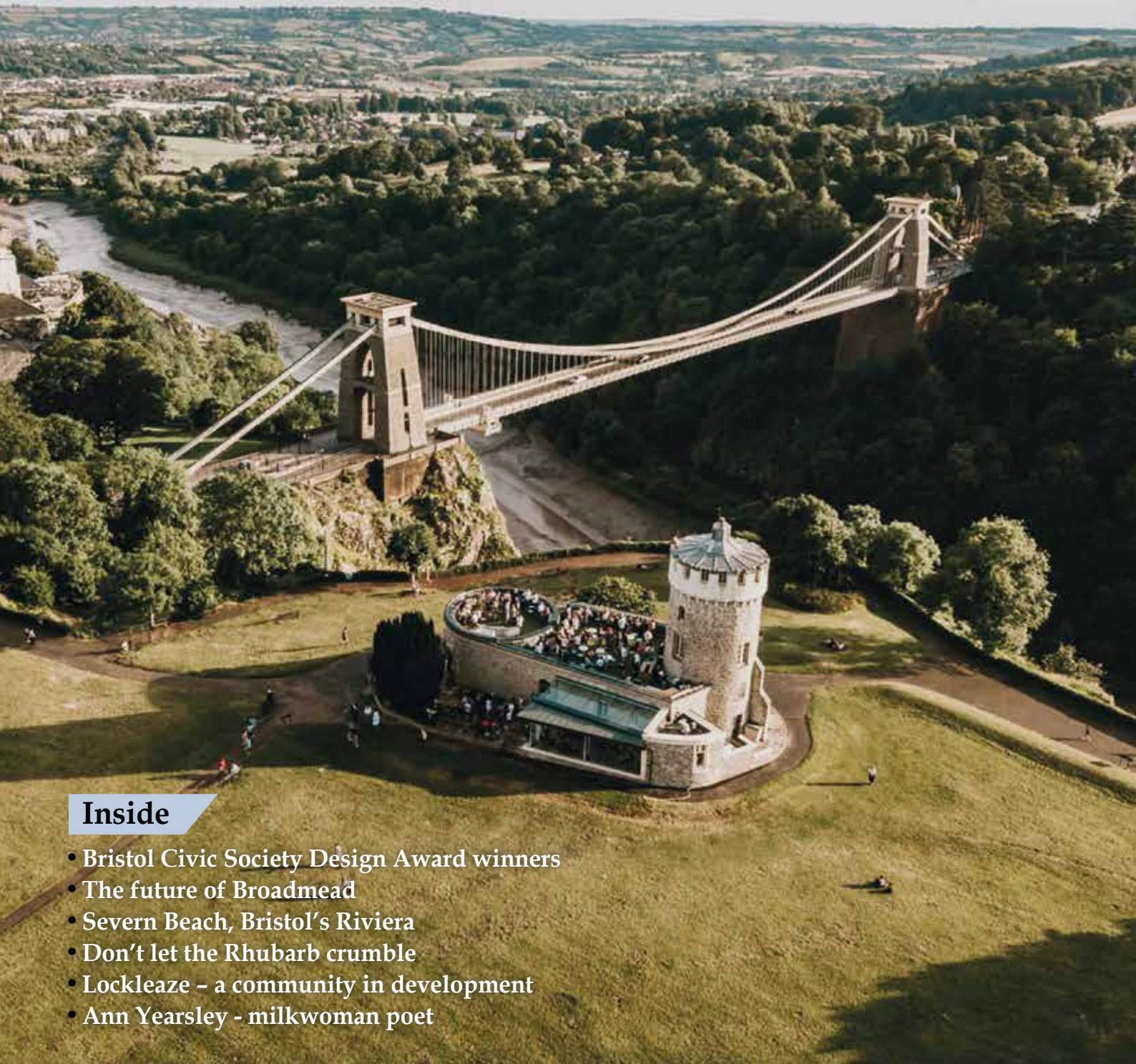


Better Bristol

The Bristol Civic Society Magazine – Issue 20 Spring/Summer 2022



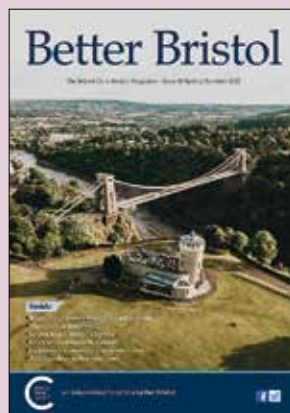
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an independent force for a **better Bristol**





Front Cover:
Bristol Civic Society Design Award winner: The Observatory.

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All articles in Better Bristol are the opinion of the author and don't necessarily reflect the views of Bristol Civic Society.

Chairman's report

Earlier this year I was invited to Chester to give a talk to the Civic Trust, their first face to face talk for many months. They visited Bristol in 2019.

I went to school in Chester for 10 years, so it was interesting to return and to see a city so obviously well cared for, prosperous and with a civic pride. Much pedestrianisation and very pleasant to walk about.

My talk, on the history of the Imperial Tobacco Company, was well attended. When Imperial was established in 1902, two of the founder members were tobacco firms based in Chester. These were relatively very small companies, and no trace remains today.

Chester Civic Trust is an active and very well supported Trust. A particularly popular activity is the organisation of group tours, all around the UK but also throughout Europe. Not something we have attempted in our own Civic Society. They are also reaching out to attract corporate members, an opportunity which we intend to debate in the coming months, with important implications to research and to assess.

The following day I arranged a tour of the immense Tobacco Warehouse, in Stanley Dock in Liverpool. Reputedly the largest brick warehouse in the world, it's currently being converted into residential apartments. With low ceiling heights and deep floor plates this has meant the creation of three enormous light wells cut into the heart of the building – it is very long! Each apartment is formed from two floors of the warehouse, with a double-height living space backed by bedrooms and kitchen accommodated in the original floor heights. Very ingenious and surprisingly effective.

Here in Bristol, there has been talk of converting A and B Bonds to residential use for many years. I recently saw these warehouses included in the forward development programme for Goram Homes. A visit to Liverpool beckons – the solution is already on site, with over 500 apartments planned, and over 100 occupied. If B Bond is to be converted to housing then it will be very important to secure long term accommodation for the Bristol Records Office, such a valuable resource for so many Bristolians (and others).

We were very active in the past year contributing to visioning for both Aston Court and for Western Harbour. In December it will be five years since

Bristol City Council stopped holding events in Ashton Court Mansion and the building has suffered since with little maintenance being carried out. Apparently, word is awaited from The Prince's Foundation following the investigations last year. I am mindful of the wise words from someone who knows Bristol well – "if a wealthy city like Bristol can't find a solution for the Mansion, we should be ashamed". The Bristol Civic Society will continue to campaign for a sustainable future for the Mansion.



Ashton Court Mansion: little maintenance being carried out.

we have just been informed that public consultation on a draft Vision for Western Harbour will run from 10 March to 22 April 2022. This is the output from the Harbour Hopes initiative which was completed late last year. I led a number of study walks around Western Harbour and all those participating were struck by the sheer complexity of the area – water, roads, history, flood defences – and by the wonderful setting and world class views, especially towards the gorge and suspension bridge. The Society will continue to participate and to work hard to preserve that setting and those all-important views whilst accepting that some change is inevitable.

With the ending of Covid restrictions we hope to return to more face-to-face meetings although continuing online, especially in the darker evenings. For many of us an essential component of Civic Society life is going for a drink after a meeting – we look forward to resurrecting this sorely missed custom!

Simon Birch

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There has been talk of converting A and B Bonds to residential use for many years.



Not already a member? Why not join TODAY!

See page 27 for more details...

Bristol Civic Society

The winners showed it is possible to combine the best of the old with the new.

The Design Awards 2021 were once again, sponsored by Savills for which the Society is very grateful.

The Bristol Civic Society Design Awards were announced at only the second live Society event of 2021. St George's, a past award winner, provided a stunning venue for this year's event on 19th October 2021.

Because of the pandemic, the award panel looked at schemes that had been completed in 2019 and 2020. From a very competitive field, three awards were made this year.. All the schemes involve the refurbishment, restoration and re-purposing of landmark buildings plus impressive new-build elements – the very best of the old and the new.

Brandon Yard provides 58 apartments on the site of a seventeenth century glassworks.



Brandon Yard

One of the final developments on Bristol's Harbourside, Brandon Yard provides 58 apartments on the site of a seventeenth century glassworks. Designed by AWW and built by Galliard Homes working with Acorn Property Group, this development has repurposed the Grade II listed buildings from the Canon's Marsh Gasworks as well as providing a new block which compliments the heritage buildings. The new, richly planted courtyard adds to the visual experience of the upgraded harbourside walk.

The award panel were particularly pleased to see the listed buildings retained and restored – including the chimney and walls along Gasworks Lane and Lime Kiln Road. They are a considerable heritage asset and a valuable contribution to conserving the rich local history of the area. This was particularly challenging project after the 200 year old buildings had remained derelict for more than 40 years.

The Observatory

The Clifton Observatory is one of the

most prominent buildings in Bristol sitting high on the clifftops of the Avon Gorge next to the Suspension Bridge. From this unique vantage point, the Observatory provides far reaching views of Bristol and a welcoming visitor attraction for tourists and locals alike.

Sympathetic renovations have been carried out on the Grade II Listed building over the past five years with the retention of the Camera Obscura and entrance to the Giants Cave. More recently, the building has been extended to include public access to a roof top terrace, an events room, a museum providing historical information of the building and a distinctive new café serving locally sourced produce. Richard Pedlar Architects and JH Construction were involved in the renovations.

The award panel considered this project to be a significant contribution to conserving an iconic building in such a historically important location and providing an excellent example of bringing an old building back into beneficial public use. The new additions to the building are sympathetic to the more prominent

Design Awards 2021

old building and add to its visual attractiveness and its utility. The project has not only restored a building of historical richness but also provides a unique space where Bristolians and tourists can enjoy the cave, camera obscura and incredible views.

The Vincent

The Vincent was developed by Pegasus and involved the conversion of Queen Victoria House to 25 apartments and the introduction of two new residential blocks into its grounds providing a further 39 apartments over a gym and wellness centre. There is also a publicly accessible café/restaurant on the ground floor. The grounds have been re-landscaped with the garden to the rear striking an interesting balance between formal spaces and areas of more natural meadow with planting including wild flowers around the retained mature trees.

The new buildings were designed by AHMM and successfully complement the historic building through a design that is characterised by its modern clean lines, light brick work over a contrasting red brick podium and an



The Observatory. Sympathetic renovations have been carried out on the Grade II Listed building.

unusual faceted facade, designed to maximise views out and light into the apartments. The effect is to create an interesting architectural composition that is unique in the landscape. The

award panel considered the building to be a well-designed, sensitive architectural addition to the local area of Redland that complemented the restored Queen Victoria House.



