

DRAFT - Bristol's High Streets/Local Centres Action Plan

Introduction

The National Planning Policy Framework highlights the importance of vibrant high streets/local centres. The Bristol Core Strategy provides the spatial and planning framework for supporting the city's 47 high streets/local centres (see pages 2 and 3). High streets/local centres are a priority within the Council's Corporate Plan. Locally, Neighbourhood Partnerships are showing an increasing interest in the economic health and the role high streets/local centres play in the community.

Our vision for high streets/local centres is to act as hubs which include office/business, education, training, leisure and cultural uses, as well as retail, providing access to jobs within local neighbourhoods. This will help reduce the need to travel and create a better environment, in line Bristol as European Green Capital in 2015.

Our approach is focused on partnership working, using resources in a smart and co-ordinated way to focus on the high streets/local centres being more diverse and responsive to change, **working together to create connected, enterprising, creative and green centres:**

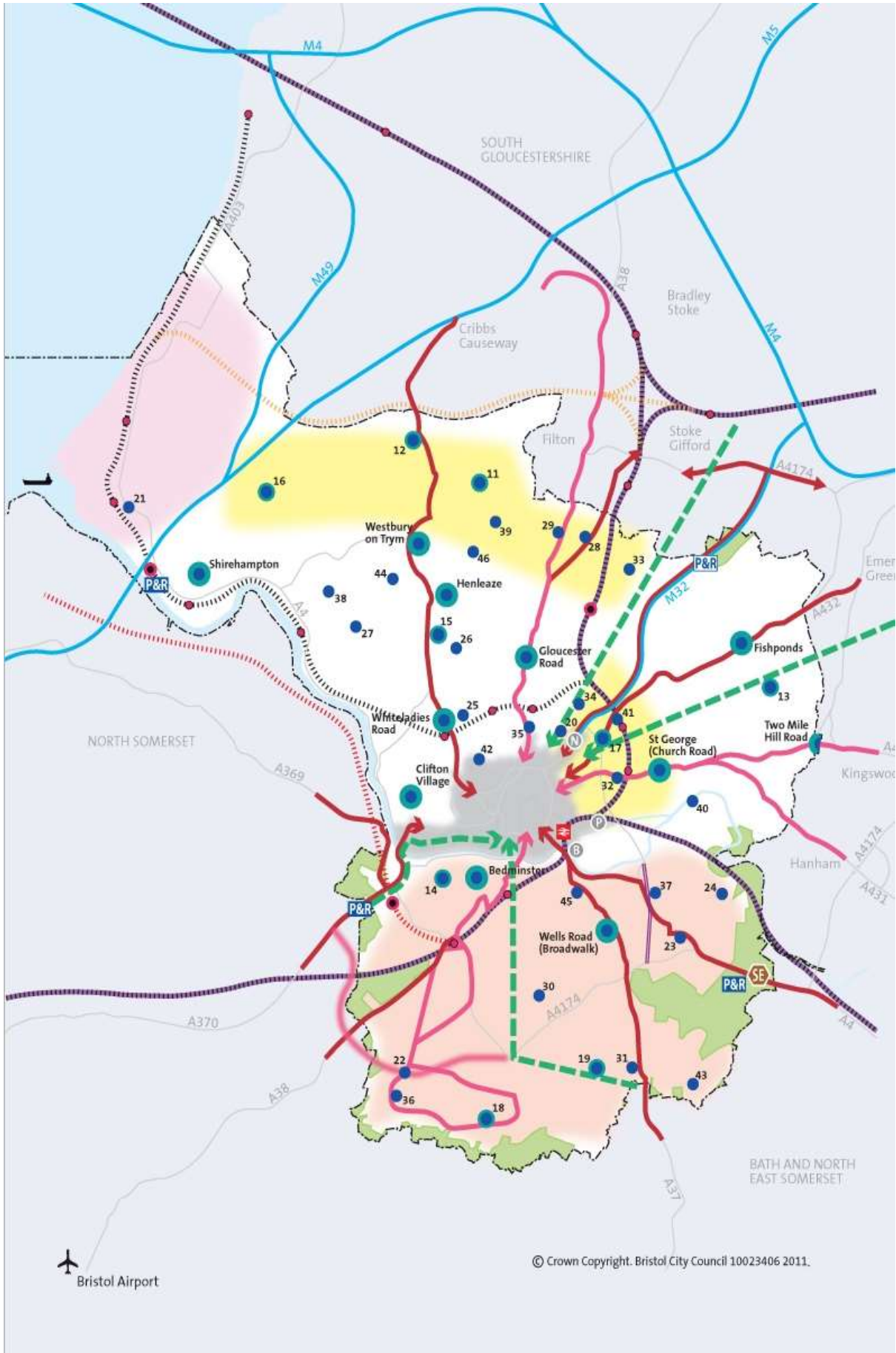
- Connected – hub of local communities; places for social exchange, accessible; getting businesses online and taking advantage of digital/mobile technology; places where people live, businesses, landlords, property agents and community groups working together.
- Enterprising – creating new enterprise and employment opportunities; training and business support; safe, accessible and attractive to provide business investment confidence.
- Creative – open to innovative ideas; opportunities for training and learning; providing cultural activities through art and events.
- Green – sustainable transport; providing access to local food and other local products/services; and green business practices.

