

Clifton, Clifton Down, Hotwells & Harbourside July 2023 Neighbourhood Forum Summary Minutes

These minutes include updates from councillors and responses to issues and questions on waste, planning department delays, Residential Parking Zones, Vehicle Crime, WH Smith Site, Bristol Zoo and Brunel's Swivel Bridge Group Petition.

After updates and responses, there are summary notes from the discussion on Jacob's Wells Baths, Western Harbour, Hotwells Corner, WH Smith Site, these include some additional links to give further information and context if desired.

All information is correct to the best of our knowledge.

Councillor Updates

Political Context - All the councillors at the Forum are from the Green Party - this means that they are from the opposition side within the Council.

Paula O'Rourke - Clifton

Paula negotiated to get the council to match community crowd funds for the playpark

WHSmiths Site Corner of Regent St and Boyce Ave

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/uncertain-future-eyesore-clifton-village-8580698>

Paula is discussing possible meanwhile use - containers but clad so they are more in keeping.

Questions to consider - could the community buy some of the site / co-design it? - also see discussion notes below.

Carla Denyer - Clifton Down

More financial support now available for adapting to the Clean Air Zone, e.g. upgrading your vehicle.

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/streets-travel/bristols-caz/financial-support>

Petition to ban pavement parking – please sign if you agree:

<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/pavement-parking>

Students On The Move campaign from Bristol Waste – please feedback how well you think it worked this year in this survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SOTM-2023>

Vision Zero motion passed at Bristol City Council – target of no deaths or serious injuries from road traffic collisions:

<https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/bristol-city-council-approves-zero-road-deaths-motion>

Preventing Knife Crime motion passed a few months ago:

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/bristol-city-council-unanimously-passes-8254478>

Patrick McAllister - Hotwells & Harbourside

ZaZA Bazaar Plans for demolition and new build rejected by Council

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-65907000>

Mardyke Steps - bottom of Church Lane

The steps are open again

Litter and Waste - this has been an issue around the harbour.

Links for reporting

Bristol City Council - Complaints and Feedback on Bins, Recycling and Litter

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/contact/complaints-and-feedback/bins-recycling-and-litter>

Report A Street That Needs To Be Cleaned

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/streets-travel/report-a-street-issue/street-that-needs-cleaning>

Bristol Waste

<https://bristolwastecompany.co.uk/>

Cumberland Basin Stakeholders Group

This has started back up again and will be scrutinising the project

Questions and Issues

Litter and Waste on the Street

This is a particular issue for residents on Frederick, Meridian and Dover place.

Here are a couple of pictures showing why residents on these streets have had enough! - Sarah



There are multiple bins on the street which often spill over onto the street.

Paula has discussed with Bristol Waste the potential of having communal bins but there is no local resident demand for this. The majority of the properties are rental on these streets.

Can Bristol Waste/Bristol City Council impose a solution?

What can residents who are affected by this do?

There was no strong conclusion at the meeting other than to continue reporting through the channels above.

RPZs - Resident Parking Zones

I have been very concerned at reports in the Bristol evening Post earlier this month on resident's parking zones. There seems to be a perception especially by the member of cabinet responsible for roads that these are not working – quoting some study which appears not to have considered the needs of the local residents....

Incidentally, the proposed increase in charges would be a direct breach of the council's promise to us at the time that the residents parking zones would be self financing and not an income generating process for the council. I'm very concerned and would like to know the position of our local councillors on this issue. - Adrian

All green councillors are very much in favour of RPZs.

Paula offered the perspective that car owners “store” their cars on the public highway - another way to think about it.

As far as councillors are aware the fees for the RPZs have increased but continue to cover the costs of the schemes - which have risen - and any surplus is ringfenced for transport. Councillors will keep an eye on any proposed change to this policy.