The Vincent involved the conversion of Queen Victoria House to 25 apartments.

Major developments in Bristol

John Payne and Simon Birch review a selection of important plans.

St Mary-le-Port, Wine Street, Bristol, BS1 2AN

Plans for the proposed redevelopment of this important city centre site have been a priority for the work of the Major Sites Group. Although the site is currently an eyesore, we concluded that we could not support the current proposals. Our strong view is that this is not an appropriate design response to this sensitive site located in Bristol's historic core. Although we have identified a number of commendable aspects of the scheme, the harmful impacts, particularly those flowing from the heights of the buildings, outweigh these.

Bristol Civic Society cannot support the proposed heights of the three office buildings because of the substantial harm to the setting (and views) of medieval church spires; the substantial harm to the setting of a significant number of other listed buildings; the overall adverse effect on the City and Queen Square Conservation Area; and, harm to views to the development when seen from many viewpoints.

Despite our objections the City Council's Planning Committee (December 2021) voted to approve the proposals. As a consequence, we resolved to take action

St Mary-le-Port. Not an appropriate design response to this sensitive site located in Bristol's historic core.



and wrote to the Secretary of State requesting that he 'call in' the planning application for his own decision. The Society made this exceptional request (after taking soundings of its membership and consideration by its Management Team on 26 January)

because the proposal conflicts with national policy on important matters. We think it's the first time that we have done this since the 1970s!

At the time of writing, we are waiting for a decision on our request.



St Mary-le-Port. The Bristol Civic Society cannot support the current proposals.



St Mary-le-Port. A current eyesore.



Above, Waterfront Place, Millennium Square. Cannot be considered as a high quality, beautiful and sustainable building.

Waterfront Place, Millennium Square, Bristol

We have lodged strong objections to this planning application, which is currently being assessed by the planners.

This key site at the heart of Bristol's historic Harbourside requires both exceptional use and form. There is an overwhelming need for exceptional quality in any development on this site. This view is now supported by National Design Guidance. The Society considers

that the current proposal at Waterfront Place does not meet any of the criteria listed in that Guidance. It cannot be considered as a high quality, beautiful and sustainable building and for this reason the application should be refused.

The proposed office is a bulky modern box out of scale with its surroundings. The height and mass of the office building would dominate and cause substantial harm to the character of the area and critically it will block important views across the city. The

122 Bath Road – 21/04096/F

It is proposed to redevelop the existing car wash and car sales site at 122 Bath Road to provide 54 one and two bed flats, in blocks up to nine storeys high. The site is near the former Esso site adjacent to Totterdown Bridge which is currently being redeveloped. The new Totterdown Bridge flats are being used to help justify the height of the proposed development. The Society also supports the objections of the Totterdown Residents Environmental & Social Action group (TRESA).

We have strongly objected to this proposal. The Society considers that the following aspects of the proposal would be particularly harmful:

- Scale and Massing. A nine storey slab is wholly inappropriate for this site. It is out of character with the surrounding dwellings and we think it is not appropriate to use the recently permitted tower block on the Esso site as a reference for the height of development on this site.
- Impact on street scene and views. The



122 Bath Road. A nine storey slab is wholly inappropriate for this site.

coloured terraces tumbling down the escarpment and the wooded areas to the east and are important views from further north in the city. They must be preserved. The proposal would destroy the setting of the Grade II Listed Thunderbolt pub.

- Overlooking and Overshadowing. The proposed building would be overbearing on the houses immediately to its south and overshadow them.
- Design. Far from uplifting the area, the sombre grey tones of this eight storey slab abutting the pavement would be a negative intrusion in the area.
- Living Conditions. Although roof terraces and balconies are provided, its location adjacent to the busy and

Draft supplementary planning document (SPD) on purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) and shared living.

Bristol City Council published draft planning policy proposals for controlling the development of PBSA and shared living accommodation towards the end of last year. The Society recognises that pressure for these forms of residential development is an issue of importance and we submitted a detailed response to the draft. Although we welcomed the preparation of this SPD because of the pressure for building PBSA and shared living accommodation, the Society's response expressed a number of concerns with the draft document. In particular we thought that the draft:

- Favoured the requirements of students slightly more than those of residents in assessing the needs of both communities. National Planning Policy

Guidance encourages local authorities to consider options supporting the needs both of resident and student populations before preparing policy options.

- Needed to reassess the basis for calculating the requirement for PBSA particularly in respect of the number of students in Bristol and the need to provide PBSA, not just for the expected increase in students but also in order to free up existing housing stock used by students for use by the resident community.
- Did not include the impact of PBSA on routes between PBSA and the social, academic and other facilities used by students.
- Proposed a model for assessing the density of PBSA in a given area that had a number of flaws.
- Did not clearly show areas suitable and unsuitable for PBSA.
- Did not require sufficient amenity space in PBSA to allow for future

Millennium Square elevation falls far short of the policy design standard.

The Society generally supports development – but only of a high standard – and has encouraged the Council to develop this outstanding harbourside site. In the Society's view this site should accommodate a building of the highest design quality to make a significant contribution to the character of the location and contribute to the cultural and civic infrastructure of the city.

frequently congested Bath Road would make the use of these facilities unpleasant for considerable periods during the day due to the noise and pollution coming from the road.

STOP PRESS: Revised plans for this development have been submitted.

The Society has maintained its objection to the proposed development. Although the revised proposals are an improvement in terms of their height and design, the Society still has major concerns about the impact the building would have on the neighbourhood and, because of limited amenity space and the noise and pollution from the heavy traffic on Bath Road, the potential living conditions. The development should not exceed four storeys and, because of the use of dark materials, the proposed fifth storey would have a considerable impact on the street scene. We commend, however, the proposed low energy heating system and windows that open. Overall, though, the Society cannot support the revised application.

conversion to regular residential use.

- Should include among the adverse impacts of PBSA graffiti and waste and recycling collection.
- Should set clearer requirements for providing cycle parking.
- Should strongly discourage the net loss land to PBSA from employment generating uses.
- Require PBSA to make a contribution to general purpose affordable housing in mixed residential developments.
- Was not clear in the proposed method of assessing the density of shared living accommodation.
- Should give clearer advice to ensure that PBSA developments upheld the Council's broader objectives for mitigating climate change and avoid the need for retro-fitting air conditioning and cooling equipment.

Broadmead

Are tales of Broadmead's death premature, asks *Eugene Byrne*.

Broadmead, according to some, is in trouble. Recent years have seen the closure of a number of big-name shops. The closure of BHS in 2016 when the firm went under is now a long-distant memory, but less so the loss of Debenhams last year and the closure of Marks & Spencer early this year. Several smaller outlets have gone, too. In 2021, for example, the Galleries lost Peacocks and Edinburgh Woollen Mill and gift/toy shop Hawkin's Bazaar. These were the results of parent companies going under rather than specific Bristol issues, but it's no secret that The Galleries has been underperforming for some time, and is due to be redeveloped in the coming years.

Broadmead's challenges are no different to those of most other shopping centres around the country, and they pre-date the pandemic. Long before we first heard of this new virus coming out of China, the retail landscape everywhere was being changed by the rise of online shopping.

Broadmead's problems, though, have certainly been compounded by the pandemic. Many businesses catering for office workers were affected by the lockdowns, and even with the return to "normality", many firms are now saving money by allowing, and in some cases actively encouraging, people to work from home at least some of the time.



Marks & Spencer, Broadmead, 1964
(Bristol Post)



Broadmead in the late 1950s (Bristol Post)

It's not just the office workers staying away. It's a lot of other people, too. *Better Bristol* has been unable to find any statistical evidence, but it's clear that central Bristol is becoming something of a no-go zone for some, particularly older people. Many have avoided the area out of concerns about catching Covid, because of the difficulty and expense of driving into town. Others are nervous about unkempt pavements and the perceived dangers of cyclists, and now e-scooters as well, whizzing past.

Furthermore, there are no longer any public toilets in the area, and facilities

offered by shops can be limited.

There are also rough sleepers and beggars. The numbers seem to vary quite widely from time to time, but anyone walking through Broadmead in the last few years will have noticed large numbers of them. Many people will privately and even shamefully admit that if they're going to visit shops they prefer at Cribbs Causeway, and not just for the free and convenient parking.

Yet tales of Broadmead's death are premature.

By the end of February, the Broadmead Bristol Business Improvement District



Bargain-hunters queue around the corner for Debenhams sale, December 1985 (Bristol Post)

(BID), which takes a levy from business rate payers to fund projects to improve the area and tackle its problems, recorded 200,000 visitors a week. The overall "footfall" by the start of this year was up by over 180% on 2021. This doesn't mean the place is booming, as lots of people stayed out of town and worked from home in 2021, but what it does tell us is that there are plenty of people going there.

The wider UK economy is facing all sorts of problems thanks to Covid, rising taxes, rising inflation and more, but we know that plenty of people want to visit Broadmead and spend money - if they have it.

The population of the area is rising fast, too, due to all the apartment buildings and student flats that have sprung up, or have been repurposed from former office buildings.

One big name that's going to be moving into the area is supermarket chain Lidl, whose store is due to open at the former H&M site next to the Odeon, sometime this year.

What, exactly, happens next, is unclear. What plans will be put forward for the Debenhams site? And what will be proposed for the Galleries? And will those plans be accepted by the Council?

"The difference between Broadmead and Cribbs Causeway is that it can be part of a real city. That's the advantage Broadmead should be demonstrating".

One person you can rely on to have clear and informed opinions is George Ferguson, architect, former mayor and veteran campaigner for Bristol's built environment.

"I think Broadmead's next phase must be much more imaginative," he told *Better Bristol*.

"It may have a few flats, but Broadmead still is pretty dead at night, but it could be a proper bit of the city and I think that's the main guidance as to where to go - make it a mixed-use, really layered place.

"Most shops don't want upper floors anymore, they want ground floors and that should be an opportunity. I would like to see a lot of the four-storey buildings, Debenhams, Marks & Sparks, stay as mixed-use buildings, with shops on the ground and perhaps office and leisure use on the middle floors, and flats above."

Other people are saying similar things; that we're going to see more and more



Above. The Galleries, Christmas 1992 (Bristol Post).

Below. Crying out for love. Debenhams shortly after it closed, 2021.



independent retailers selling things that aren't so easily available online, or that you wouldn't necessarily encounter from a casual Google search. Bristol's much-vaunted quirkiness, creativity and enterprise may be the salvation of what was once a very conventional shopping area.

