> <p>It is important to keep in mind that there is also a cost to inaction, in so far as homes are not delivered and/or alternative sites are then required that are further away from the city centre and therefore come with a greater likelihood of car dependency.</p> <p>Refurbishing the existing bridge would cost in the region of £40m. But this would come while sacrificing the opportunities of this development: homes within an active travel distance of the centre, flood defences built in sympathy with the development, making the harbour a destination accessible to all, homes and shoppers living next to the centre and North St.</p>
<p>Ruth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tourists taken around gorge ▪ Garden centre 	<p>Any development will complement the wider work to ensure the harbour is all it can and should be. We want it to be a destination for Bristol and tourists. It will be important to maintain and improve this part of Bristol's tourist offer, as well as access for boats in the gorge.</p> <p>I've met with the Garden Centre and heard their views directly – we will continue to include them and other businesses in the conversation as plans develop.</p>

Paul

- Heritage, and wants railway integrated with new development

The slip of the chocolate path is clearly an issue, but the heritage of the area is a huge asset and something we want to preserve and enhance. This will need to be reflected in the planning.

One of the key benefits we believe can be realised is to make this part of the harbour an accessible destination for the whole of the city. We are aware that this area borders many much-loved heritage sites, such as the railway and the chocolate path. There is also an opportunity to open up access to new retail and cultural areas such as Wapping Wharf and North Street.

By considering the future options for the area and consulting local residents in this way, we aim to deliver a development which provides the homes the city needs in a way which honours and enhances the history and heritage of this part of the city.