Planning Department Delays

Getting any sort of timely response from the Council Planning Department is becoming increasingly challenging at present - an issue that also disproportionately affects those of us that live in listed properties. It would be helpful to know what measures are being taken to improve the situation - Jane

There is a running delay of approx 6 months and this has had some serious consequences for businesses as well as residents. A recruitment freeze was partly responsible but no examples of delays worse than those in Bristol had been identified in the rest of the UK. Greens are proposing energy saving plans are fast tracked to help clear the backlog.

Paula will raise again the need to expedite decision making and or “retro” approve some types of planning decisions to help get things back on track for all concerned.

Vehicle Crime

There are regular spates of car break ins and thefts or attempted thefts of bikes/motorbikes/mopeds and scooters in the Cliftonwood area. While residents report these incidents to the police, is it possible to get a more coherent response to reduce this type of crime? - Rachel

Jeremy Burstow - Neighbourhood Constable for Clifton and David Pires - PCSO both attended the meeting. Vehicle crime has been a long time issue in the area. There is no easy answer.

There were some arrests in March for car crime.

Car thefts are often perpetrated by gangs, break ins can be more opportunistic. Bikes/mopeds etc are different again.

Police have also had some major IT issues so they have had a backlog of cases at their end. These are now sorted.

If you want to contact local police you can do so below.

Clifton <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/your-area/clifton/>

Hotwells and Harbourside <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/your-area/harbourside-and-hotwells/>

WHSMITH SITE UPDATE

See above and further notes below.

Bristol Swivel Bridge Group's Petition to Bristol City Council

Don't move Brunel's Swivel Bridge

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=278&RPID=23973756&HPID=23973756>

BRISTOL ZOO

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/bristol-zoo-sells-key-site-8535778>

Update from Katy Grant - Councillor for Clifton

The BZS has identified a buyer for the site, in the form of The Hill group, which the BZS claim is a good developer providing high quality housing, growing their business in this region. The plan is to sell the site in the autumn of this year, and the developers would then start work inside the Garden Site in early 2024. The remaining animals at the Garden site will slowly move – the gorillas not till early 2025, once a gorilla house has been built at wild Place, which the zoo now has funds to build. A letter has gone from the Save the Zoo campaign to the Secretary of State, asking for it to be called in; so far the council have sent a bundle of docs to the SoS, and in principle we will know before the end of July whether or not the Secretary of State will call it in. if not, the site will be sold in the autumn. That process could take a year, if it is reviewed at national level.

The Save the Zoo campaign have some slightly more firmed up plans by way of an alternative vision to the residential development, but it is not clear what they are. Meanwhile, Clifton College are still expressing interest in buying the site, and have asked the zoo how much they should be offering. The Zoo have said it needs to be more than the market price, and the Clifton headmaster thinks they won't be able to meet the criteria.

Update from Iain Boyd - Save The Zoo Campaign.

<https://savebristolzoogardens.org/>

We've heard the zoo's plans to push through their application for housing, and perhaps it all sounds like a 'done deal', but it's not. All could be delayed by a year or more by a public inquiry and judicial review. Much could change.

A short term decision has been made to sell the Zoo Gardens for as much money as possible. But look at those involved in that decision. Three of the zoo's senior management have left or are leaving, the Chair of the Zoo has stepped down, and at the Council the head of planning and the Case Officer have both left and of course the mayor finishes next year. Much could still change.

Which makes you ask: who is thinking about and who has at their heart the long term interests for this poor old site? The Zoo Gardens have been a special place in Bristol for centuries and such places deserve not to disappear, to become luxury housing estates and lost to memory.

It seems very unlikely, despite our protests, that the zoo will reopen, so we've taken ideas and comments from the thousands of people who campaigned against its closure, and have been developing a new initiative and vision.

It is a plan that, above all, has nature at its heart. It would keep the site as an open public destination and a precious amenity in the city. We want this to be the start of a new 100-year chapter, creating a place dedicated to the understanding, enjoyment and recovery of the natural world.