Writing in October when the M&S closure was announced, James Durie, Chief Executive of Bristol Chamber & Initiative, said: "Bristol has a strong reputation when it comes to independents with over 100 stores in Broadmead helping give this shopping quarter a distinctive offering and flavour."

"If you just look at the cranes and hoardings nearby there will be many more people living in the area in the future and activity coming along that will build on and complement

Cabot Circus and the Bristol Shopping Quarter ..."

Nothing is guaranteed, of course. George Ferguson says he fears that the Debenhams and Galleries sites could join the proposed development of St Mary le Port as potential sites of inappropriately high buildings.

The Clean Air Zone, though, and the re-routing of buses could see the area become more pedestrian-friendly. "There is a real opportunity for it to become a much safer and cleaner place for families, as a place that people linger in.

"The difference between Broadmead and Cribbs Causeway is that it can be part of a real city. That's the advantage Broadmead should be demonstrating - it's part of a whole-day experience rather than Cribbs, which is just an artificial place."

A history of change

Conceived on paper as Bristol's new postwar shopping centre, the plans were watered down from the very start, both by shortages of labour and building materials, and by the retailers lobbying to change the Council-led designs.

Most notable among these was Woolworth's, but whatever one might think of the aesthetics, the store was one of the biggest attractions for shoppers for decades.

Right from the beginning it was supposed to be pedestrianised - yes, they were talking about keeping traffic out even the 1940s! - but the retailers lobbied furiously against it. It was only in 1977 that it was partially pedestrianised.

The threat from out-of-town shopping centres was around before The Mall opened at Cribbs Causeway. Little remembered now, the Carrefour 'Hypermarket' at Cribbs Causeway, which opened in the spring of 1978 was the biggest supermarket in the UK. Driving out of town and doing the whole week's shopping in one go was a novelty back then.

The Galleries was one response to this threat and did good business after it opened in 1991, but then came the truly existential threat of The Mall at Cribbs, which did immense damage to Broadmead.

Broadmead's next response was to attach a whole new retail experience onto the side; Cabot Circus, featuring a number of high-end fascias, including Harvey Nick's.

Designing Bristol's future

Clive Stevens asks us all to get involved

Over the coming months the citizens of Bristol will be asked to contribute to two important consultations on the future function and form of Bristol and its surrounds.

The first is due on 8 April. It is the *West of England Spatial Development Plan for Bristol, Bath, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire* and will set general principles like protection of Green Belt, trees and green spaces plus quantities and locations for housing and employment land.

The second consultation is this summer, the long awaited, revised Bristol Local Plan, which will develop the detail.

Councillor Nicola Beech, who leads the Local Plan process explains: 'The Local Plan is out for consultation later this year and there is a real need to get new planning policy in place in Bristol. We believe it is possible to deliver many thousands of homes while protecting valuable green spaces and key city views. Covering everything from community led housing, economic policies, student housing and density this is a key document which has the power to shape Bristol so please get involved'.

Bristol's housing market is a failure; a market failure.

The visible tip of this failure is the people we see on the streets. Reality is worse. 25 per cent of people can't afford market-priced housing. Half of them have homes, courtesy of the Council or a housing association. Others live on sofas or in over-cramped accommodation, caravans and hostels. Lots live in private sector accommodation with no hope of raising a deposit to buy.



Above, mobile homes on Parrys Lane, The Downs. Photo Ry George.

Left, Castle Park View without the view; seventy five affordable homes. Photo Ry George.

Market failure should come as no surprise to anyone with economics training. Bristol's land is constrained by Green Belt. Land is therefore a scarce commodity and its price will rise.

Water levels are set to rise too. Flood defences will save many properties and enable low lying sites to be built on. £228m is the expected bill, funding is not secured. Much of the new land is private, so public money making those landowners wealthier. Fair? If we had Land Value Tax maybe, but I'm digressing.

85 per cent of building work in Bristol is on brownfield sites. This will go up. In comparison, South Gloucestershire achieve about 35 per cent. Developing brownfield land is usually more expensive. There's demolition costs and heritage to protect, adding complexity, whereas on greenfield land, a developer can gain economies of scale.

These higher costs reduce the amount of developer funded affordable housing secured during the planning process. The viability assessment means developer profits over and above twenty percent are usually top-sliced to subsidise housing for the needy. But if costs are too high plus things like connection to the heat network, carbon neutrality, community infrastructure levy.....then for the humble developer it would seem difficult to afford a good architect, let alone subsidise affordable homes.

Homes are not the only things competing for the same land: new office space, student accommodation, expensive homes and even Airbnb style blocks.

The office market is strong, as explained by Chris Grazier of Hartnell Taylor-Cook (see pages 12-13). Clients are looking for more space, better airflows, sustainability and servicing, something like "Office hotels".



Retention of heritage at its best. Flats selling for 15 x average earnings. Photo Clive Stevens.

I wouldn't mind about new, carbon-efficient offices if there were a good system to efficiently recycle unwanted office space. But recently introduced permitted development rights mean owners can convert offices to flats, bypassing planning, cramming in rooms with zero affordable housing. Parkview, the ex-council offices in Hengrove, has become the troubled Imperial Apartments. The insides look smaller than hotel rooms. Whereas, if the Council bought and converted old offices, they could do a better job as well make sure some are affordable.

The university market is buoyant too. Student blocks in the right place can take pressure off the house of multiple occupation (HMO) market. HMOs used to be a form of affordable accommodation but room rents can now be £600 a month in some areas.

The private rented sector is seeing a rents boom, taking savings from hardworking young people, money that could be going into the local economy or towards a house deposit.

And lucky homeowners? "So what if prices go up? I make more money on my house".

But there are wider impacts. Bristol depends on its key workers. If they are forced out by unaffordable rents or house prices that will reduce levels of social care, school assistants and feed through to increased tax. The other option is for Government to pay

higher housing benefit which also adds to taxes.

Key workers are key. Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, has said all key worker roles are valid for London's housing list. Things are desperate there, if you have the chance to watch The Street on Amazon you will see why. This will come to Bristol if something isn't done.

Many of us support the Council's efforts to prioritise affordable homes. After all, people aren't losing jobs through lack of office space, but people are being made homeless due to lack of affordable housing.

And what is being done?

Government recognises the market is broken. Their definition of affordable is, 'housing for those whose needs are not met by the market'. I repeat: 'not met by the market'. One can debate whether a 20 per cent discount off market rent is genuinely affordable, compared with social rent levels which need to be 50 per cent off. But the success of the city requires key workers to be able to live here combined with the opportunity for artists, musicians and young people to stay.

To be successful Bristol needs higher build density and more affordable homes.

The market is broken. The solution therefore doesn't lie with the market...

Government have removed many of the constraints that strangled Local

Authorities' attempts to solve this problem. Bristol City Council now has a fully funded scheme to build three hundred council houses a year.

Additionally, the business it set up a few years ago, Goram Homes, is forming partnerships with developers to build mixed and balanced communities. Some council housing, some merely affordable and some market-priced. The latter pay for the first two. Hengrove Park is now following this approach. Mixed and balanced communities are becoming realisable.

Council-led schemes could build 600 - 800 affordable homes a year, leaving the private sector with 200, perhaps more using tax-payer subsidies from the Government (Homes England).

Finally, much has been touted about prefab homes using modern methods of construction. These speed development and make it easier to achieve carbon neutrality. Under the control of the Council, cost savings can feed through into affordability. In the private sector the long-term risk is it feeds higher land prices. Profitable sites will encourage developers to bid higher for land in the future. The issue 19 of *Better Bristol* (page 6) described "Boklok homes on the Brook" selling at £310,000 (eleven times average salary): un-affordable then.

This is all encapsulated in Bristol's Project 1000 launched by Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Renhard earlier this year. But it needs supportive planning policies which is where we fit in.

Most of us care about Bristol, its looks, vitality and its people. So please contribute to the two consultations. May the force be with us and the Council as we help design our city's future.

Clive Stevens is an ex-Councillor for Clifton Down ward (2016 - 21). He was on Planning Committees for the five years and has written a book about his experiences: 'After The Revolution', available from TangentBooks.co.uk



Caravans on Petherbridge Way, off Muller Road. Photo Ry George.



Whitehall Road Redfield. 14 housing association homes built on the site of a pub with the aid of a grant. Photo Ry George.

Rising to the challenge

Bristol property market snapshot

Chartered surveyor *Chris Grazier* analyses how the unprecedented challenges created by Covid have impacted upon the Bristol property market.

As we went into the pandemic, it's fair to say that everyone in the property sector assumed the worst. But, while not everyone has escaped unscathed, the market has turned itself around and some huge positives have come out of the experience which will have a fundamental impact on the property sector into the future.

One of the first casualties of Covid was retail. Despite business support grants and loans as well as furlough payments, the sector was the first to show signs of serious stress. And yes, some players have definitely either pulled in their horns or been permanently lost to the High Street. But those with a good online offer blossomed – and the businesses delivering the goods gobbled up a huge amount of space... driving up rents and encouraging a wave of new developments to come forward. As a consequence, Industrial is now having its long awaited moment in the sun!

The pandemic also served to accelerate a trend already in motion: the shaking out of retailers from many secondary and tertiary locations. That will unleash a wave of units being changed to residential or other uses, in turn generating more footfall in the locations where retail and leisure remain. The implications long term for suburban High Streets, as well as Broadmead, could be profound.

We also learned that employees can be trusted to get on with their work at home. And, after the first lockdown, the assumption was that we would be needing a lot less space into the future. However, by the time we had



Covid has had a fundamental impact on the property sector.

weathered the second one, it was clear that workspaces still have a huge part to play within organisations, not least in maintaining the mental wellbeing of many employees, and that hybrid working was likely to be the model for the future.

That in turn has accelerated the flight to quality, with occupiers keen to provide employees with the best possible experience while they are in the office. That is having a fundamental impact

It was clear that workspaces still have a huge part to play within organisations, not least in maintaining the mental wellbeing of many employees, and that hybrid working was likely to be the model for the future.

on the property stock in the city, and the significant uplift in values we are seeing almost certainly won't drop back and will encourage landlords to invest in further refurbishments.

That step change in values of quality refurbished space is also influencing the new stock coming through; shored up by a relatively constricted pipeline, it is leading to ever higher quality there too – greener and more expensive to build, but commanding higher rents. It's a virtuous cycle, improving the city's office stock as a whole.

The drive towards more flexible leases

is also continuing apace: younger, dynamic tech businesses want less commitment because their growth trajectory could be steep, and they are prepared to pay for that. Landlords, meanwhile, are becoming increasingly confident that they will be able to re-let into the future and are prepared to accommodate greater flexibility.

