

BACKWELL RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Hon Secretary Mike Veal, 36 Long-thorn, Backwell, BS48 3GY
Tel No. 01275 461187 – E-mail address: smveal@talktalk.net

Bristol City Council
Western Harbour proposals
E mail to “transport.projects@bristol.gov.uk”

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Dear Sirs

Western Harbour and Cumberland Basin Consultation

Backwell Residents' Association is a membership organisation which works to safeguard and promote the collective interests of Backwell residents in matters concerning social, economic and community life. The Association currently has a membership of over 400 paid up households.

It is acknowledged that the Cumberland basin is potentially one of the most interesting and enticing geographical features in the City of Bristol. It is also true that the current road system is visually unattractive, makes inefficient use of the surrounding land area, and requires a fresh and potentially radical review.

It is also the case that it provides one of the very few crossing points of the River Avon. It is both a vital strategic location providing the principal entrance to the city for two major trunk roads as well as essential local routes across the harbour and the city.

We believe that, in identifying three alternative approaches to addressing this situation, too much focus has been given to Bristol City concerns and local residents' requirements and preferences. The essential needs and concerns of users of this location from the south and west of the City boundary – so called “strategic users” have not been given sufficient weight.

Whilst the proposals identify the importance of seeking to increase other modes of transport - bus, bicycle and walking – this is either impossible or impractical for very many “strategic users” seeking to enter the City for work, shopping or leisure reasons, or crossing the city to routes north and east of the country. From the point of view of Backwell Residents Association this predominantly means the A370 route through Cumberland Basin to either the city centre, the A4 or on to the M32 motorway.

The M2 Metrobus route has provided an excellent service in and around the city centre, and has demonstrated one good way of avoiding the Cumberland basin. However, its route has its limitations, and is unhelpful or impractical for many essential journeys into or through the city. Cycling and walking is just not an appropriate option for the vast majority of travellers coming from somewhere like Backwell or other parts of North Somerset.

Whilst attempts to “beautify” the Cumberland Basin area, and create a more efficient use of the surrounding land are to be strongly encouraged, our principal concerns are the likely effects of any major development on traffic movement and congestion. At many peak times,

congestion is significant, causing a loss of economic activity and an off-putting reaction from tourists/visitors. The three approaches discussed in the paper all identify that they would slow traffic movement still further. The contention that other measures will tend to decrease the overall level of road traffic is not proven, and is hard to accept in the light of continuing growth of residence (and therefore car usage) in the region.

All three approaches have their merits but all three create major pinch points where they meet at crucial road junctions. The likelihood of increased and more regular congestion at these points seems inevitable.

A major study has only very recently been undertaken by the West of England in a Joint Transport Study, identifying and proposing transport initiatives throughout the region over the next 20 years. This study made scant reference to any major changes around the Cumberland Basin, which we find strange, further suggesting that these latest proposals are very much “Bristol City orientated” rather than analysing the needs of the wider region.

In an attempt to offer some support to the concept of improving traffic movement through the Cumberland basin, we suggest one further initiative. A significant percentage of the traffic through the Basin is heading to or from the A370 to the M4 (east and west) and M5 (north). The recently opened south Bristol ring road has provided a good alternative option for skirting around the south and east of Bristol.

However its attraction founders as it approaches the A4 in Brislington, where there is major congestion much of the day. If the southern part of the ring road could be connected to the ring road north of the A4 close to the city’s eastern boundary (and avoiding the Brislington pinch points), this could transform this route and make it a potentially realistic alternative to driving through the city centre (including the Cumberland Basin) for travellers seeking onward routes.

To summarise, whilst supporting the concept of upgrading and altering the Cumberland Basin area, Backwell Residents’ Association is not persuaded that the current proposals give sufficient weight to strategic car users who must use this route to access the city centre and points beyond.

For Backwell Residents’ Association

Michael Rose