Discussion Tables

In the second half of the meeting we had 4 discussion tables. The following notes summarise the community discussions.

WHSMITH Site

There was a strong desire for some sort of funding to support community activity/ownership
If a third of the site is needed for a square or piazza...
What compensation would the developer need?
What would be the price?

The developer has failed - it's been 3 ½ years since planning permission was granted.

The developer bought the land to sit on it. Solutions need to be found MUTUALLY

There is access to a cross section of skills within the community e.g. CHIS (Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society)

If there is residential development, it would need hospitality on the bottom

Where is the interest in the community?

30% of the site could be the whole bottom floor

Where is the money going to come from?
We need a ball park figure of the market value of the site
Philanthropy has been mentioned
What is the owner of the site prepared to do?

Steps to take to put pressure on empty commercial properties?
Is there a mechanism for the Council to take action?
Only solution is a CPO - compulsory purchase order (?)

Community Buy Out Idea
This needs a clear vision
Eg The community don't want more commercial premises to compete with Princess Victoria St Community Hub?
The owner would want reimbursement of the profit - he's losing ££

It'll cost him several £100,000 to do a meanwhile space.
He's given Paula a rough draft - looks like a cargo style container approach.

Is there a mechanism for a partnership in co-developing with community

Can we create a shared vision - with the developer?
This might offer a chance to get things moving.

Jacobs Wells Baths

BREAKING NEWS - Bristol City Council have just announced that they are giving Trinity Community Arts a 35 year CAT (community asset transfer) lease subject to conditions.

<https://www.trinitybristol.org.uk/activities/jacobs-wells>

<https://www.hotwellscliftonwood.org.uk/>

Scroll down on link for statement

Included Sarah from Trinity Arts and Norman from Bristol Historic Buildings who have both submitted CAT (community asset transfer) applications to Bristol City Council

Question - might the building be a swimming pool again?

Both Sarah and Norman responded to this. Sarah explained that any pool in the fabric of the original building would be a modern pool in an older shell. Current plans do not include a pool.

Norman explained that he has enough money to replace the roof of the baths. The Mount Without is an income generator.

Sarah explained Trinity's approach to the project. She talked about stripping the building back to the original structure - so that full surveys could take place.

Question - Could Trinity Arts and Bristol Historic Buildings (BHB) work together?

Whilst they support each others - they both work very differently - working together would not be that easy.

We estimated the cost of the building, to buy could be just £250,000. It's been added to a disposal list with parcels of land that include toilets

There is a Council meeting on Thursday 20 July 2023 to decide the outcome of the CAT process. This is a closed meeting.

Other potential community spaces e.g. Police Station on Jacobs Wells Road, have been sold - there is a need in the local area with the two blocks of high-rise flats.

The baths were originally saved by the Dance Community.

Sarah reminded us that it is a complex site.

Community Asset Transfer has not been a totally transparent process, both for the local community and applicants. Neither Trinity or BHB want a 35 year lease. Trinity prefers a long lease / BHB prefers the freehold. As it stands the building is uninsurable.

Trinity Arts are good at conserving vulnerable buildings. Equally Norman has a proven track record.

How can we stop the council selling the building in the future?

Other options are available.

Can we also use this as an example to urge the council to develop a more transparent CAT process with more involvement from local communities.

Western Harbour

Some links

https://www.hotwellscliftonwood.org.uk/cumberland_basin_western_harbour_plans_history_and_timeline

<http://www.bristolnbn.net/current-topics/cumberland-basin-western-harbour/>

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-regulations/regeneration/western-harbour>

includes info on Western Harbour Advisory Group (WHAG)

The Cumberland Basin Stakeholder Group is community led and has met only twice in the last 5 years. They're starting up again to promote the community's views. Jo Booth was elected chair at the first meeting.

The Western Harbour Advisory Group (WHAG) is still around and will be refreshed in Autumn 2023.