Alongside all this, we are seeing a burgeoning Life Sciences sector in the city region, with companies spinning out from our Universities and needing specialist, flexible lab and bench space, and making us look anew at the sort of workspaces we need for the future.

Arguably the only part of the market not particularly impacted is out-of-town offices: the rental gap between North Bristol and the city centre, which has widened significantly in recent years, kept on rising, acting as a brake on refurbishment and new development.

There is, however, the prospect of Filton, where YTL are focussing on place making: eco systems in their own right can demonstrate how out of town locations can work because low density sites have the ability to build in amenity. There are also some new refurbishments coming forward, such as Aztec 1000, which are more aligned with the city centre approach and might provide a much-needed new benchmark. I think this market will rise to the challenge in the next few years.



800 Aztec West. A new benchmark.

So, a lot of lessons learned, and plenty of positives going forward. But how did agencies themselves perform during the pandemic? I believe that the surveying industry has really proven its worth and helped prevent a drama turning into a crisis. Yes, we've helped our agency clients – especially

in industrial and retail – respond to the unprecedented pressures they have found themselves dealing with. But perhaps even more credit should go to those in property management.

With Covid, we entered unknown territory in many respects: our role has been to help landlords adapt and

survive, and we've seen our colleagues in those departments run off their feet doing just this. This part of our work really came into its own during the pandemic and it's arguable that we could not have managed to do this 25 years ago, say, when that level of expertise simply didn't exist. Difficult times can not only test your mettle but also prepare you for future challenges. I think the surveying industry is in a better place now than it has ever been to serve its clients.

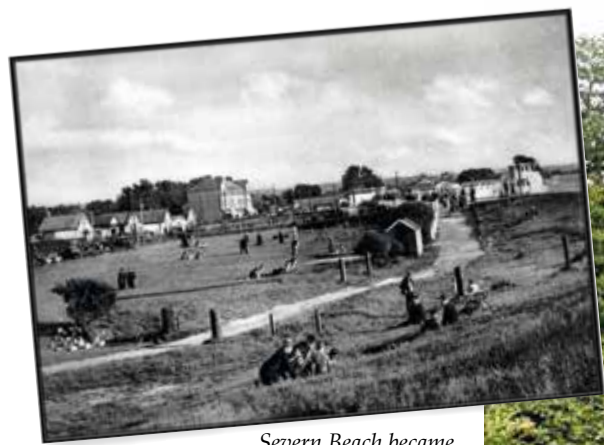
Chris Grazier is a Chartered Surveyor and is Partner in charge of Office Agency at Hartnell Taylor Cook in Bristol. For the past two years Chris has been President of the Bristol Property Agents Association, a unique body established 75 years ago in Bristol to represent the property industry in the City and provide a forum for liaison with the Local Authority.



The long term implications for suburban High Streets, as well as Broadmead, could be profound.



Landlords are becoming increasingly confident that they will be able to re-let into the future and are prepared to accommodate greater flexibility.



Severn Beach became a popular weekend getaway pre-war for the residents of Bristol and beyond.

The first impression of the small riverside town of Severn Beach might be of a sprawling development of old and new housing built for commuters. Or perhaps you notice the impressive sea-wall, resolutely keeping the muddy brown Bristol Channel at bay. Equally, you may be impressed by the sight and sound of traffic hammering across the Prince of Wales Bridge. Not very inspiring, but linger a while, don a pair of walking shoes and look around because much unexpected history is to be discovered.

In the nineteenth century Severn Beach was farmland. Nearby at New Passage, a passenger ferry service had plied its way across the fearsome channel to Wales for centuries.

In 1863 the South Wales Union Railway linked up with the ferry and a jetty was built to handle passengers for their journey across the water. The railway brought construction workers and other staff to the village which boosted its size. A couple of decades later, in 1886, the Great Western Railway opened the Severn Tunnel, which passed through but didn't stop at Severn Beach. Passengers could now travel safely in all weathers under the river by train.

In 1922 a local railway station was constructed at the southern end of the village with a branch line linked to Bristol via Avonmouth. It was at this point that the benefits of enhanced communications and location were spotted by a local entrepreneur, Robert Charles Barton Stride (1894-1970). Stride identified and sparked the growth of a new and perhaps unlikely industry. Between the two world wars

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY



Severn Beach Gravel Road (now Station Road)

Severn Beach, Bristol's Riviera

Nic Billane writes about Bristol's forgotten holiday destination.

Severn Beach took off to become a surprising and successful local seaside resort (the Blackpool of the South West) and a popular tourist destination for Bristolians and others.

It is worth putting some perspective about the growth of UK tourism during this time. Clearly, in the immediate aftermath of World War One, freedoms

Only a few fragments remain of the amazing pleasure beach and Stride's Blue Lagoon.

and austerity initially restricted market growth. But social changes to employment, personal freedoms, and finances along with changing attitudes of both men and women towards their hard earned leisure, and the feeling that holidays should not be restricted to middle and upper classes fuelled rapid economic growth of coastal destinations. Towards the end of the 1930s around 15

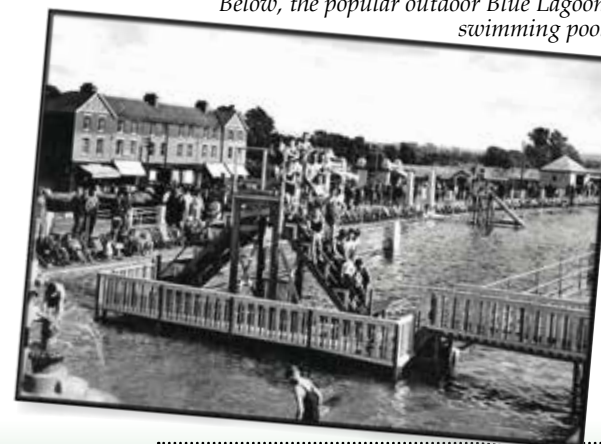
million people were going on holiday to the seaside around the UK, often by train. Rail was the most popular way to get to destinations until the early 50s, as private car ownership was low. The high water mark for domestic seaside holidays was in the early to mid 70s when 40 million people holidayed in Britain. In the 1950-70s hotels and guest houses were the usual fare for most families. It was the Thomas Cook organisation that started to promote foreign holidays in the early 1950s with all-inclusive flight and accommodation package holidays to Mediterranean resorts. Guaranteed sunshine and cheap holidays eventually decimated the traditional British seaside holiday.

The opening of the railway station at Severn Beach in 1922 unleashed development opportunities. Stride and family were builders. Many of Stride's fine and sought after residential houses are still to be seen in Bristol's suburbs today. Stride started to erect wooden bungalows and larger houses in an

expanding Severn Beach, laying down Osbourne Road, Beach Road and Beach Avenue. He built a restaurant and six shops opposite the old tennis courts. It was at this point that a well-connected riverside/ seaside resort began to emerge.

On Whit Monday 1922 the first trains ran from Bristol to Severn Beach, and as a result of mass publicity 11,000 people made the trip. Other attractions began to spring up in the 1920s and 30s: an

Below, the popular outdoor Blue Lagoon swimming pool



amusement park, including a wooden framed roller coaster, and a Ghost Train ride were introduced. Over the years Stride promoted Severn Beach by arranging water carnivals, 'personality girls', seaside reviews and dance competitions. Severn Beach became a popular weekend getaway pre-war for the residents of Bristol and beyond. It benefited from lax licencing laws thus drawing visitors from a wider area. There were numerous cafes and pubs, a funfair, a large hotel, boating lake, pleasure gardens and the popular outdoor Blue Lagoon swimming pool (also built by Stride), which packed in the visitors during the summer months, (perhaps it was deemed more attractive than bathing in the muddy sea). Most of the attractions were located in the space between today's concrete sea wall, the green space immediately behind and the High Street.

Family legend says that Robert imported sand into Severn Beach in order to create a proper beach, but it was washed away at the next high tide.

Over recent years pretty much all of the resort facilities have disappeared. Only a few fragments remain of the amazing pleasure beach and where Stride's Blue Lagoon once stood. The Blue Lagoon drew good crowds well into the 1960s but was finally demolished in the 1980s. The land was subsequently redeveloped for housing, green space and the huge sea defences we see today.

Most of all, decline of the pleasure beach was due to the changing taste of the British public. By the 1960s the arrival of the motor car meant fewer people visiting by rail and motorists were finding other holiday destinations more attractive. Bristolians are fortunate to have a range of seaside towns to visit within easy drive: the Victorian towns

of Clevedon and Western-super-Mare; muddy Portishead or seven miles of sand and dunes at Brean.

The town was also effectively bypassed by the building of the M4 and Severn Bridge (1966). Before then drivers had used the nearby Aust Ferry (car ferry services operated from 1926-66). Severn Beach was almost cut in half by the arrival of the Second Severn Crossing opened in June 1996 (now named the Prince of Wales Bridge).

Today we have many options from weekend city breaks to far flung adventure trips. We take for granted the ease with which we can book a package holiday (Covid permitting). But don't overlook Bristol's closest Riviera, it has moved on and has found a range of different attractions from its glory days as the 'Blackpool of the South West'.

Walk along the extensive paved promenade and admire the new and extended coastal defences, part of the Severn Way footpath. Head towards the protected salt-marsh, a site of special scientific interest, where thousands of birds stop by on their annual migration. Look out for the diverse range of wildlife: occasional seals, peregrine falcons. Stop for tea and cake at Down's Bakery and admire the selection of vintage photos.

Today you won't see many physical traces of the holiday resort that once was. But look out for the interesting notice boards erected by the Pilning and Severn Beach History Group and follow their signs for the heritage trail. This will help bring the surprising history and much changed form of Severn Beach to life.

Special thanks to Doug Nethercott for the attached vintage photos and personal insights into the Severn Beach story.



The Blue Lagoon 1937. It drew good crowds well into the 1960s but was finally demolished in the 1980s.

www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Is Bristol's transport strategy heading in the right direction?

Alan Morris asks if the first corridor scheme sets a good precedent.

What is needed

Road traffic has returned to pre-Covid levels. Transport emissions are too high, and switching to electric vehicles is not enough to meet net zero targets. But changing behaviours is politically painful, and COP26 statements and UK government strategy have so far failed to grasp that nettle sufficiently.

What interventions does this imply along a specific key city road route 'corridor'? It means reviewing how the road space is shared between different users. Private motor vehicles are space-inefficient. Carbon emissions, air and noise pollution along the route will be reduced if more people travel on foot, on bike, or on the bus. More people will use such modes if their journey is made easier, quicker, safer and more reliable.

