

Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Association Response to Western Harbour Consultation April 2022

Introduction

The Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Association (HCCA) is pleased to be given the opportunity to comment on the draft vision and report of community engagement - Harbour Hopes. The HCCA, established in the 1970s, is the voice of local people in Hotwells and Cliftonwood, and over 10,000 local residents and businesses. Originally based at Hope Centre, we have campaigned continuously for a greater quality of life for our residents and local businesses. We respond to planning and development issues in our area, we run events, and we continue to seek to replace Hope Centre with a new community hub. Recently, the piazza, the open space in the Cumberland Basin has been our main focus for community events, and engagement.

Our community has experienced changes in our local area from increased and heavy traffic, poor local traffic management and continual through traffic including rat running through residential streets, significant increase in students, electric scooters, closure of local shops, increase footfall around the harbour, which has become a citywide destination, loss of our community space, loss of local pubs Adam and Eve, Spring Gardens, Plume of Feathers, increased focus on North Street, new development that is not connected into our community, 20 minute neighbourhood principles and lifestyle emerged through the pandemic and yet no investment has been made to make this a better and safer place to live, work and visit.

We ask that the City Council recognises the HCCA as a voice of local people, and takes advantage of strong networks to engage local people in the Council's regeneration projects. We also ask for a formal place on the Western Harbour Advisory Group and urge that other local partners and stakeholders such as CREATE Centre, Riverside, businesses such as the Pumphouse and Nova Scotia, and Hotwells School are included.

On behalf of the local community, we ask that the City Council responds positively to this representation on Western Harbour, and ensures that any change to our area is well planned and sustainable in meeting existing and future generation's needs.

HCCA also asks that you re-name this project Cumberland Basin, which is what everyone knows this area as, a historic name, applied to the area from Hotwells to Riverside.

Taking the broad areas referred to in the Harbour Hopes Consultation report and Vision, we make the following detailed comments which have been brought together following more in-depth local consultation by HCCA.

Detailed comments on vision, project context and key issues to be addressed

HCCA makes the following more detailed and not necessarily exhaustive comments;

The Vision- many local people are struggling to understand the high-level vision, to understand what it might mean and what the City Council plans to commission next. Some local people welcome the breadth of recognising the historic, harbour context, the confluence of the river and harbour, the strategic links, the cherished green infrastructure and the acknowledged threat of climate change which must surely influence how this project develops. We welcome the reference to culture, but we want to see that interpreted as community arts and enable our local ambitions to thrive. HCCA was promised an arts/community building from the caravan site development, - we are still waiting. Local people have a number of key concerns and feel these need to be understood better, to

enable us to engage better with the long-term ideas. We commissioned a report in 2017 which set out the key issues for the area and the justification/need for community support.

Western Harbour – the project - HCCA is concerned that the area described and indicated in the Bristol Local Plan and the Harbours Hopes documentation has changed, this affects residents and business both within the boundary and just beyond. Will you please clarify and going forward work to an agreed project area? We assume the policy area is as set out in the Local Plan Review Document, BCC has also talked of actions beyond the project boundary, including new housing sites which would presumably count towards the total number included in Western Harbour.

Bridge Repair - HCCA understands the Plimsoll Bridge needs to be repaired, we support the repair of the existing bridge. We do not support any of the other bridge repair/road schemes which bring traffic further into Hotwells, and therefore risk raising air pollution and noise for existing and future residents, we do not believe this is fully taking account of the key traffic movements in this area. Neither do we support any schemes which take the road further out into the gorge.

Through traffic - the WECA Subregional Transport Plan, and BCC's City Transport Plan are both silent on the significant increase in through traffic that Hotwells has experienced since the south Bristol link road connected via the Long Ashton roundabout to the A4 Portway route out of the City. Whilst, the [Joint Local Transport Plan - Combined Authority \(westofengland-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk) sections on the strategic road network and connectivity do acknowledge on page 46 the increased impact on Portway but there are no suggested mitigations, or plans to take traffic away from this area. Both the City Council's Local Transport Plan and the WECA Transport Delivery Plan place great emphasis on a modal shift to public transport, walking and cycling and the planned Low Emission Zones. Local people welcome these policies and planned projects but, they do not deal with the through traffic issues. Interestingly there could be improvement if traffic going south from the south Bristol link road were directed to the M5 via Congresbury and not the Portway.

We note the LEZ may impact on through traffic, but also fear that when the M5 is blocked due to accidents, which happens several times every year, that these policies may be temporarily suspended, and Cumberland Basin subjected to high levels of pollution and congestion. In particular the suspension of any charges when the national network is under stress means that a significant proportion of charges will be levied at Bristolians.

The most polluting incidences are when congestion from National Network in particular the M5 causes diversions into the City, using the City as a relief road and yet pays not LEZ costs, indeed it is understood charges will be suspended. We believe this risks a considerable impact in the Hotwells and Cumberland Basin area which is contradictory to the LEZ's purpose and to the planning of more houses and to more people living here.

