



an independent force for a better Bristol

The Society's response to the New Temple Gate Consultation 2015
5th February 2015

Introduction and summary

The Society's response is indebted to the response to the Bristol Urban Design Forum (the Forum). Like the Forum, the Society:

- Generally supports the principle of the changes to the road network. The scheme will produce real gains for the public realm. It will recover development land from the gyratory system and eliminate the 'island' and regain the George & Railway and Grosvenor Hotel sites to economic use. The continuation of the Brunel Mile into the precincts of the station and the one-stage pedestrian crossing are substantial improvements.
- Has concerns related to the detailed design of the highway, the integration of surrounding development, the lack of provision for improved bus based public transport. the approach to landscape and green space
- Is keen that the highway changes are implemented in a manner that ensures great placemaking. The Society particularly welcomes the proposals to mend the broken townscape, which presently separates Bristol Temple Meads and its surroundings from Redcliffe and central Bristol. In order to make this an attractive route for pedestrians and hence a successful link, it is critical that varied retail, catering, recreational and other activities are available at ground level in adjacent buildings and, where appropriate, in open spaces."

The Society shares the Forum's frustration at being *"unable to place the current proposals within a holistic vision of the surrounding areas of change and that the specific proposals by Network Rail and HCA for Temple Meads Station and Plots 3 & 6 should not be considered consequential, but rather integral to the access intentions of the current proposals."* The Society shares the Forum's opinion that, *"a scheme*

informed by proposals for the areas described above would have resulted in a more convincing and robust proposal.”

The Society is encouraged to hear that funding has become available to hire a project manager. A development on the scale of Temple Gate requires proper coordination between the development partners.

The new Temple Gate road layout

The Society welcomes the statement of principle of Policy BCAP28 that the Forum quoted in its response about the development of improved public transport interchange facilities at Temple Meads Station (the Station). The Society supports the principle of removing the existing roundabout and creating a simpler straight through route as the preferred design. The Society relies on the Council’s statement that it has evidence that the changes to the road layout will maintain the capacity of these junctions to carry traffic flows of 40-50,000 vehicles per day.

The Society supports the Forum’s suggestion of a continuous tree-lined boulevard that picks up the theme from the recent Bath Road improvements.

The length of road between the junctions with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street is critical to the success of future management and provision of improved public transport interchange facilities at the Station. In a future development, Network Rail will build a new north entrance to the Station to be the principal pedestrian entrance. Pedestrian and cycle traffic will continue to increase, substantially. This length of road between the junctions with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street should contain the bus stops for buses that pass the Station.

- There is more pavement space on west side of the length of road between the junctions with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street than there is for the current bus shelters in Bath Road at the bottom of Station Approach.
- Siting the bus stops in the length of road between the junctions with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street would go far to solve the problem of the awkward crossing in the Bath Road to the bus stop at the bottom of Station Approach. The new one stage crossing would be close to the bus stops. By moving the bus stop from Bath Road opposite the Station Approach, it would remove the main obstacle to providing a segregated cycleway along that stretch of road.
- The use of the length of road between the junctions with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street would be a step towards the creation of a larger public transport interchange facility at a later stage in the redevelopment of the area. The south and east bound bus turn offs could be in the Station yard. There is space for a bus turn off on the Grosvenor Hotel side.
- The configuration of length of road between the junctions with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street should signal to drivers entering the city that they have moved away from an arterial road and have entered the city centre, which has pedestrian and cycling priorities.

To exploit the place making opportunity in the length of road between the junctions with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street the Society suggests further design work. The question to ask is ‘what should be the purpose of this length of road, which the Brunel Mile will cross and has multiple users?’ The rhetorical answer is that it should be a space that is safe and convenient for the majority of its users. The Council could follow the approach used for Broadway in New York (see [here](#)), which counted the number of road users who were pedestrians to the number passing through in motor vehicles.

The Society shares the Forum’s concern about how future buildings will address the highways and their coordination to ensure that there is no ‘no-man’s’ land left over after redevelopment. The current plan appears to leave a number of orphaned spaces around the Victoria Street Temple Way junction. There should be a tighter urban grain. A tighter grain would support the aspiration to reduce the highway content if there is a future reduction in traffic. To overcome developers’ reluctance to acquire former highway land the redevelopment planning brief should map all the underground services.

Public Transport provision

The Society adopts the strongly expressed points that the Forum makes about the inadequate plans for the public transport provision to which it adds these further comments.

