

Bristol Parks Forum response to the St Philips Marsh Masterplan Consultation 16th June to 28th July 2026

Bristol Parks Forum (BPF) is the only community voice dedicated to all publicly owned parks and green spaces in Bristol. We work with Bristol City Council to ensure our spaces are well looked after and to help local groups to enhance their green space.



Further information about the Forum can be found at
<http://www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/>

The Forum's Vision includes the following outcomes for parks and green spaces in 2030, which are that they are:

- Excellent in terms of quantity and quality
- Available in all areas of the city
- Places that have a positive influence on our well-being
- Hubs of activity that empower local communities
- Recognised for their value to the city
- Free to access
- Places where wildlife thrives
- Places where our heritage is protected and explored.

This document contains Bristol Parks Forum's response to the latest iteration of the Masterplan issued for consultation - <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/ask/find-consultation-engagement/consultation-engagement?id=295>

This near-final version of the Masterplan offers some small areas of "park land" within the new development area. However, these areas are totally insufficient for the proposed numbers of residents and workers that will be reliant on them.

On plan, shown as green blocks of colour, these may look as if there are going to be some parks. The existing park within St Philips in the SE corner of the site (Sparke Evans Park) is only 2.35 hectares but its total size is probably greater than the combined area of the two small parks proposed. Sparke Evans Park is already serving existing local communities and cannot and should not be pressed into service as the main park for the new development area. That is neither in the spirit nor the letter of the Bristol Parks and Green Spaces Strategy 2024-2039.

The two proposed new park areas – Chapel Park and Fruit Market Park - are not large enough to meet the basic needs of the new communities and certainly will not be able to offer a variety of activities that are expected from a park. They will not offer space for formal and informal sports, space for nature to thrive – e.g. wildflower meadows, small woodland areas, quiet space for contemplation in peace, space to walk your dog, space to breathe, space to be cool away from the tower blocks and the heat island effect of all the proposed developments.

A new primary school is described in the Masterplan. This needs significant play space on top of the small area attached to the school presumably for playtime breaks. Where will the children go to play formal sports such as football, hockey, tennis, etc.? Where will they run around? The school site has its own small green space seemingly about 0.5 hectares. We doubt that a school playground would actually be kept as a green space but anyway it cannot be considered part of the parks provision because it is not publically accessible. For activities needing a larger space Chapel Park next door would be the only option. Experience in Bristol, Stoke Lodge / Cotham School being a well-known example, shows that school sports areas are not considered suitable for the general public to use as well, particularly if they are dog owners and walkers. In any case, the illustration of Chapel Park in the Masterplan shows that it is completely inadequate for all of the green spaces requirements.

Current estimates of the residential homes that are planned in the area are at least 7,000 dwellings in the main part of the site plus "a proportion of the 3,000" proposed north of Feeder Canal. With, additionally, "an appropriate" amount of student accommodation. This implies potentially up to 10,000 homes plus student provision. With an average residency of 2.5 people per household we are looking at a minimum population of 19,000 – 25,000 people of all ages. Clearly there is an anticipation of children living in this area – hence the need for the school.

Bristol Parks Forum's view on Chapel Park

The total area of this "park" is smaller than Bristol's College Green which is 13,014 sq metres or approximately 1.3 hectares, and about the size of one and a quarter football pitches!

Our calculation from the Masterplan's scale drawings is that the maximum size of the orange, purple and green areas in total will be 200 x 50 metres (at its widest) or 1 hectare. For comparison The Centre (where the Cenotaph is located) in Bristol is approximately 200 x 35 metres

Within that area the designers expect multiple forms of play, presumably including being the primary school's sports area as their playground is too small, a formal garden space, an ecological area (one native planted flower bed!), event space for neighbourhood events, a "square" which is not green space but hard surface and also the park provides the frontages of the flats. There is nowhere for formal sports nor food growing. This space is simply not big enough to meet the needs of the people who will be living there.

