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Bristol Civic Society comments on the Temple Meads southern gateway planning application

Planning application 25/13135/F for 1 - 9 Bath Road Totterdown Bristol BS4 3DP

August 2025

1 Summary

We support the application but only if it can be shown to be workable.

Whilst the strategic logic for the proposed gateway within the Temple Meads masterplan is clear, the gateway is attempting to do a lot within a constrained site, alongside one of the busiest highways in Bristol. It is catering for users by car, bus, bike and on foot. And the car park is providing disabled parking, long-term parking, short-term parking, and drop-off/pick-up spaces. There is an onus on the proposers to demonstrate that the car park and adjacent roads can cope with the volume of cars coming in and going out, and to be prepared to review the plans if it cannot be shown to work.

The workability of the proposed gateway depends crucially on plans for the covered walkway to the station and changes to the adjacent highway, both of which are outside the red line of the development. It is difficult to appraise the proposal without assurances on the design and workability of these other elements. We would like to see more information on this to support the application.

1.1 Building design aspects

We think the architectural design is probably as good as it can be, given the constraints of the masterplan and the tightness of the development site.

We support Historic England's comment: "We would task your urban design team to advise upon ways in which the visual bulk of the proposed car park building could be better articulated and fragmented." As HE say, this would mitigate the impact on the visual approach to Bristol along the Bath Road and the evolving view southwards from the head of the station ramp.

1.2 Transport aspects – traffic flows

The Transport Assessment's benign modelling results and the optimism about reduced car trips can be difficult to square with lived experience.

We remain sceptical that one lane in/ one lane out will provide sufficient capacity at peak times

We wait to see from the Council:

- detailed design of nearby highway changes (including the new signalised junction on the Bath Road for cars turning right out of the car park)

- inclusion of an inbound bus stop in the highway plans, which does not impede traffic flow
- their comments on the Transport Assessment.

1.3 Other aspects

We support the inclusion of:

- green infrastructure throughout the site
- public art on the building facades that are solid. Most of it is however not visible from the front of the site.
- a “central square [which] is a space where opportunities to host pop up markets, promotional events and hospitality food trucks are anticipated”

It is essential that the covered walkway to the station is up and running before the car and cycle parks open.

2 Building design aspects

The transport hub is part of the approved Temple Meads masterplan and is an integral component of it. The mass, height (7 storeys for the car park), and location of the two proposed buildings are all driven by the tightness of the site and the sewer running across it. If these constraints are taken as a given, then we think the design of the buildings is probably as good as it can be. The transparency of the cycle parking is a good feature, as is the partial greening of the car park facade, as long as the low-maintenance design works well in practice.

However the proposed buildings do have a ‘moderate’ negative impact from certain viewpoints. Looking at the Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment. We think the HTVIA slightly underplays this. The car park will dominate the view of Bristol when coming from the south along Bath Road, but we accept that there are other nearby consented schemes of similar height which will also affect that view. Also from Cumberland Road, but the proposed buildings on Temple Island would dwarf it. And from the station platforms.

3 Transport aspects

3.1 The overall approach

The Society’s consultation response is quoted in the Design and Access Statement: “Within this context and these constraints, the Society welcomed the proposals. We think it provides a coherent proposal that caters for many transport modes: pedestrians, wheelers, cyclists, bus, private car – both long-term parking and drop-off/pick-up.” We still hold that view but we also continue to have concerns about the workability of the proposals.

The Transport Assessment says that the “proposals would result in an overall reduction in car parking spaces serving Bristol Temple Meads”.

We understand that this in the following context. The number of car parking spaces is dictated by regulatory rail requirements, and in total the number of parking spaces will remain the same. The majority of these spaces will be located in the new Southern Gateway car park. As per the Temple Meads masterplan, there will be some blue badge and taxi spaces on Station Approach, and pick-up/ drop-off spaces at Temple Back East near the northern entrance to the station.

In the traffic modelling, “To provide a robust assessment, despite this proposed reduction in provision, it has been assumed that the number of trips associated with the proposed development will mirror that of those associated with the existing Temple Meads car parks”. The modelling is said to show that “the development would generally maintain or improve journey times during the AM and Interpeak peak (14:00 – 15:00) periods, with more mixed outcomes observed during the PM peak” and “On the whole it has been demonstrated that the impacts of the proposed development are acceptable from a transport perspective, with no ‘severe’ impacts on the operation of the local highway network.”

The Planning Statement and Transport Assessment make clear that “it is considered that the proposed development would lead to a net reduction in the number of car trips to Bristol Temple Meads”, on the basis that “the proposed development will positively contribute to the uptake of travel by sustainable modes”.

But the benign modelling results and the optimism about reduced car trips can be difficult to square with lived experience. For instance, the practice of pick-up and drop-off at the station is necessary for those with disabilities, and considered necessary by many who judge the bus/cycle/walk alternatives as impractical.