- The Council should recognise that the only public transport improvements this consultation proposes are the upgrade of two bus shelters. A different budget will pay for the AVTM stop. To suggest that the Metrobus stop on Redcliff Hill 400 metres distant from the train platforms would be a transport hub accessible to rail passengers could bring ridicule upon this aspect of the consultation. A better course of action would be for the Council to say that the current budget cannot fund an improved public transport interchange, and to set out its long-term transport aspiration.
- If local bus stops are relocated in the length of road between the junction with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street, the Society accepts the location of the Metrobus stop on Redcliffe Way because there would be insufficient road capacity between the junction with Redcliffe Way and Victoria Street. The Metrobus Redcliffe Way stop would set down passengers conveniently close to the new one stage crossing.
- The proposal is heavily orientated to provide access to the Station from the north and west. The Society would like to adopt the Forum’s suggestion of a circular one way access to the Friary, which Plot 6 could enlarge. There must remain doubt whether Temple Back East has sufficient capacity: it needs widening between Valentine’s Bridge and the new station entrance to ensure that the pedestrian route is not compromised..

- It is frustrating that there is no information whether First Bus and the Council have engaged to discuss altering the network of bus routes to improve the inadequate service to the Enterprise Zone, which includes the Station. The Society is aware that the Council commissioned a report about the public transport provision for the Enterprise Zone.

The proposed new Gateway Building

The Society adopts the points that the Forum makes about this proposal and to which it adds these further comments.

- On this site, the conventional choice is to promote a large building with a new large public space to the south or west. Like the Forum, the success of the Engine Shed also impresses the Society. This site could support a development with a larger footprint of buildings that would not be taller than the Grosvenor Hotel. There could be pedestrian access only between the new buildings: the site is small enough to service from the perimeter. As an alternative to a large public space, the new development could build smaller 'pocket parks' in spaces between the new buildings adjacent to the pedestrian routes. A close grain area of work and recreation would create a sense of place.
- Headquarters capacity buildings are dominate in the area. The disadvantage of a large building is that it would overbear the human scale of the Brunel Mile and conflict with the local place making objective. Overdevelopment of the site could repeat the grim Avon Street canyon. Without a pre-let, the occupancy is more speculative than the occupancy of smaller units. The need to secure a pre-let could lead to delay of construction of the building and public spaces, which are dependent upon it for finance. Smaller buildings are more flexible than large concrete frame buildings.
- The Society supports the retention of the Grosvenor Hotel an unlisted building of merit. The period design is attractive and built with good quality materials. The loss of unlisted buildings of merit results in the loss of local character. An important area of the city must contain buildings of more than one era if it is not to become an anonymous, 'anywhere' townscape. The Society does not close its mind against demolition if a developer proposed a 'really good' development. The redevelopment planning brief should state that the Council's preferred option is a development that exploits the townscape potential of the polychrome Victorian Grosvenor Hotel as an placemaking important element.

Landscape proposals

The Society adopts the points that the Forum makes about these proposals to which it has nothing to add.

Relevant matters not covered by the consultation

The Society appreciates the Council's desire to begin an improvement scheme that will have a regional significance and to create a framework for further development. The Society understands the Council's difficulties promoting major changes to the traffic dominated, fractured Temple Gate townscape. Multiple 'ifs', surround the Council's efforts. How will Network Rail redevelop the Station and the land next to the Bristol and Exeter building? How can the HCA dispose of Plot 3 and part of Plot 6, to support redevelopment? Can the Council secure the use of the former Parcel Sorting Office? Where should the new multi-storey car park be built? How will TCN redevelop the former WH Smith warehouse site? Will the Council and First Bus negotiate to improve the local bus network?

The consultation is wider than changes to the road layout at Temple Gate. These are the wider matters that concern the Society.

- There is no published high level master or strategic transport plan to support the Enterprise Zone and the Station. With the confusion of taxis and buses in front of the Grade I listed station, there is no sense of arrival in an aspirational city. The consultation could have indicated an aspiration for a bus interchange off the Friary, or at the bottom of the old station ramp. From the consultation document, the Society could infer that despite Policy BCAP28 the Council has abandoned any aspiration for an interchange within the Station precinct and that Bristol cannot achieve things that are normal in other core cities.
- The consultation does not consider how the street system will cope with the burden of the growing footfall. There are predicted a daily average of 25,000 station users. 17,000 jobs are to be created in the Enterprise Zone and Arena events will see up to 12,000 arrivals/departures.
- In the absence of any published information, it is impossible to understand how the current proposals of the Council, Network Rail and HCA for Temple Meads Station and Plots 3 & 6 will form a coherent development. The Council and the Enterprise Zone Board should develop and publish high level aspirational plans for the area surrounding the Station. For instance, there is no reason why the Council should not put forward proposals for Plot 6 just because it does not own the land. The Society understand that Gehl Architects have been commissioned to do a masterplan for the Temple Quay Enterprise Zone, and we would ask why has this has not been published alongside this consultation. In the absence of any published information, the Society could infer that redevelopment will be consequential and opportunistic. Each land owner will develop independently, which could create unhappy land use conflicts, uncoordinated development, and a poor public realm. This risk is not fanciful; for example, the Council on the former Gyratory site and on Plot 6, Network Rail in the proposed at grade concourse and TCN on the former warehouse site all offer mixed café/restaurant/retail

developments Four similar use areas so close to each other, will not be viable.