Bristol Parks Forum's view on Fruit Market Park

The total area of this "park" is about the same size as Bristol's College Green which is 13,014 sq metres or approximately 1.3 hectare. Our calculations from the scale drawing is that the Fruit Market Park would be an equilateral triangle of 100 metre sides, again, much the same as College Green.

Insufficiency of Parks Provision when measured against the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Bristol Open Space provision standards state: "We have set out that new green spaces should be a minimum size of 0.2 hectares to be included in our quantity standards." Therefore the only green spaces being provided to meet that standard of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy are Chapel Park and Fruit Market Park.

The Bristol Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (PGSS) Quantity standard requires 7.75m² per person in the Central Bristol area. For 25,000 residents the space needed will be 7.75 x 25,000 = 193,750 m². Divide that by 10,000 to get hectares and that results in **19.375 hectares compared with the 2.3 total in the 2 new parks proposed.**

If Sparke Evans is added in (although we don't think you should) the total area is c. 4.6 hectares – still somewhat short of 19 hectares. The masterplan appears to be relying on existing open space in the city centre to serve the people living in St Philips in the future, yet this space is already in high demand and increasingly so as new city centre residential development takes place. It is also simply too far for many residents to access on a regular basis and so the Masterplan does not meet the Council's parks accessibility standards.

The St Philips Marsh development area will be a real missed opportunity to be the vanguard for brownfield site planning and development, the current Masterplan lacks the vision to offer the decent quality of life green spaces provide for the proposed new residents. More importantly it looks like it will fail to meet the existing Bristol City Council green space policy requirements aimed at ensuring access to high quality green spaces for all.

It is also a missed opportunity for Bristol as a whole. With all the proposals for waterfront developments, it is very likely that not only will the adjacent communities from Totterdown, The Dings etc. make use of this area it will also be a draw for other people across the city. Creation of this new "destination" will put an even greater pressure on any parks and green spaces that are provided and this Masterplan does not allow for this.

This is Bristol's last chance to plan for a new, Big Park serving new and existing local communities. The inadequate spaces proposed are just not enough for the wellbeing of this big population of people.

We have not discussed the other green spaces described in the Masterplan as they cannot be considered to be parks. The green corridors are tree lined roads or cycle lanes and do not count towards the space standards of the PGSS. The indicative "precedent" photos of a green corridor in the Masterplan show a photo of a road lined with very mature trees – but that is not really a green corridor offering recreation opportunities as the Masterplan suggests.

Incidental Residential Green Space and Public Realm are both suggested as adding to the "green space" offer in the Masterplan. However, Bristol's Open Space Provision Standards document is very clear that these do not constitute public open spaces for recreation and cannot counted towards the space nor accessibility standards of the PGSS.

Much of the waterfront “greening” will be flood defence. To what extent the greening in the illustrations from the Masterplan can be achieved is uncertain given the imperative of defending the buildings that are being proposed within the flood plain, indeed an ever growing flood plain area due to climate change impacts. The illustrations also indicate that the land uses adjacent to the river and canal are actually public (or indeed private) realm – such as outdoor cafeteria space – and not public parks and recreation space.

Bristol Parks Forum – summary of our main concerns regarding St Philips Marsh Masterplan Consultation

The Masterplan has insufficient parks and green spaces provision – a Big Park is needed.

- There will be no space for local people – the new community – to escape their small apartments and breathe in clean air, enjoy tranquillity, or watch nature.
- No spaces for formal or informal sports; nowhere to kick a ball about for an informal game of footie, and definitely no space for neighbourhood rounders or similar.
- Nowhere to keep cool as Bristol heats up in the ever-increasing heatwaves and generally much hotter weather all summer long.
- This is an inadequate proposal for providing for people who will be living in homes with no access to decent green space of their own
- The Masterplan does not meet the PGSS minimum per person space standards, nor accessibility standards let alone make sufficient provision for the high quality parks and green spaces for the new communities who will be living and working there.