



Bristol Parks Forum

representing resident led
park groups and citywide organisations
involved in protecting and improving
Bristol's green spaces

Bristol Central Area Plan – Preferred Options September 2013

9.3 High Street, Wine Street and Castle Park

Response to Consultation

This response is submitted by the Bristol Parks Forum (BPF) committee following discussions at the BPF meeting on 12th October 2013. The issue was also raised by our members with Mayor George Ferguson at a meeting on 5th October 2013.

Overall Position

- The BPF agrees with comments by the Mayor and others that the buildings at the west end of Castle Park around St Mary Le Port Church are a disgrace and that redevelopment of the site is urgently needed. A properly planned development would greatly enhance the appearance of this historic part of Bristol and would improve the setting of Castle Park.
- The BPF strongly opposes any development that encroaches into Castle Park and we believe that the Central Area Plan should designate the existing area of Castle Park as 'Important Open Space' as was shown in the 'Central Area Action Plan Options Consultation' in February 2012.
- The BPF objects to the proposed felling of the mature street trees on Wine St and High St. Further, if any development is permitted which requires the felling of these trees then as a minimum the standards for replacement of the trees set out in the Local Plan should be followed.

Detailed Response

It is worth reviewing the recent history of proposals for Castle Park.

Proposals for building on a large part of the western end of the park were published in 2006 and resisted by the BPF and many others. As a result of the public reaction these proposals were delayed and eventually withdrawn.

The Parks & Green Spaces Strategy (P&GSS) was then adopted by the Council in 2008 showing that the Cabot, Clifton & Clifton West Neighbourhood Partnership has a shortage of accessible green space compared with the adopted standard.

In other parts of the City some 'low value' areas of green space were suggested for disposal as part of the Area Green Space Plan consultation in 2010; given the shortage of green space in the Neighbourhood Partnership area no disposals were suggested for any parts of Castle Park.

Following the public outcry at the suggested disposals the Cabinet agreed that Neighbourhood Partnerships should decide on any disposals and most areas were retained. For those areas covered by the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document all sites covered by the P&GSS (except those where disposal has been agreed) have been allocated as Important Open Space. All political parties said they would protect this green space from development.

The February 2012 consultation version of the Central Area Action Plan showed the area available for development at St Mary Le Port restricted to the area of the disused buildings with Castle Park being shown as Important Open Space. This was consistent with the treatment of areas covered by the P&GSS in other parts of the City.

The BPF was therefore surprised to find that the current document proposes development on two areas of Castle Park shown as Important Open Space in the February document, being parts of site KS04 and site KS07.

While the BPF is aware that designation as Important Open Space does not give absolute protection (and a developer could still bring forward a proposal to build on the space which would have to be considered on its merits) we believe that maintaining the designation of Castle Park would send out the message that Bristol stands by its P&GSS and as Green Capital 2015 considers green space in the City to be important. Reducing the area to be designated would send the opposite message.

The BPF would like to express its concern that the City Council has not consulted separately on the principle of disposal of this green space (which would be required were it to be developed), especially given the campaign against disposals in other parts of the City.

St. Mary-le-Port Site KS04

The BPF believes that the area for this development site should be as shown in the February 2012 Central Area Action Plan consultation document. The area to be designated as Important Open Space should also be as shown on the maps in that document. We do not accept that the area needs to be extended to provide a viable development.

We agree with and strongly support the following requirements for the development stated in the document:

Improved access and setting for the St. Mary-le-Port Church tower, which may take the form of a new public space, and improved access and setting for the High Street vaults, both of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments;

A strong relationship with Castle Park, including a properly designed transition between the redeveloped area and the park, providing surveillance and active ground floor uses fronting onto the park and the quayside walkway;

Answers to consultation questions:

To bring forward a well-designed and viable scheme should the area proposed for development fall within the boundary indicated on the aerial photograph below?

No - the boundary should be as shown in the February 2012 document.

Are there other options which should be considered?

See below.

To enable the narrowing of High Street and Wine Street closer to their historic proportions should any existing street trees be removed and replaced elsewhere?

None of the existing mature street trees should be removed.

If the trees are to be removed then felling should not be permitted until suitable replacement sites have been identified. The number of replacement sites should as a minimum be in accordance with the standards in the Development Management Policies based on the size of the trees to be felled. We support the Mayor's view that at least 10 trees would be required to replace each tree. These sites should be for trees that will give equivalent benefits to those lost ie they should be street trees or urban trees. It should be a requirement that sufficient sites should have been identified, had service checks, and been consulted on before the trees are felled. This should be a condition of any planning approval and should be written into the the final CAP document.

Are there other options which should be considered?

We believe that an imaginative and viable scheme could be designed without building on Castle Park and without removing the trees. In particular the streets could be narrowed with the area under the trees forming public space to be used for outdoor markets or seating areas. The Council should challenge the country's architects to design such a scheme.

Land to the west of Castle Street/Queen Street - Site KS07

The BPF strongly objects to the proposal to allocate this site for housing. This site is the depot for the park. It is shown as part of the park in the P&GSS. This site was not suggested for disposal as part of the AGSP consultation. Disposal of this site as proposed here would set a precedent for other depots at other parks in the City. If this is intended then there should be much more extensive public consultation on the issue.

This site should be allocated as Important Open Space as shown in the February 2012 document.

If the depot is no longer required for park operations then The BPF would strongly support the use of this site for small scale development which is ancillary to the park and of benefit to park users; for example as a café or information centre.

Land at Lower Castle Street and Broad Weir - Site KS06

The BPF supports the statement that 'Opportunities should be explored to provide a new gateway into Castle Park from the site'. We do not believe that the site should be developed for retail use. Any development should be such that it forms an attractive green

area that draws people towards the park and forms an attractive park entrance. It may be possible to include a café or other community facility related to the park within the design.

Central ambulance station - Site KS05

The BPF welcomes the ideas for this site set out in the Draft Old Market Quarter Neighbourhood Development Plan that has recently been published for consultation.

Expansion of the park onto the Council owned land currently occupied by a car park adjacent to the ambulance station and the incorporation of Castle Street into the park has great potential to enhance the park and its setting.

The BPF urges that these proposals should be incorporated into the Central Area Plan.

Bristol Parks Forum Committee
14th October 2013
info@bristolparksforum.org.uk

Bristol Parks Forum

Bristol Parks Forum was established by Bristol Parks as an umbrella organisation for community park groups and organisations in the city with an interest in their local parks and green spaces.

The forum is supported by Bristol City Council but acts independently and is the only 'community voice' that is dedicated to all of Bristol's green spaces. The forum's three main roles are to:

- offer an opportunity to share ideas and experience
- act as a consultation body for the Bristol Parks service and other agencies
- influence decision-making, including the allocation of resources

Bristol Parks Forum www.bristolparksforum.org.uk