The Council and First Bus came to an agreement in 2019 that in return for



freeing up passage of the buses on arterial routes, and thus making buses more reliable, First Bus would double the service frequency. This is a critical rationale.

Now it is being tested for the first time ... on bus route 2

At the end of 2021, the Council consulted on draft designs for the first of the programme of arterial route schemes – the Number 2 bus route, between Cribbs Causeway and Stockwood.

Bristol's transport strategy, and the

route 2 scheme objectives, make the right noises about achieving major changes for buses, pedestrians and cyclists. But do the designs deliver that? The policy statements and the transformational aspirations only get tested when designs are produced that share out the available road width between buses, bikes, footways and parking, and the compromises start to be made.

Let's consider the bus route 2 proposals mode by mode:

- **Walking:** there are some welcome changes, especially the public realm changes near the Victoria Rooms. A number of continuous footways and pavement buildouts across side turnings are proposed. These are important: they give recognition that the pedestrian has priority in that location. But there are two major exceptions. At the Triangle, the proposed scheme does not widen the high-footfall pavement, and there is nothing proposed for the narrow footway from Bath Bridges to the Three Lamps junction.
- **Cycling:** there are some very good proposals in the city centre, but outside the city centre there are large gaps in provision. The proposals do not include segregated cycle lanes on Whiteladies Road or Wells Road. A quiet route parallel to part of the A37 is offered.
- **Buses:** there are some good proposals in the city centre, especially the bus gate on Park Street, and the existing

bus gates on Baldwin Street and Bristol Bridge. Away from the city centre, there are some significant gaps in bus lanes on Whiteladies Road and Wells Road.

Are the designs good enough?

Good bus infrastructure that allows free passage, faster journeys, and more reliability is crucial to a viable and popular bus service. Bus companies are struggling post-Covid, and the government seems to be rolling back on previous commitments to support them. The route 2 changes do not seem enough to transform the bus experience and allow First Bus to double frequencies, and if so put at serious risk the goal of a viable and popular bus service.

Bristol's cycling strategy is to "build a comprehensive cycle network accessible for all and segregated wherever possible, meaning free from motorised vehicles". 'Accessible for all' is important: people will not switch to using bikes unless they feel safe, and continuous segregation by bollards or kerbing is required for that. A route through back streets which isn't direct is unlikely to achieve the same take-up as a route directly along the arterial road. The proposals are insufficient to encourage less confident cyclists to switch mode.

So what has gone wrong?

We seem to be behind other cities. Why? Some possible answers are:

- **Political choices** – judgements have to be made about whether each potential design intervention would excessively impede the flow of private motor traffic. Transport policy is starting to move from the conventional 'predict and provide' approach to a 'decide and provide' approach. In the city centre, bold decisions have been made. Outside the city centre, bolder interventions, including removing car parking spaces, as in some other cities, were not presented as options, and that was a political choice.
- **Political debate** – ideally the public debate should be informed by strong messaging about the rationale of the scheme, but inevitably the public debate seems to be one-dimensional: about the impact on single-user vehicles. Feedback from the first round of engagement on the route 2 scheme was that nearly 80% agree and strongly agree with taking road space away from the car. But somehow the wider rationale does not get through to the public, and the political nerve is influenced more by the louder noises. Are politicians leaders or followers in this debate?
- **Officer choices** – do transport professionals sometimes 'self-censor' on bold design choices? Do they constrain



Good bus infrastructure that allows free passage, faster journeys, and more reliability is crucial to a viable and popular bus service.

themselves to 'predict and provide' thinking? Where choices are the result of the technical judgement of officers, it would be helpful to explain publicly why bolder choices are not an option.

- **Practical constraints** – maybe arterial roads are too narrow to accommodate all the transport modes, and it is just not possible to deliver the policy aims.



There are some good proposals in the city centre

We need to be honest

The consultation showed a single design proposal, but didn't explain the rationale for decisions, didn't show options, didn't describe the implications for transport strategy.

If this first scheme is the art of the possible, there are implications for other corridors, and implications for Bristol's

transport strategy. Tucked away in a 2021 Bus Service Improvement Plan is the admission that full bus priority is achievable only on the A4 Portway, A4 Bath Road, M32, and A370/Cumberland Road; not on the A37, A38, A4018, A420 or A431.

No similar statement has been made on the practical ability to deliver all-ages cycling on arterial routes, but it would probably be as for buses. Provision for safe cycling would seem to be very reliant on quiet back roads. Quiet cycle routes are variable: most are indirect, good as leisure routes but less good for regular utility travel; some go through parks and are unlit at night.

If arterial roads are too narrow to accommodate all the transport modes, then we (and the Council) should be honest about what is possible.

What else can be done?

If arterial routes have limited scope for improvement, what else can be done to transform transport provision? The list includes:

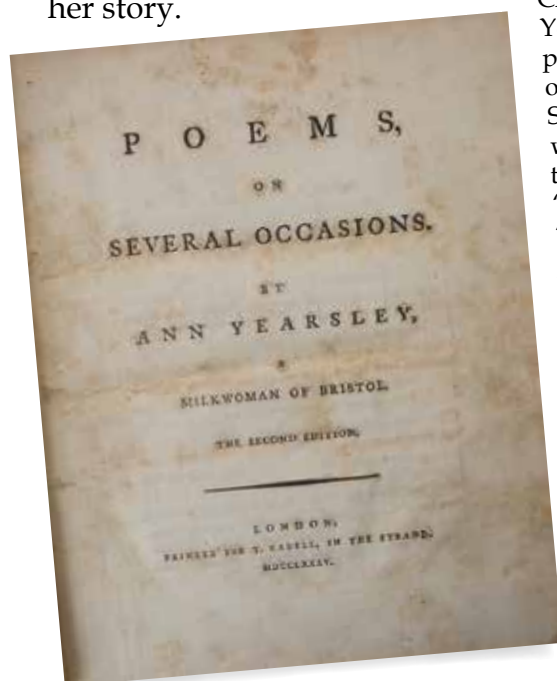
- more Park & Ride sites – progress is too slow
- underground mass transit – if it is feasible, but anyway it will not come soon enough to meet net zero targets
- road pricing – it has been politically unacceptable, but the mood is changing
- more public messaging by government and councils – if it was possible for Covid policy, why not for transport policy?

Transport emissions are too high.

Patronage and poetry

Gordon Young celebrates Ann Yearsley, Hotwells' milkmaid poet.

You may know that I devised walks around Clifton last year based on the suburb's commemorative plaques. Along with those for generals, scientists and politicians, it was gratifying to see lots of plaques honouring women – an architect, a neonatologist, the founder of the Wrens, novelists, suffragists and suffragettes. And as a bonus offer, I included an inscribed gravestone in the churchyard of the now-lost St Andrew's church, high above Goldney House. It marks the resting place of a poet, Ann Yearsley. She is not well known, but certainly deserves to be, especially at this time. Here is her story.



Author's copy of Yearsley's poems. With John Pinney bookplate.

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY

Much is made nowadays of our city's historical involvement with the African trade. But there is far less known about Bristol's efforts to condemn the practice. One such attempt was made by a Hotwells poet with her *Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade*, written in 1788.

At that time, women contributed to the anti-slavery movement by subscribing to abolition societies, boycotting slave-grown sugar, organising public meetings and writing impassioned poetry. In an effort to raise public awareness about the slave trade, they focused on encouraging British people to start acting like the Christians they claimed to be. Hannah More, the evangelical moralist and poet, wrote *Slavery, a Poem* in an attempt to do this. It appeared in February 1788.

And published a month later, Ann Yearsley's poem strives to get readers to think of the slave trade in different ways (her poem is an impassioned narrative of personal suffering, while More opts for lofty Christian rhetoric). With her work, Yearsley takes on some of the most powerful and affluent people, not only in Bristol but in all of Britain. She reproaches so-called Christians who trade in human lives, calling them 'slaves of avarice', 'hypocrites', 'a vile race of Christians', and 'thieves'. She published her poem just as the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade was at its height (a month later, John Wesley condemned slavery from the New Room pulpit, the first time in England that a sermon was preached against the African trade).

The main action of the poem takes place in an unspecified colonial location, but begins and ends here in Bristol, with our city's name in capital letters at the start:

BRISTOL, thine heart hath throb'd to glory. – *Slaves,*



Ann Yearsley was a milkmaid's daughter, born in 1752. She didn't attend school but learned to read by examining tombstones and the Bible.

E'en Christian slaves, have shook their chains, and gaz'd

With wonder and amazement on thee . . .

. . . And when thou hast to high perfection wrought

This mighty work, say, 'such is Bristol's soul'.

It depicts an enslaved African taking violent action against a British planter and invites the reader to sympathise with the African, a stance that would surely have shocked many contemporary readers.

It is remarkable that so little is known about Yearsley or her writings but if we study her life we can see why she was out of favour and uncelebrated until very recently.

We should acknowledge her, not only for her significance but also as an antidote to the current dialogue about our city's links with the slave trade.

Ann Yearsley was a milkmaid's daughter, born in 1752. She didn't attend school but learned to read by examining tombstones and the Bible. And she read Milton's poetry. Her brother taught her to write. She married at 22 and bore six children in the following ten years. They lived on the Clifton Wood hillside opposite the SS Great Britain, beyond the south-eastern end of Bellevue Crescent, close to White Hart Steps.

In 1783 the family was impoverished and it was a particularly hard winter, when the Severn froze over. They were sheltering in a stable, Yearsley's mother died of starvation and, despite inheriting her mother's milk-round and selling firewood, the family were close to destitution. She collected pig swill from the home of Hannah More who, subsequently recognising her literary abilities, came to her rescue. More recorded: "John Yearsley is a husband so stupid as to be incapable of any but

the most slavish and least profitable employments; Ann is 8 and 20, slender and not ill-made; her face plain, but not disagreeable, her countenance rather pensive than sad, her pronunciation vulgar and provincial, but her taste uncommonly accurate and her sentiments very noble."

Hannah More encouraged Yearsley to write and she corrected her grammar and syntax. More championed the young poet's cause by bringing her to the attention of her influential London literary friends and set about organising the publication of Yearsley's first volume of poems. She also kept a tight hold of the money earned by the poems. This led to an acrimonious fallout and a very public quarrel.

Much has been made of this patron-protégé relationship. In 1785 Yearsley was granted an annual allowance of just eighteen pounds, which would have forced her back into manual labour. She asked for more, but Hannah was insulted to find her good intentions questioned by a social 'inferior'. Both women lost their temper. More broadcast her view that Yearsley was intemperate, ungrateful, and likely to squander her earnings. She and her cohort condemned Yearsley for ingratitude.