Flooding and mitigation – Local people know this area well, and many have long term memories of the extent of flooding that occurs here especially when a storm surge combines with high tides. We note this is happening more frequently, and thus doubt the wisdom of extensive development.

The HCCA notes the Bristol and Avon Flood Strategy 2020 approved March 2021 and welcomes the paragraph that states that 'While we cannot prevent floods from occurring, we (BCC) have been working on a long-term plan to address what happens when they do. Our ambition is for a strategy that works for Bristol year-round, not just when the river floods. By designing defences that improve public spaces, we will provide new green spaces, better access to the river, enhanced heritage features, and improved transport connections. By using this approach, we can protect Bristol and create a more active, sustainable and

resilient city'. The HCCA welcomes this statement and hopes it will underpin and help inform the Western Harbour project.

However, the HCCA are concerned that the *Bristol and Avon Flood Strategy 2020* favours hard surface public space over blue/green adaptive climate mitigations and we would like to work with the Council and relevant authorities to help find effective and adaptive solutions that create an environment which allows people and nature to thrive. Existing residents deserve to be part of the conversations leading to flood mitigation as they are the people who will suffer if the area floods.

Housing need – Given the Flood Strategy statement it feels as though the Council's targets for housing in this area are too ambitious and should be revisited. The scale and massing, that would have to be achieved to achieve the suggested local plan targets now feel out of line with 20-minute neighbourhood ideas, post pandemic living and post BREXIT housing need and construction industry problems. We feel this needs a rethink. The Local Plan states 2500 new homes, we note planning approval for Clanage Road, the existing caravan site and other recent smaller schemes such as the conversion of local pubs count towards this number. Local people recognise there may be the opportunity to create some new houses in the area, that would help address the housing shortage in the City but they feel that the number currently suggested is unreasonable and it is unclear how these new homes could be created without impacting negatively on the area. The HCCA would also like to understand better the potential mix of housing proposed. Local people would particularly support additional affordable housing, particularly for social rent. We also think there would be significant demand, and support for an elder person's housing scheme, focussed on A Bond which would enable local people to stay in the area and downsize. HCCA do not understand where the policy support is for student housing, and doubt this is the best form of housing for this area.

Climate change – HCCA support the comments in the Vision re carbon zero and responding positively to the climate emergency. There is some irony that this part of the City is at greatest risk of flooding and yet appears to be being considered for potentially unsustainable growth. We support a fully sustainable 20-minute neighbourhood, passivhaus development, use of embodied carbon, district heating schemes, etc, these are details which should go into a clear overall climate change mitigation plan and be applied to each individual project including the repairs to the bridges, any housing development and community infrastructure.

Green Infrastructure – Cumberland Basin is at the key intersection of the city harbour and the River Avon, it is the point where the open space of Ashton Park and the Avon Gorge meet the city, it is also the focus of former railway routes now metro route which form green routes out past the meadows to the south Bristol link road and beyond. The cycle routes, footpaths and leisure spaces, including the skateboard areas and the pump track are vital to the creative and community spirit of the area. The quality of biodiversity is enormous, the recent sighting of buzzards and the kestrels living in A Bond are a sign of this area having precious, strong ecosystems that should be protected for the long term.

Community Infrastructure – Cumberland Basin has relatively few community resources, there are opportunities and capacity in the community to grow these. Hotwells School is the only education/young people's resource. There are some church based activities promoted by Hope Church and Trinity Church. Some local pubs provide for community activities -but this is dependent on the landlord and this changes over time, for example, we have recently lost the BeBop Club due to changes at The Bear during the pandemic. The biggest potential resource is the City Council's CREATE Centre, which we all love, but which is closed at weekends, is not shared with the community and has a lot of underused space. We would

like to open a conversation with the Council about shared community space of the ground floor of CREATE, and the opening of a weekend market on the carpark.

The Cumberland Piazza is an important space designed by Sylvia Crowe as part of the Cumberland Basin Gyratory. At its heyday the piazza included a vibrant café and important social meeting space, we would like this re energised. This is a potential site or meanwhile or longer term social and community space.

We would equally, like to talk to the City Council about a good-sized meanwhile project, a community hub, a performance space, a place for toddlers to play and for some outreach GP services to be set up.

The Council has long promised support to replace what the community of Hotwells and Cliftonwood lost at Hope Centre. It is time to do this and regain community trust.

Business growth and investment – the main commercial area is along Hotwells Road, sadly this has declined in recent memory, and now there are very few local shops, there are some small local businesses and we know there is scope to develop more. We note that in other parts of the harbour there are ground floor business units, some successful some less, so, we would welcome some new services located around the Riverside Garden Centre which enhance services for local people.

Future engagement – HCCA wishes to play a key part in the Western Harbour project aka Cumberland Basin. We would like to see a 'commonplace' type digital platform set up that would enable everyone to share data, information and to see what others are saying about the project as it develops. We are keen that many more local businesses and residents are aware of this project and want to use our community links to support that.