

Bristol Parks Forum Statement to Public Health and Communities Policy Committee 11th September 2026

Ensuring that the health and wellbeing needs of all the city's residents and workers are being met through provision of sufficient Parks and Green Spaces, especially when new developments are proposed

Bristol Parks Forum is calling on the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee to ensure that the health and wellbeing needs of all of the city's residents and workers are being met through the provision of sufficient Parks and Green Spaces, as close to where they live and work.

Bristol Parks Forum has previously raised its concerns about the lack of proper use of the Bristol City Council's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy in the Council's decision making. The PGSS sets out very clearly that the provision of sufficient green spaces and quality parks is an important part of the way that the Council will work to improve Bristol's residents' Health and Well Being.

Public Parks and Green Spaces are recognised locally, nationally and internationally as being extremely important for good health and wellbeing. This week's Council meeting was shown a screening of "It's Just Trees Bro" written and filmed by a youth project, Bristol Youth Zone 224, that demonstrated the importance of substantial green spaces. The opportunity to get away from the "chaotic" and "stressful" city which they find overwhelming. Somewhere "I can hear myself think" was said. There was wildlife, calm, but also space to explore. The small, manicured garden-style parks proposed in the St Philips Masterplan offer no opportunity to get away from surrounding buildings. Just one flowerbed is deemed sufficient for biodiversity in a park in the Masterplan designs.

The final draft of the St Philips Masterplan was recently consulted on, but has failed to meet even the very low, **minimum** standard of needing to provide 7.5 square metres per resident. The Masterplan includes only two new green spaces, both about the size of College Green. Meanwhile St Philips Marsh will host "at least 7,000" new residential homes – housing roughly 17,500 people. There is clearly an intention for families to live there as there is provision for a primary school location. This is a plan for a **minimum** number of domestic residents and does not encompass the wider area beyond the boundary of the Masterplan whose residents will use the facilities in St Philips.

This figure also does not include the large number of students to be housed in purpose-built student accommodation in the area, including within and to the north of the St Philips Marsh area, who will be residents for either a large part, or all of the year. The student housing development proposals do not include green space but some "public realm" space which is specifically excluded from being considered as a park and contributing to the minimum greenspace provision standards in the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.

A large number of people will be employed in the new business premises and will be working in the area. These must be added to the number of people who will be seeking to use the available public parks and green spaces.

The low, minimum standard for "residents" does not appear to include the resident students and does not consider other daily users.

This minimum standard is not being met in the Masterplan. If that minimum standard is not planned for, once developments come forward we consider it likely the space will in reality will be even less than in the Masterplan. To start from such a very low area of park provision is unacceptable.

The proposed parks space in the Masterplan also does not take account of the adjoining existing residential areas who will need to use the facilities in the new developed areas, including the parks, due to lack of parks provision in their areas. Sparke Evans Park, the only existing park within the Masterplan area, will be expected to accommodate more people to the point that, even with CIL and other planning related funding bringing park improvements, it will not be enough. Sparke Evans is in itself only a small park and already serves existing local residents.

Government advisers have stated: *“that universal access to a healthy natural environment could save the NHS billions of pounds a year in treatment costs if everyone in England had access to good quality green space”*

So, it is surely beholden upon this Committee with its remit both for public health and for parks and green spaces to actively advocate for good parks and green space provision in new developments, not only in terms of square metres per person, i.e. quantity, but in quality and proximity to homes.

These new residents and workers will all need these vital green spaces within walking distance. Biodiversity Net Gain sited elsewhere cannot be used in St Philips Marsh to compensate for lack of green spaces on site. The Bristol PGSS requires the delivery of parks at the point of need not miles away or across the city – delivering our natural health service on their doorstep is a vital necessity, not just a ‘nice to do’.

We ask that the Public Health and Communities Committee ensures that there is proper provision of quality parks and green spaces to meet the needs of everyone in Bristol.

We therefore call for the Public Health and Communities Committee to make representations to the Economy and Skills Committee, and any other decision-making fora who are considering the St Philips Marsh Masterplan, to ensure joined up decision making and sufficient parks and green spaces are planned for and at least meet, though preferably exceed, the bare minimum standard in Bristol’s Parks and Green Spaces Strategy.