More was an energetic philanthropist but she did perceive herself as a moral guardian of the nation. She elevated Christian piety to a whole new level: she

hated the seasonal greeting 'Merry Christmas' because she felt that the first word was more suited "for a Bacchanalian than a Christian festival, and seems an apology for idle mirth and injurious excess". More was committed to policing the social order – everyone in their place – and she would not tolerate any prospect of social elevation by Yearsley. A milkmaid could only go so far in the world of letters.

Thankfully, in recent years, a rehabilitation of this poet has begun. She is buried in the south-east corner of St Andrews churchyard at Clifton Hill. We should acknowledge her, not only for her significance but also as an antidote to the current dialogue about our city's links with the slave trade. The grave is close to a side-entrance to the cemetery: a rusty gate and stone pillars face onto the pavement next to the Bishop's House. Just beyond it among the trees lies a victim of the British class system, a remarkable woman whose poems were condescendingly described as 'far above the level of a person in the situation of a milk-woman'.

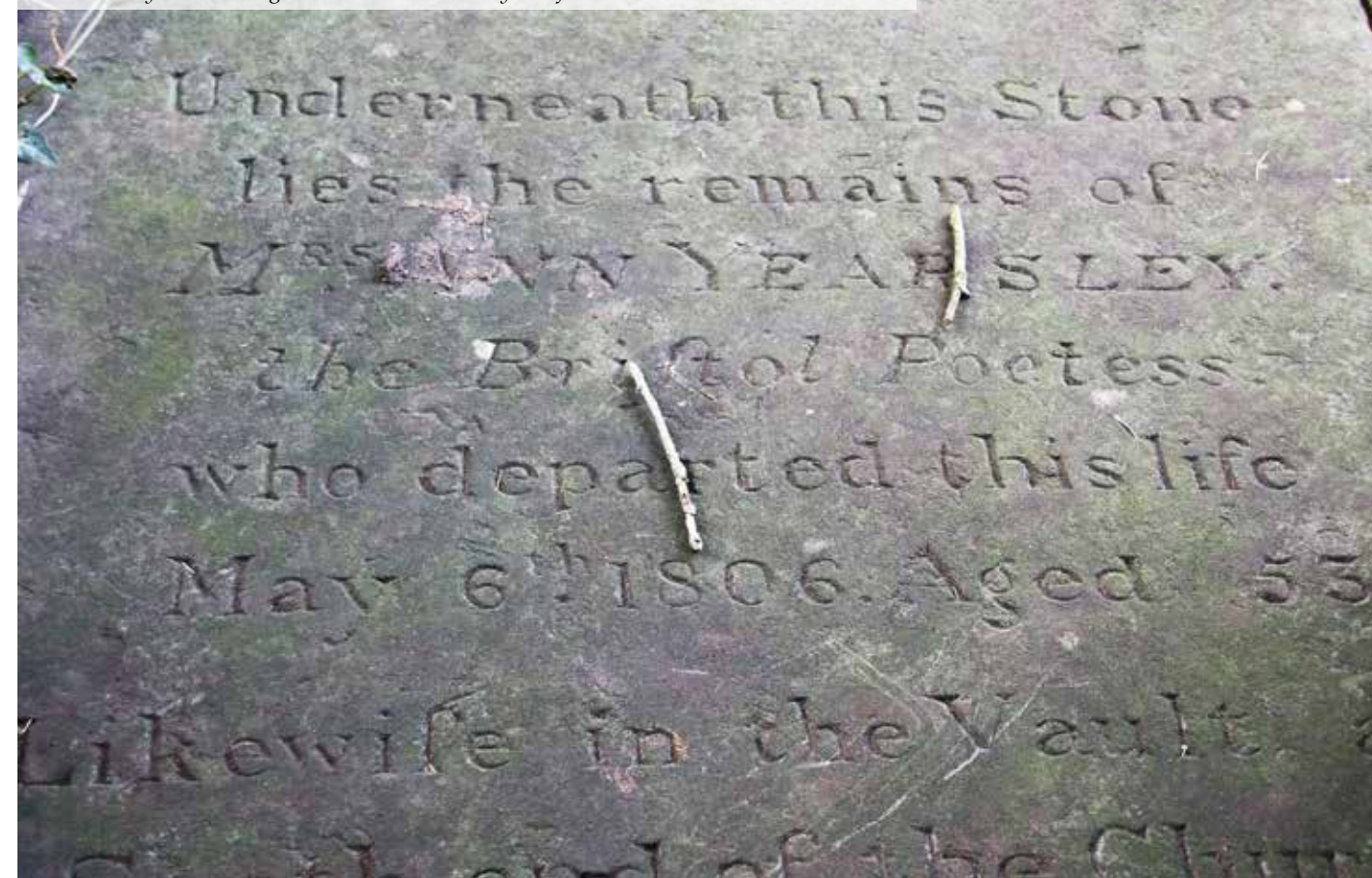
Ann Yearsley sought to secure for herself a place in literary culture. Her time has now come, and we should celebrate her as a distinguished daughter of our city.



Bookplate.

The Clifton Trilogy of plaques walks will resume in May. On Walk III we will stand by Ann Yearsley's grave and I will show participants an extremely rare copy of her poems: bound in one volume, her first two publications (1785 and 1787). And you will see from the elegant bookplate on the inside cover that the original owner of the book was John Pinney . . . yes, the sugar merchant and Nevis plantation owner who resided in Great George Street and had a house slave named Pero.

Ann Yearsley's inscribed gravestone in the churchyard of the now-lost St Andrew's church.



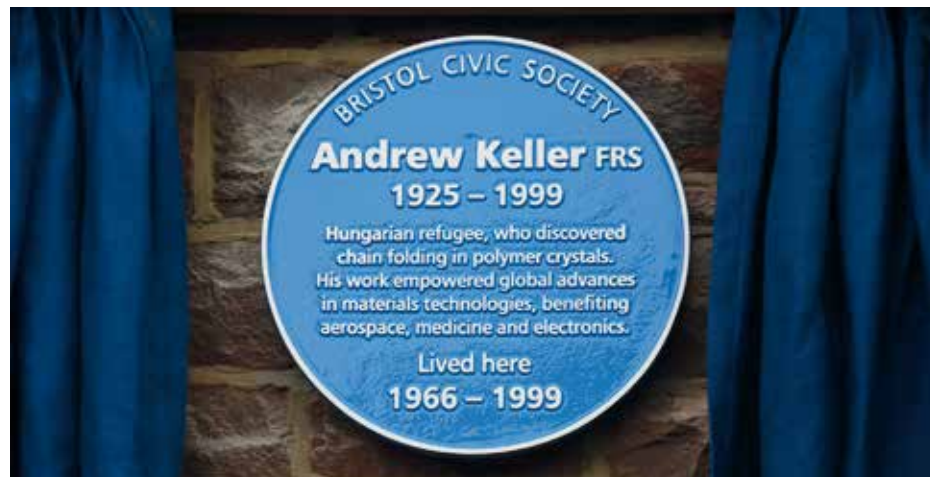
Four of the best . . .

Gordon Young on the latest Blue Plaques.

Andrew Keller FRS

A distinguished polymer scientist with an action-packed early life. Born in Hungary, his education at Budapest University was interrupted by the Nazis, who put him to work in a Jewish

labour camp. He escaped, was captured by the Russians, escaped again and was awarded a chemistry degree by Budapest University. Arriving here in 1955, his productive university career spanned 36 years.



Andrew Keller, A scientist with a broad reach.

Mary Fedden OBE

In September a plaque was unveiled to honour a notable modern artist. Mary Fedden is known for her still lifes – flowers in vases, a jug and bowl of fruit, all painted in vivid colours. We are reminded of the St Ives School when we view some of her work featuring a laden table with a window view of blue sky and sea as a backdrop.

This application required research. We knew she was born in Downs Park East, Westbury Park. She attended

Crofton Gane

He joined the family furniture firm of P E Gane at College Green and developed a passion for Modernist design. Crofton acted as patron for the movement's architects and designers. His furniture showroom was destroyed in the Blitz and the plaque is affixed to a sixties' office block, now student accommodation. Certainly, person and place form a crucial relationship with regard to plaques and one that is not on an original building can lose some connectivity. Not this one, though – Crofton was a key member of a goodwill deputation which went to Hannover in 1947, leading to the creation of the Bristol Hannover Council, one of the first city twinning schemes. Thus despite losing his premises to enemy action, Crofton Gane offered the hand of friendship to a former enemy just two years after the war ended.

nearby Badminton School before moving to London as a teenager to attend art college. The Slade School of Art confirmed her start date there. They sent us a copy of her enrolment certificate which revealed her address as Stoke Bishop, not Westbury Park. Our investigation switched to Bristol Archives where 100-year-old electoral rolls proved her family had moved to Stoke Bishop when she was five. It was very gratifying to confirm residency dates, especially since both organisations assisted us during full lockdown.



Above, Mary Fedden. Speeches from the front garden.



Mary Fedden. Art historian Jonathan Camp praises the artist.



Crofton Gane. Plaque-proposers Byron Thomas and Rosemary Silvester.

Theresa Garnett

Horfield Prison

We should be proud that Bristol had the highest suffrage activity of any provincial city. Annie Kenney is honoured with a plaque in Gordon Road, Clifton. She was involved in militant acts and was jailed 13 times.



And our blue plaque in West Mall celebrates an early meeting (1866) of suffragists.

And now we have (as far as we know) the first blue plaque on the wall of a working prison. Theresa Garnett assaulted Winston Churchill and was sentenced to a month's custody in Horfield Prison. She went on hunger strike and was subjected to cruel and degrading force-feeding, a practice which now violates international law.

Panel members were treated to a tour of the prison grounds after the unveiling. I alarmed the governor when I told him that my father had been in the prison several times. I explained that he had played second cornet in the Salvation Army band at annual Christmas carol events in the thirties, a custom which continues to this day.

Left, Theresa Garnett. A unique position for a Blue Plaque.

Invitation

Bristol Civic Society 2022 Annual General Meeting

Members and friends are warmly invited to attend (in person!) our 2022 AGM. (We will be able to revert to an online meeting if circumstances call for it, but we sincerely hope that we will be able to hold a normal meeting, and see as many of you as possible.) It will be held on:

Tuesday 14 June, from 7pm, at "The Mount Without" (formerly the Church of St Michael on the Mount Without), St Michael's Hill, Bristol BS2 8DT.

You will have the opportunity to see the progress made in transforming this splendid but dilapidated and fire-damaged building into a performance and events space. The venue has been generously made available by the owner, Norman Routledge, who will give a talk afterwards about the restoration.