3.2 Traffic impacts

The following is an extract from the Community Involvement Statement provided with the planning application.

| Point raised | BTQ LLP response |
|---|---|
| Traffic | |
| Traffic turning in and out across the cycleway and walkway on Bath Road may cause a hazard. | The primary entrance to the Southern Gateway is signal controlled to ensure that movements from different transport mode do not come into conflict. This includes a signalised pedestrian and cycle crossing point at the main access to the car park. |
| Impact of traffic on Bath and Wells roads and round the Bath Bridges roundabout | Traffic modelling has been undertaken to assess the impact to the road network as a result of this project. This has confirmed that the project can be delivered without causing congestion on this key route, with negligible impact to journey times in the morning peak hours, and limited impact in the evening peak hours, both including some journey time improvements. |
| Entry and exit to/from the car park: Potential conflict with other modes of transport crossing the entry/exit point. Suggestion to have a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing at this junction One lane on exit could cause congestion at busy times If buses are pulling out will this create a blind spot for car drivers pulling out of | The primary entrance to the Southern Gateway is signal controlled to ensure that movements from different transport mode do not come into conflict. This includes a signalised pedestrian and cycle crossing point at the main access to the car park. Entry to the car park is barrierless. Exit will be controlled via ANPR with the final equipment specification to be confirmed at later stage. |

| | |
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| the exit | |
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Despite the answers given in the Community Involvement Statement, and we repeat below the comments made in response to the consultation.

4 Impacts on traffic flows

Whilst we support the Southern Gateway in principle, we do have concerns about its impacts on traffic flow circulation. The Gateway will be situated at one of the busiest nodes in the road network: where the merged Bath Road and Wells Road meet the inner circuit road. The impacts include:

- the consultation diagrams show that you can turn right out of the car park, which will require traffic lights, slowing down traffic flows on Bath Road.*
- traffic from South Bristol that previously might have approached Temple Meads from Redcliffe Way will instead be drawn to Bath Bridges roundabout, coming from Bath Road, Clarence Road, or York Road.*
- the signalised pedestrian crossing of Bath Road near Fowlers will be used more, slowing down traffic flows.*
- traffic coming into the car park may queue back on to the Bath Road, slowing down traffic on Bath Road.*

All these will impede traffic flows on the critical link between Bath Bridges and the Three Lamps junction, already a major pinch-point. There is no resilience in flow here at peak hours, at both ends of the day, let alone for unexpected roadworks or accidents. From our meeting with the project team, we learned that more traffic modelling work is needed to properly assess the impact. We look forward to seeing the results of that impact analysis in the planning application to be submitted in April.

Given the criticality of Bath Bridges roundabout in the road network, being at the confluence of the inner loop and the Bath and Wells Roads, it seems a missed opportunity that BCC is not reviewing the configuration of Bath Bridges roundabout at the same time as introducing this scheme that will impede traffic flows, especially when the Council is reviewing Bedminster Bridges as part of the City Centre Transport scheme.

5 Other comments

We make some comments on particular aspects of the scheme:

Operation of the car park: *no doubt the operability of the car park will be modelled, but we have concerns. We note that the diagram shows two entry lanes/barriers, but only one exit lane/barrier from the building. Major train arrivals cause traffic surges, and we suspect that the time to exit from the top storey at peak times will be long. This will be exacerbated by mixing both short-stay and long-stay users in the same exit queue. A comparator is Trenchard Street car park when the Hippodrome audience exits. If the car park does not function well, it will gain a reputation, potentially affecting both its own revenue and actual train use, which is surely the reason it is being built.*

...

3.3 Other comments

We said in response to the consultation ...

Pedestrian movements and risk of collision: *The plans introduce conflicts between pedestrian and other movements:*

- the cycle lane and pedestrian route alongside Bath Road run parallel to each other. The two need to be at different levels to ensure separation between the two.*
- crossing the road from Fowlers will take pedestrians and cyclists on to a route where there are multiple movements of cars, buses, e-scooters etc. Clear crossing points across the cycleway will be required, which can be zebra crossings, which as they cross the cycleway are raised to pavement level. The zebra crossings should be of sufficient width.*
- the 'floating' bus stop, ie a cycle way behind a bus stop, requires pedestrians to cross the cycle way. A railing or other barrier along the length of the bus stop will be needed, as with the floating bus stop on Prince Street, and we understand from the project team that this is planned.*

It will be hard to design all this to eliminate the risk of collision and injury. We look forward to seeing the detailed mitigations proposed in the planning application to be submitted in April.

There will also be a conflict between pedestrians and cyclists travelling along the A4 Bath Road and the entrance and exit of cars from the car park. We understand that the cycle and pedestrian crossings of the entrance/exit will be signal-controlled to reduce the risk of collision.

Mis-use of bus lay-by: *If there is no private car pick-up/drop-off facility, the bus lay-by will inevitably be used by some for drop-off. We believe that the only way of effectively enforcing this would be to use cctv cameras.*