See interview with its chair John Savage from The Bristol Cable in Aug 2022 which gives good overview here:

<https://thebristolcable.org/2022/08/western-harbour-development-cumberland-basin-advisory-group-more-diverse/>

WECA (WEST of England Combined Authority) Board met recently to discuss funding for new community consultation and feasibility study (masterplanning)

Proposal for a WH Advisory Group - 16 applications sought by BCC Regeneration Team, budget of £180k, they will also be procuring consultants. Councillors are involved.

There are challenges for this process - Bristol is moving away from a mayoral system, there are general and local elections and financial pressures remain.

What does this mean for Western Harbour?

Patrick McAllister - H&H councillor said that WH is going to move forward in some way regardless of the administration. There is a city-wide need to meet housing targets, but we also need to keep an eye on the Local Plan (for Bristol) coming out later in 2023. Is the housing capacity/target too high?

Discussion that previous consultation was very high level, nothing about the risks of flooding, road layout etc. Cumberland Basin Road System does need work but a previous report said that repairing the existing bridge was the cheapest option. However this information was not available at the last consultation. Many felt the whole process was very un-democratic.

The existing traffic flow over the two bridges works.

Patrick McAllister has asked BCC about the social housing content of WH scheme. Is 50% realistic given the high cost of the scheme? He did not get a satisfactory answer.

There are still lots of questions, information needed and discussions to be had.

Hotwells Corner

<https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/forgotten-corner-hotwells-could-finally-improved/>
Survey Link <https://forms.gle/38iSrrPtVH4NSb4a6>

The current version of a suggested scheme was presented and discussed.

A major motivator for this project is the safety concerns for those walking to and from Hotwells Primary School along Hope Chapel Hill, as expressed by the school and parents/carers. Any proposed traffic calming measures need to take into account residents' access to their properties, making a closure to motor vehicles at key times, one possible idea, highly problematic.

The chicaning on Hope Chapel Hill is considered effective by the school; the sight line for drivers to the 30 mph sign at the bottom of the hill is thought to encourage acceleration as soon as this part of the road has been cleared. Ideas discussed included having the 30mph sign removed, seeking a reduction in speed limit, having the road markings (20mph and cycle lane markings on Hotwell Road itself around the Carrick House / Hope Chapel Hill / Dowry Square road section repainted so as to be visible, (they are currently much deteriorated). Risks arising from pavement parking were noted. Options for a 'green screen' at the junction, removing the sight line of drivers joining Hotwell Road at this junction and, hence, providing a heavy nudge to come to a complete halt at the 'Give Way' junction, were discussed.

Some issues were seen with a proposed additional, signal-controlled pedestrian crossing, although there was efficacy seen in slowing traffic around the corner.

A further idea put up for discussion was arguing for a return to a two-way traffic flow on this section of road.

At this stage, Councillor Katy Grant is working on access to a member of the BCC Highways team for expert input into what would be viable and effective in terms of road modifications.

The Hotwells Corner group has put in a bid for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding and is awaiting feedback.

The Hotwells Corner online survey remains open for comments; ideas and feedback would be welcomed at the following destination, where full-size plans can be seen: <https://forms.gle/38iSrrPtVH4NSb4a6>

Actions

HCCA Management Committee will look at follow up actions for discussions affecting our area.

I will pass the discussions affecting other wards back to Gerry Swarbrick - Forum co-chair - for follow up/ forwarding to relevant community groups

Rachel

You can sign up to HCCA newsletter here

https://www.hotwellscliftonwood.org.uk/sign_up_to_receive_newsletters

If you would like to receive updates about Neighbourhood Forum Meetings please email Gerry Swarbrick info@cliftonneighbours.com

Wrap Up

Thanks to Sandra, Sibs, Anna, Julian, Carol and Heather for documenting and making this meeting run smoothly. Thanks also to our councillors and everyone who came.