Refreshments from 7pm; the meeting starts at 7.30pm.

The Agenda will include: Annual Report from the Management Team, Finance Report, election of officers and other Management Team members.

After the formal business, Norman Routledge will talk about the restoration of the building, and give us a tour.

Nominations for officers and Management Team members must be sent to the secretary no later than 7 June, at secretary@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Don't let the Rhubarb crumble

Barton Hill's last pub, the Rhubarb Tavern, is under threat, writes Mark Steeds.

Since 1997 Barton Hill has lost five more pubs, the Forgerman's Arms, Lord Nelson, Royal Table, Russell Arms and Swan Inn. The only one left is the Rhubarb Tavern, and that's under threat as well, with plans from a London Developer to turn it into flats.

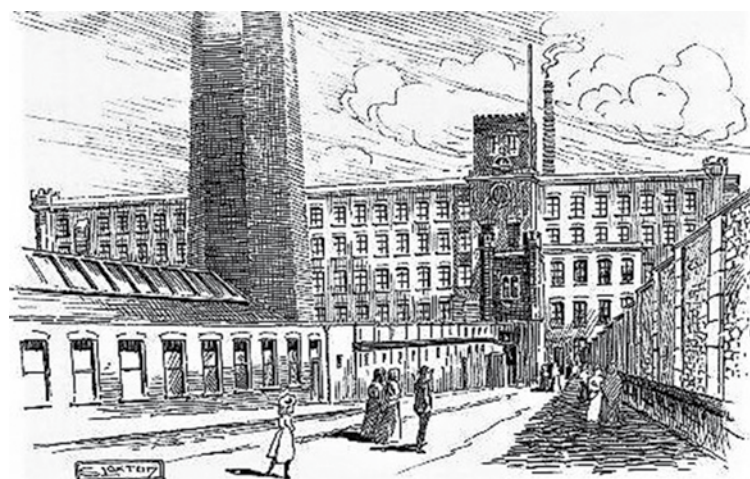
A pub with genuine historic credentials, the Rhubarb Tavern will forever be associated with Queen Anne's visit to Bristol in 1702. Queen Anne is reputed to have rested in Barton Hill on her famous 'Progress' from Bath to Bristol. As proof of this the pub has a splendid and much loved Charles II fireplace dated 1672. The chimney piece is of particular note because Victorian historians insist that it came from Sir Thomas Day's country house (it has T.D.A. above the date) in whose town house the Queen dined. Day's mansion was originally situated further along Queen Ann(e) Road.

It tickles me to think that a fireplace that once hosted the highest in the land, has for ages now been enjoyed by the



Left, The pub has a splendid and much loved Charles II fireplace dated 1672.

Right, The Great Western Cotton Factory. Financed by slave owners' compensation money



Above, The Rhubarb and George's dray by Bristol artist Ian Cryer (President at The Royal Institute of Oil Painters).

were low-grade terraced houses, which promptly engulfed the former mansions and farmhouses that used to supply Bristol with food. Pubs followed hot on the heels of the houses and very soon the Beaufort Arms (Top House), Mechanics Arms (Middle House) and Weavers Arms (Bottom House) were purveying mostly Georges' ales to the growing populace. The Lord Nelson soon joined them, specifically for the cotton workers. Ultimately 12,000 people would live in the area.

After the war, much of Barton Hill was scheduled for slum clearance and the three famous 'Houses' succumbed to the wrecking ball in the 1950s, along with a goodly portion of the early terraces. They were replaced by the hated high rise flats we have to this day, "Utopia" or "Dystopia"? Barton Hill's strong community was shattered and broken up. Elderly people saw out their days in solitude, looking down on a desolate world. They had their memories though, and tales abound about the characters that used to frequent their favoured watering holes.

The "Top House" for example used to have its own "Judge & Jury Club" which used to raise money for



Rhubarb Tavern. Architecturally, it's all a bit of a mishmash.

local worthy causes. One of the star contributors was 'Hopper' Chinnock, a local rat-catcher, who used to dock puppy dogs tails by biting them off for a tanner (6d) a time. Famously dressed in a hooded coat of rat pelts, another pub 'dare' was his predilection for biting off the heads of his victims. If you've ever seen the size of a rat's teeth that was some dare.

During wartime rationing the Lord Nelson kept several successive communal pigs with the locals each having a share; Dad said he ended up with the squeak once! Whether it was the antics of the pig or the landlord

is up for debate, but the pub at the time had the nickname of the "Turd & Trumpet". The post-war landlord of the Swan had different issues, ex-boxer 'Rocky' James allegedly kept a double-barrelled 'pacifier' behind the bar for errant customers. On the musical front the Russell Arms hosted national music hall star Randolph "On Mother Kelly's Doorstep" Sutton for one of his first ever gigs pre-First World War.

Opposite the Russell Arms stood the Morton House, which was demolished in about 1970, and the nearby Royal Table lost its famous oversized rooftop stone table in the 1960s prior to

being demolished itself in the 2000s. Incidentally, the Royal Table took its name from the big house opposite which still stands, and is now a vicarage, although reduced in scale.

Finally, let's end with a story about the Rhubarb which I think says a lot about Barton Hill, its pubs, and its people. In June 1940 trains loaded with bedraggled troops returning from Dunkirk, were waiting on sidings above the Rhubarb for forward dispatch. They were given sustenance from locals with the assistance of the landlord. This was despite rationing; then as now those with least to give, give the most. Later that year the Nazis dropped their first high explosive bomb on Bristol, narrowly missing the Rhubarb and taking out a nearby piggery (they were after the railway and gasometers).

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2021 edition of Pints West, and since then the Rhubarb has been granted Asset of Community Value status. The initial planning application was then withdrawn. Barton Hill's last pub is still under threat however, and any interested parties hoping to take on the ownership and running of the Rhubarb - as a pub - will be offered the support of the "Save the Rhubarb" campaigning group.

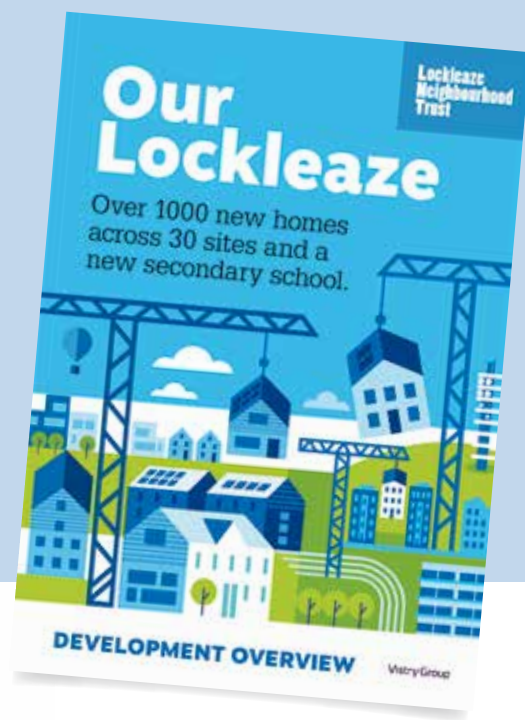
Mark Steeds is the co-author with Roger Ball of 'From Wulfstan to Colston', (2020) Bristol Radical History Group.



Barton Hill's last pub is currently closed

Lockleaze: a community in development

Suzanne Wilson describes how a community organisation can support residents to achieve positive change to their community.



Introduction

Lockleaze was built by Bristol City Council on former farmland following the Second World War to house those made homeless by slum clearance and the blitz. It was part of a national wave of housebuilding with high quality housing and large gardens for food growing. Thus a garden suburb of mostly three bed detached and semi-detached homes was created. Decades later concrete cancer from poor quality post-war materials meant that a number of homes needed to be pulled down leaving large areas of Lockleaze empty and an eyesore.

Years of planning aid, regeneration discussions and designation as a Neighbourhood Planning Area followed. But lots of talking did not lead to lots of building. In a system that largely relied on private housebuilding Lockleaze was not commanding sufficient values to tempt major house builders. Residents were left dissatisfied and disengaged. In 2017, local community organisation, the Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust (LNT), undertook a community survey. Not surprisingly, the main issue for the community was housing. Despite a national housing crisis, local housing need and land owned by Bristol City Council available for house-building Lockleaze was felt to be the forgotten estate.

Following a year of workshops and presentations Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust published a community plan which set out a range of resident priorities across ten different themes with housing at the top of the list.

For more than ten years the neighbourhood of Lockleaze has

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY

been earmarked for expansion, with over twenty sites within its boundary identified for housing development. For most of this time sites laid dormant with little more than a number on a plan attached to them. This is until four years ago when ten development sites, totalling nearly 1,000 homes (an approximate 20% increase in the number of Lockleaze households), emerged.

How can a community impact development?

Picking up on the challenges set out by residents around availability and affordability of housing, the strategic focus for LNT for the coming years is clear: how can we ensure that all this activity is fair to existing residents and benefits the wider community?



Lockleaze has been earmarked for expansion. It has a new school, the Trinity Academy.

We aim to achieve this in the following ways:

1. Create conditions for sign posting, learning and community collaboration.
2. Support resident-led initiatives.
3. Direct action and delivery.

Residents Planning Group

In 2017 the LNT worked with local residents to set up the Lockleaze Residents Planning Group (RPG) to get advice from the local planning network and a friendly community consultant who had been working in Lockleaze.

The Residents Planning Group has argued for high levels of affordability and has achieved above planning policy on all major sites. The RPG has

campaigned for well-insulated homes with renewable energy sources for low running costs, and meaningful changes in design to be sympathetic to needs of existing residents.

It was clear from the start that residents on the group did not all need to agree but did need to be respectful. The RPG worked hard to make sure that those in desperate need of housing did not feel drowned out by those voices concerned about developments next door to their house. Whilst not all smooth sailing, we are proud the group has grown from the early seven members to over 300 members, with a regular 30 involved. The RPG has made significant improvements to a number of key developments in Lockleaze.

Lockleaze Housing Festival 2019

In early 2019, as several sites were brought forward in quick succession, it became increasingly difficult to keep up with evolving proposals. Residents were concerned whether the scale of change was understood. Also that some developments weren't receiving the proper scrutiny because we were seeing so many at once. In response to this, LNT sought to convene project architects, development managers and local stakeholders to showcase development proposals across Lockleaze. As well as family fun activities, art installations and discussions around different models of housebuilding the Lockleaze Housing Festival provided a way to grab the attention of residents and get valuable feedback on community attitudes to various changes.

