



WESTERN HARBOUR RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON DRAFT VISION

Bristol Civic Society welcomes the new approach to the planning of Western Harbour which has the advantage of providing an unusual and innovative way forward to looking at the future of a very complex area. The draft Vision is generally commendable and supportable although it is not clear how the Vision relates to the results from recent consultation, as this is not documented. The Vision gives no priorities, no hard choices have been made, and it is difficult to identify anything that was left out. There are contradictions which exist such as an emphasis on tranquility set against the possible amount and range of new development.

The "big" issues facing Western Harbour

However, this is all ultimately frustrating as the exercise excluded discussion of the three main issues – the future of the road system and bridges, the apparent ambition for residential development at scale, perhaps up to 2,500 new homes, and the land use implications of climate change and the need for flood defences.

The Society identifies as a very significant challenge: how will the Vision influence the master planning exercise? Will commitment to thorough community engagement be part of the master planning work? What weight will be given to it?

The traffic challenge

The Vision includes reducing local traffic. We think it should also include reducing through / strategic traffic.

To develop road / traffic management options in line with the draft Vision, and our suggested addition of reducing through traffic, you have to have the right canvas. To make effective strategic decisions about traffic, both in terms of

managing down volumes and rerouting, you have to go wider than Western Harbour.

In our view it's not realistic to drop into the master planning exercise a roads' study that hasn't been informed by the Vision. Substitute the Vision for the original objectives for Arup's work and you'll likely get a different set of road options.

The firm proposals

The Society welcomes the commitment, if still rather ambiguous, to retaining the Riverside Garden Centre and pump track within the area. It's sensible to find long term uses for A and B Bonds, but also essential to retain the Records Office, an invaluable resource for the City.

However, the Vision certainly leaves open the option to build a new dual carriageway from the Pump House pub, along by Underfall Yard and through the current site of the Riverside Garden Centre. This would destroy the very heavily used walking/cycling route on Avon Crescent, that was one of the benefits of Metrobus. A new road here would sever old and new communities.

Drafting the master planning brief

We request our involvement in drawing up the brief for the master planners. What will the programme be?

In our view it would be inappropriate for the brief to identify a suggested number of homes that should be provided. The amount of new development in the area, and ensuing densities, should emerge from the master planning and in full awareness of the full range of constraints. For example, the brief will need to address flooding constraints on the south bank in the light of the recent planning decision on the site of the former police training centre.

And it's essential that there is inclusion of a road option that retains the existing Plimsoll Bridge alignment, and even the existing bridge itself.

We suggest that the process should incorporate Enquiry by Design (or a similar technique), enabling the wider community to work co-operatively with a range of professionals in assessing all the available information and in assessing possible options and identifying appropriate outcomes.

Conclusion

The ultimate test for this initiative will be if future generations take pride in Western Harbour, and not say 'why did they do that? Why didn't they do that?' The draft Vision is a good start, but we are all looking forward to the real task – tackling the roads, floods and development opportunities and creating a sustainable place for all, now and in the future.

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