

Bristol Parks Forum Statement to Environment and Sustainability Committee – 24-09-26 - regarding the lack of parks provision in the St Philips Marsh draft Masterplan

Bristol Parks Forum is concerned that the inadequate parks provision proposed in the St Philips Marsh Masterplan will result in a detriment to the environment and sustainability for the area and the wider city. We are therefore bringing this matter to the Environment and Sustainability Committee in view of its remit regarding delivery of both the Ecological and Climate Emergencies Strategies.

The decision regarding the adoption or otherwise of the St Philips Masterplan will be taken at the Economy and Skills Committee Meeting on 28th September 2026 and we urge members of this Committee to call for better parks and green spaces provision.

We have also taken our concerns about the inadequate green spaces provision to the Public Health and Communities Committee highlighting the impact on both public health and general liveability for dense populations with only small parks provision.

We consider that the Masterplan is failing to meet the environmental and sustainable needs of the St Phillips Marsh new communities and existing neighbouring communities.

We hope you have had an opportunity to read the St Philips Marsh Masterplan. We consider that the proposals within that Masterplan will not deliver any positive contributions to tackling the Ecological and Climate crises in the City. They will not offer sustainable living in a thriving environment.

We ask you to call for better and greater parks provision in St Philips Marsh

The Bristol Parks Forum has repeatedly called for a decent sized new park to be included in the proposals for St Philips Marsh. The existing Sparke Evans Park already serves several communities living in adjoining areas and should not be included in any calculation about the green space needed for the new St Phillips Marsh residents and workers.

The Masterplan anticipates a minimum of 7,000 dwellings, conservatively that would mean 17,500 people living in the area. There is already student accommodation built or in the pipeline, to house at least 5,000 students with more student accommodation expected to be built in the north of the St Philips Marsh area. The mix of office and industrial work space could mean 5000 – 6000 employees – calculated using government figures for worker density per use.

For these 27,500 plus people the Masterplan is only proposing two small parks, one of which is about the size of College Green and the other a little larger, to provide all that new residents will need. Parks, as we know, need to provide for everyone in the community. Those who want a kick about with a football (no space for that in the proposed new parks) or those who want to sit quietly watching a robin or a sparrow maybe. To provide space for meeting up with friends and having a picnic and a chat. For taking the whole family out to enjoy both formal play areas and the flowering plants.

Those Councillors who were present in the Council chamber last week will have seen the work of a Bristol youth project, a short film they called “It’s Just Trees Bro” which they had written, produced and acted in. It highlighted that young people not only need activity space but also really need space to escape from the overwhelming chaos of city living. A

large park would offer that opportunity. Peace and quiet in a busy urban environment should be a priority, not a luxury only for those living in suburbs.

The Masterplan does not offer any genuine space for biodiversity. Biodiversity in the Masterplan document is shown as a few native trees, a small area of long grass and some flowering plants. There needs to be a larger space for wildlife to thrive, for birds to nest, for example.

The Masterplan states:

“Biodiversity net gain Biodiversity net gain should be delivered primarily through on-site provision, prioritising habitat creation within parks, green corridors and along the waterways. Ecological management plans should be submitted alongside proposals to demonstrate how habitats will be established, maintained and monitored over time.”

Whilst this is a good set of words, it is unclear how such small areas will deliver what is needed to achieve the Managing for Nature goals.

The parks are overlooked by high rise blocks. These which will contribute reradiated heat to the green spaces, yet these are the very places where people will be expecting to go to keep cool as part of the city’s “Keep Bristol Cool Framework”.

According to Bristol City Council’s website “Bristol is committed to delivering the SDGs locally” The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) specifically mention access to green spaces.

SDG 11 paragraph 7 states:

“By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities”

<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

The proposed parks in the St Philips Marsh will not offer sufficient space to meet these goals. Bristol’s Parks and Green Spaces strategy is very clear that public “realm” i.e. hard landscaping is not included as a green public space. From a sustainability point of view hard landscaping – even porous – is not as good as grass, soil, etc and will contribute to urban heating, parks and green spaces will not.

We urge you to make representations to your fellow councillors and the Economy and Skills Committee to redraw the plans to include a decent amount of public parks and greenspaces in the St Phillips Marsh developments to enable multifunctional parks fit for serving tens of thousands of residents and visitors.