Development site map

Most residents found the planning portal impenetrable. A high volume of residents either did not have the internet or a computer at home or found it difficult to



In 2017 local residents set up the Lockleaze Residents Planning Group (RPG)



The Hub, run by the Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust

find, read and comment on plans. Even those attending the residents planning meetings had difficulty keeping track of what developments were happening and where. A development map (with sponsorship from Vistry) was produced outlining all the developments: where they were in the planning process and the number of homes and levels of affordable housing on each site. Developers gave an email address and crucially a phone number so residents had a clear route to get any questions answered.

Resident-led initiatives

The Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust exists to support residents and resident-led campaigns to achieve positive impacts for themselves.

As specific sites came forward residents local to the site have sometimes set up their own action group – for example the Bonnington Walk Open Space Group and the Dovercourt Development Residents Group.

These hyper-local groups have been good ways for neighbours to unite. The planning group and the LNT have been a resource for those groups to connect with, and to learn from other residents' experience.

In many cases residents have been well organised and not needed much support. But as the development process is lengthy, with several different stages of input over the years, from pre-application to reserved matters, having a community anchor organisation that can be there for the long haul as resident interest waxes and wanes has been helpful.

Our work exploring development has led us into discussions around transport. Specifically, traffic calming measures to support safe walking routes to school and the campaign for a Lockleaze rail station.



In the case of the latter we worked with the Friends of Suburban Railways Group. Campaigners have met with our MP, local councillors, the Metro Mayor and local press. We are requesting an up-to-date feasibility study in light of new housing/increase in residents. We've not as yet been successful in this campaign.

Community led Housing

A key way to ensure that local homes are affordable and benefit local residents is to build them ourselves. The community-led housing sector was beginning to flourish with government grant funding and the local authority making land available for self-build and community led housing. LNT, working with a pilot group of residents, decided to take matters into their own hands and show that the community can build better.

In March 2019, following a community co-design process led by LNT and our amazing project designers, Barefoot Architects, we submitted a planning application for 19 affordable homes. We are now preparing further designs ahead of going out to tender and embarking on our second CLH project working in partnership with local organisation Ecomotive and their modular system SNUG homes.

Lockleaze lettings policy

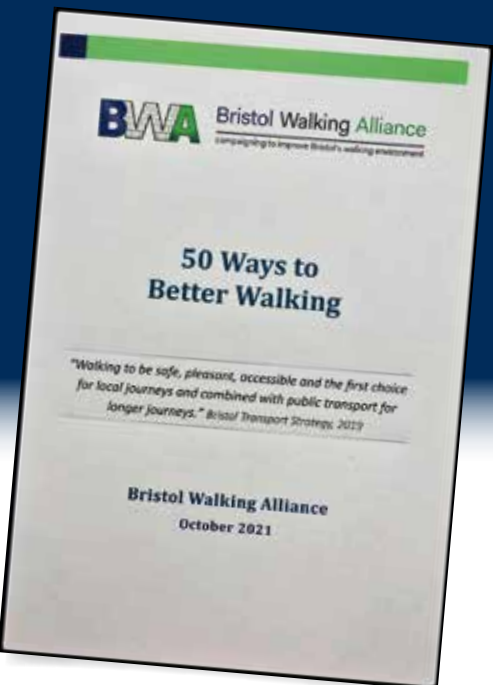
With over 700 households in Lockleaze on the housing register, there is a serious housing need within the neighbourhood. Currently, there are 14,000 people in need of homes across Bristol on the register. It is imperative that some of the local homes available for social rent are available for local residents.

The local lettings policy has been produced in partnership with Bristol City Council.

The housing allocation system, because demand far outstrips supply, seems impenetrable and impossible to influence (as one individual). Collectively we have worked together to make meaningful changes to the system. We've helped people in housing need stay connected with their community and helped free-up spare bedrooms in under-occupied homes. We've also made people willing to downsize aware of local opportunities. Above all we're making sure that new housing starts to address local needs.

50 Ways to Better Walking

Bristol Walking Alliance member, *Suzanne Audrey*, promotes *50 Ways to Better Walking*



Left, Launch of 50 Ways to Better Walking. From left to right: Cllr Lesley Alexander, Cllr Christine Townsend, Cllr Ed Plowden, Cllr Lisa Stone, Ben Barker, Cllr Alex Hartley, Cllr Lorraine Francis.

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) recently launched its booklet, *50 Ways to Better Walking*. As the name suggests, 50 actions are suggested to improve the pedestrian environment and the experience of walking.

Written by BWA, and funded through Bristol Health Partners, the booklet encourages politicians, policy makers, transport and planning professionals, businesses, community organisations and individuals to play their part in ensuring that walking is safe, convenient and inclusive.

The widespread existence of pavements in urban environments leads some to suggest that there are more pressing transport problems than improving the pedestrian environment. We disagree.

Walking is an important mode of travel that promotes health and wellbeing, and can reduce our carbon footprint. But much of the infrastructure has been neglected and, although walking is said to be top of the 'transport hierarchy', the needs of pedestrians are frequently relegated to the bottom of the pile.

Part of the problem is that walking is often subsumed in the terms 'sustainable transport', 'active travel' or 'walking and cycling'. But walking is a distinct mode of transport and the most common form of active travel. Monitoring pedestrian use of footways, crossings, bridges and public spaces can help in developing schemes for walking routes, high street improvements and

the public realm. Such schemes require clear design standards and separate, adequate funding.

BWA campaigns for walking to be safe, pleasant and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities. This includes addressing problems with infrastructure such as loose paving slabs, uneven surfaces, faulty lighting, and inadequate pedestrian crossings. It requires walking routes to have sufficient visibility and oversight, including ensuring that new developments have 'active frontage' at street level, and replacing outdated underpasses with street level crossings.

Many pedestrians feel less safe when required to share space with bicycles and e-scooters, and adequate segregation is required. A healthy pedestrian environment also means reducing exposure to dirty air. Wider footways, single-stage crossings, and buffer zones (such as green verges) can all reduce pedestrian exposure to traffic-related air pollution.

Narrow footways are a problem for



Parking on pavements blights many neighbourhoods.

those who need to walk side-by-side, push a buggy, use a wheelchair or mobility scooter, or walk with a guide dog. Street furniture, such as benches and signs, should be positioned to maximise the useable footway. Good practice would, for example, place electrical vehicle (EV) chargers on the road, not the pavement.

Other 'temporary' barriers can reduce a pavement that usually has adequate width, to one that does not. These include bins, overhanging vegetation, scaffolding, A-boards and fly-tipping. Resolving these issues involves active participation from businesses and communities.

Parking on pavements, and across dropped kerbs, blights many neighbourhoods. BWA supports a London-style ban on pavement parking and enforcement action against drivers who block dropped kerbs.

Some progress is being made with the current interest in Liveable Neighbourhoods, School Streets, and continuous pavements across side junctions on some key transport routes. BWA is keen to build on this progress and work with others to promote understanding and support for the actions proposed in *50 Ways to Better Walking*.

More information is available on the website: <https://bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk/50-ways/>

For further information, to join BWA (membership is free), or to order a free copy of *50 Ways to Better Walking*, email: enquiries@bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk

Bristol Civic Society membership

Your Civic Society needs YOU!

Bristol Civic Society is more than 100 years old. It is a non-party-political body which campaigns for what is best for our city. Joining the Society is inexpensive and it is open to all. The bigger and more diverse our membership, the stronger we can be.

As a Society member you're also on the invitation list to a range of events and benefits, from serious campaigning through to expert talks and social evenings and outings.

Bristol Civic Society is:

- * Saving the best of Bristol's past
- * A powerful voice in Bristol's future
- * Campaigning on issues that affect us all - and the generations to come
- * A great way to make new friends (and maybe re-connect with old ones!)

Find out more about the Society and its work at bristolcivicsociety.org.uk



Joining is easy

There are three ways to apply. You can do it via the website: bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/get-involved/join-the-society where you can join using PayPal, or download an application form. Or fill out, cut out or photocopy, and return the form below.

Have you considered leaving something to the Bristol Civic Society in your will?

Membership application to join Bristol Civic Society

Membership (Annual)	Rate	✓
Individual	£20	
Joint living at the same address	£30	
Student	£10	

Please return to: Membership Secretary, Bristol Civic Society, 52 Oakwood Rd, Bristol, BS9 4NT. Cheques, if not made by standing order, made payable to Bristol Civic Society.
Enquiries: Tel: 0117 9621592.
Email: membership@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

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Events

Spring and Summer 2022

One might hesitate to say that life is slowly returning to normal. But the world does seem to be beset by problems and nasty surprises. However, during spring and summer months the events team are planning a program of local walks, Zoom meetings, site visits, talks and the occasional archive-film mail-outs for your entertainment and information.

As always, please check the Bristol Civic Society website (www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/events) periodically for updates on the events shown below and for other so far unannounced events.

We usually notify members via email about individual upcoming events, particularly where booking is required. Some events may have limited capacity and may incur a small charge.



Wednesday 6 April, 7.30pm.

Zoom talk with Pete Insole, 100 years of Council housing in Bristol.

Wednesday 20 April, 1.45pm.

Walk with Ed Hall around Bristol Old Town and its ancient walls.

Thursday 28 April, 7.30pm.

Zoom talk with David Martyn, Bristol Transport History.



Wednesday 11 May, 7.30.

Zoom talk with Tim Milwood. Topic: South Bristol.

Wednesday 18 May, 2.00pm.

Study walk with David Martyn. Topic: Broadmead, Past, Present and Future.

Bristol Walk Fest. Including walks by Simon Birch on Wednesday 11 May at 6.00pm, repeated on Sunday 15 May at 10.30am, on the subject of the Bristol Tobacco Industry.

And with Jeff Bishop on the subject of Bristol Docks through maps 1568 to present, on Friday 20 May at 10.30 am, repeated on Friday 27 May at 2.00pm.

Wednesday 25 May, 7.30pm.

Zoom talk by Ian Harvey of Civic Voice organisation on building engagement in high streets and town centres, and the importance of having a strong civic society to champion.



Tuesday 14 June, from 7pm.

Bristol Civic Society AGM at 'The Mount Without' (formerly the Church of St Michael on the Mount Without), St Michael's Hill, Bristol BS2 8DT.

Bristol Civic Society Design Awards. Date to be announced.

Thursday 23 June, 7.30pm. **Zoom talk with Tom Morris of Bristol Old Vic**, on the History of Theatre in Bristol.

July & August

Further events to be announced.

Events in planning:

Members' social; more walks; more Zooms and further events on subject of the 'Changing face of Bristol'. Keep an eye on website for more details of upcoming events.

*Wednesday 20 April 1.45 pm.
Walk with Ed Hall around Bristol
Old Town and its ancient walls.*

