

Bristol Parks Forum Statement to Economy & Skills Policy Committee regarding Insufficient Parks Provision in St Philips Marsh Masterplan – 28-09-26

Bristol Parks Forum considers the parks provision in this Masterplan to be inadequate and calls upon the Economy and Skills Policy Committee not to adopt the plan but to send it back for better parks provision to be designed in.

The St Philips Marsh Masterplan lacks adequate Parks and Green Space for a good quality of life and healthy living.

It fails to meet the Council's own Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (PGSS) and the requirements of the Local Plan.

This is the first time the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy is being properly put to the test and this Masterplan has failed to meet its requirements. The Masterplan does not meet the PGSS minimum area for parks required, which is already far, far smaller than the city average.

The Masterplan, wrongly, conflates public realm and green corridors with Parks and Green Spaces provision. This is not acceptable. All of these things are needed in a modern development but the Masterplan skimps on the parks spaces which are key for good health and wellbeing. In particular the PGSS in its provision standards appendix <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/7566-minimum-standards-for-publicly-accessible-open-spaces-for-recreation-in-bristol/file> specifically makes it clear that public realm cannot be included when applying the space standard nor "highway landscape".

Paragraphs 2.9 - 2.11 disingenuously refer to "open space," this is not a park or green space definition in the councils' own Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.

The Report goes on to talk about large destination parks which are far bigger than anyone would expect to be provided in St Philips Marsh. There has never been a call nor an expectation for destination parks.

Bristol Parks Forum has pushed for a "Big Park" in St Philips Marsh but there seems a misunderstanding of what is meant by this. A previous version of the plans described the site now called Chapel Park as a "large park" even though it is much smaller than Sparke Evans Park which is not deemed a large park. This made it clear to us that if the planners thought they were offering a "large park" what is needed was bigger than that. Bigger because the proposed parks are not large enough to do much at all in them. Bigger because they are not fit for thousands of people to use for recreation, sport, to walk their dog, to keep cool in the heat, to enjoy nature nor to get away from the hustle and bustle of dense urban living.

Parks Forum has never suggested a new Victoria or St George's style destination Park. What is clear however, is that the proposed little parks are not big enough to deliver the quality requirements of the PGSS either.

The Committee report also states "The measure is not the size of any one park" which of course is not really the case at all. The measure must be what is specified in the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy which is clear about the definition of the standards needed for parks and green spaces. Multifunctional Parks have a completely different role in public health and wellbeing than green corridors and pocket parks.

The Fruit Market Park, for example, is almost exactly the size and shape of College Green.

Page 174, Figure 07.52 of the Masterplan depicts the proposed uses of this space the size and shape of College Green. The illustration shows two children's formal play areas, other hard standing described as play integrated in planting areas, a tree lined road and cycle way – therefore hard landscaping, lawn space for "leisure and recreation," which is maybe half the size of the grassed area of College Green or smaller, and an area described as "ecological gardens planted with native species" which would be probably no bigger than the formal flower beds on College Green and certainly will not make any real contribution by anyone's standards either to the city's nature recovery nor its addressing of the ecological emergency.

The actual green space and opportunities for multifunctional uses of these proposed parks is inadequate. How can these 2 spaces, roughly the size of College Green serve the 22,000 residents, plus members of the neighbouring communities?

Even if this Masterplan was somehow meeting the letter of the minimum PGSS provisions, the parks proposed, even including Sparke Evans Park (which already serves existing communities), will in no way meet the needs of the thousands of present and future residents and workers to gain the proven mental and physical health benefits of proper parks.

Accommodation for approximately 6000 students has already been permitted or is in the pipeline for St Philips Marsh (in LP DS2 policy area) with no provision for a park or green space.

It is stated that developers will not have to adhere to this Masterplan but may diverge from it. There is a very high likelihood that there will be attempts to reduce the amount of green space provided by individual development. Therefore this plan must start with significantly larger parks to have the remotest chance of creating a neighbourhood that is fit to live in and fit for the future.

We are supposed to making our city fit for the future. Climate and ecological resilience and improved public health outcomes will fall at the first hurdle without decent areas of public parks and green spaces.

This Masterplan fails to meet the Council's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, the Local Plan, the Council's Climate and Ecological strategies, the City's public health needs and the global sustainability goals to which the council is signed up.

If the Masterplan is not adopted today, that doesn't mean it has to be abandoned, we do not understand why the report implies that. Meanwhile the Local Plan includes the Parks and Green Spaces Standards provision so the developers should meet that. Offering a Masterplan with smaller green space requirements is surely in contravention of the Local Plan.

We call upon the committee NOT to adopt this Masterplan but to tell the Temple Quarter Partnership to properly apply the Council's existing policies for parks provision.