

Statement from HCCA on the Consultation on the Development of Cumberland Basin/Western Harbour

HCCA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the new consultation on the potential development of the western part of the docks and associated land referred to by Bristol City Council as Western Harbour.

The local community recognises the need for a review of the area and the way it is occupied. The Council has a responsibility to investigate the opportunities it presents to achieve positive outcomes for all Bristol residents.

It has been widely reported that in 2019, when three options for the development of the area were first mooted, the response of the local community was very negative. A community survey carried out by HCCA in September 2020 (delivered to 3,000+ homes and with 266 responses) found when asked '*Do you see the City's proposed plans to develop 'Western Harbour' area as a threat*' that 57.6% said 'yes' and 27% said 'maybe'.

Whereas, when asked the question '*Do you see the Western Harbour plans as an opportunity?*' only 26% said 'yes' and 35% said 'maybe'.

This shows that on balance the vast majority of people saw the plans for Western Harbour as a threat. The plans were deeply unpopular and sowed seeds of mistrust in our politicians.

However, this is a new consultation process which we hope will have better outcomes. For HCCA, this would include agreeing a design brief to guide the development of new proposals which maximise positive opportunities and eliminate threats, are well received and bought into by the local and the wider community. Proposals which the whole city can get excited about.

We think that the brief for Western Harbour scheme should address the following concerns or threats identified by the community survey:

- Road structure.
- Increased traffic.
- Density and scale of housing and concern over suggested height of buildings.
- Flood risk and cost and impact of mitigation measures.
- Loss/damage to green spaces and impact on site of SSI.
- Historic environment.
- Threat to setting within the Gorge and impact on the suspension bridge.

We believe that the local community would get behind development proposals which have the following features and/or achieve the following targets:

1. Measures to reduce traffic travelling through the area, particularly over the Plimsol Bridge and along Hotwell Road.

This should include an assessment of the retention and refurbishment of the existing bridge, or 'like for like' replacement in its current location; measures to reduce traffic speeds, noise and pollution, including planting trees and vegetation on either side of road to reduce noise and absorb pollutants; and traffic cameras and speed restrictors.

Imagine a wide green bridge with shared pedestrian, bike and car use which could be

functional, attractive and accommodate all forms of active transport softened with planting and vegetation - [[inspired by The High Line - New York City](#)].

We recommend that the wider brief to reduce heavy traffic is informed by some of the ideas being promoted by [Moving Bristol Forward](#) with its new vision for Greater Bristol's transport vision. This seeks to improve public transport, with better integration, promote active travel and reduce congestion. Hotwells is over-congested and at risk of being blighted by traffic around the harbour bridges, rat runs and poor separation between cars, cyclists, and pedestrians along the main routes.

A new Transport Hub located at this west end of the City which acts as a gateway and encourages people to get out of their cars could also make a big contribution.

Any development should be future-proofed and designed to accommodate improvements to the transport system in the longer-term when funding is available.

2. There should be no net loss of current green or open space, including the piazza and other space alongside the basin or under the flyovers. Additional space should be provided as required/appropriate to meet the needs of new/additional residential accommodation. Consider how important green open space has become during the pandemic, particularly for people who don't have larger homes or access to gardens.
3. New/additional residential development should provide a minimum of 40% affordable housing, primarily for social rent and suitable for families. This should include consideration of feasibility of conversion of the bonded warehouses. An opportunity to make a big contribution to the desperate need for affordable homes in Bristol, homelessness and overcrowding.
4. Heights and densities of any development should be proportionate and appropriate to the locality including current lower densities/heights at this end of the docks (as opposed to the central or eastern harbour).

The guiding principle should be to spread or share new housing development throughout the city and ensure it is in keeping with the existing heights and densities in the areas where they are taking place. Housing should not be shoe-horned into particular locations just because land is developable or in the ownership of the Council.

5. Protection of existing use of the docks for appropriate water sports/recreational use. Including continuing to encourage sport and activities for young children and teenagers.
6. Rather than focusing on provision of more bars and restaurants which are already well supplied in the central docks, where it is probably more suitable, any development should make provision for community facilities, local shops, health centre, meeting rooms etc. which are not currently provided in the area. Provision also for local businesses, such as Riverside Garden Centre which may be at risk of displacement. Consider the opportunity to help rebuild the local Hotwells and Cliftonwood and Spike Island community.

A development based on the above brief/criteria would create a number of opportunities which would benefit the local Hotwells and Cliftonwood, and Spike Island communities as well as the wider City, and win the support of the local community. It is certainly something HCCA should back.