The issues impacting high streets/local centres have been well documented over the last 4-5 years, including the Government's review of high streets carried out by Mary Portas and the Grimsey Review. The 2014 report 'Evolving High Streets: Resilience & Reinvention' by the University of Southampton and the Economic & Social Research Council notes that the recession exposed and reinforced longer-term underlying forces of change which had been reconfiguring UK high streets for some time – the progressive rise of online shopping; the long-term, cumulative impacts of out-of-town development and changes in consumer behaviour in terms of re-evaluating convenience shopping.

One measure of the economic health of Bristol's high streets/local centres is the retail property vacancy rate. Business Rates data can be used as an indication; in January 2015 the rate was 7.2% across the city. The rate for individual high streets/local centres currently ranges significantly from 0% to 23%.

Key Diagram





A High Streets/Local Centres Action Plan is in development, the latest draft is below. The Action Plan has six strategic themes:

- Supporting and co-ordinating activity
- Planning and Property
- Transport
- Business support and training
- Building business and community collaboration
- Business development and marketing

Actions carried out and supported during 2013/14 were presented to the Sustainable Development & Transport Scrutiny Commission in March 2014. Feedback on the actions was positive. The main issues raised were:

- Effective Town Teams or Business/Traders' Associations are essential to getting things done. More capacity within the council is needed to act as a catalyst for action, provide support and ongoing liaison.
- High level of business rates - national schemes in place to assist, including those which came into place from April 2014.
- A need to share best practice across the city.
- Markets are a regeneration tool. Guidance on establishing a market would be beneficial.

The Cabinet Member for Place was briefed in May 2014. Since late June 2014, the Council has employed additional capacity to support the delivery of actions by the community, businesses, support organisations and within the Council. This resource is currently committed until April 2016.

There are twenty seven actions in the draft Action Plan, a number of which are already underway.

Much of Bristol's past and current work in this field is regarded as good practice. During 2014 and 2015 Bristol has been part a national research project looking at the future of high streets up to 2020.

There has been a growth in the number of groups (Town Teams, Business/Traders' Associations) collaborating with others (e.g. Neighbourhood Partnerships) for the benefit of the high street/local centre they are located in.

- Do you have any comments on the policy context in terms of working together to create connected, enterprising, creative and green high streets/local centres?
- Are there actions your organisation is delivering that should be included in the Action Plan?
- What are your 3 top priorities?
- Do you have resources (time/funding/linked projects) that could help deliver the Action Plan?

All comments welcome. Please email to jason.thorne@bristol.gov.uk by 20 March 2015.

Draft actions by theme

Strategic themes and actions	Who (see key at bottom)	When	Notes
Supporting and co-ordinating activity			
1. Develop City Team to inform long-term coordination plan, including identification of priority high streets/local centres	BCC, DB, BW, FSB, BITC, CoBC, BI, BP, BRAVE	April 15	- Need to agree indicators.
2. Bristol Shopping Quarter management and marketing, with a city team to address future developments and investment	DB, The Galleries, Cabot Circus, BCC	Ongoing	- Supported by BCC and through Business Improvement District. - Survey of Bristol Shopping Quarter businesses underway. - Also see action 6.
3. Night Time Economy Plan	BCC, Police, DB and others	TBC Purple Flag – ongoing	- Purple Flag awarded for night time economy in the city centre.
4. Support Business Improvement Districts (BID)	BCC	Ongoing	- Four existing: Broadmead, Clifton, Bedminster, Gloucester Road. - DB are working towards setting up a new BID for the City Centre (including Old City, Park Street, Centre Promenade and parts of Harbourside).
5. Produce Street Operations Guidance	BCC	Oct 15	- Tables/chairs guidance in development.
Planning and Property			
6. Central Area Plan adopted	BCC	March 15	
7. Site Allocation and Development Management policies adopted	BCC	July 14	
8. Support development of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and their delivery	BCC	Ongoing	- NDPs including high streets/local centres include Knowle West, Lockleaze, Lawrence Weston, Old Market.
9. Carry out study of residential/workspace development opportunities	BCC/UWE	April-June 15	- Case studies will focus on Bedminster and Church Road (St George/Redfield).
10. Monitor property vacancy levels	BCC	Ongoing – once a quarter	- Receive Business Rates data on a quarterly basis.

11. Respond to business enquiries (including pop-ups)	BCC/IIBB	Ongoing	
Transport			
12. Implement Resident Parking Schemes and associated parking provision	BCC	Underway	www.bristol.gov.uk/rps
13. Better promote range of travel modes, accessibility and corporate travel schemes	BCC, BIDs, Town Teams, Business/ Traders' Associations, transport operators	TBC	
14. Promote alternative delivery methods e.g. freight consolidation, cycle deliveries	BCC and businesses	Ongoing	
Business support and training			
15. Promote training, business support, finance and rate relief opportunities	BCC	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - www.bristol.gov.uk/highstreets due to go live early March 15. - Weekly Items of Interest email. - @ShopLocalBris Twitter has 13,800 followers.
16. Promote procurement opportunities and the local supply chain	BCC, FSB, BP and others	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Meet the Buyer – June 15</p> <p>Business Guide and it's local mobile site – March 15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See @Supply_Bristol Twitter - Real Economy project operated by Bristol Pound
17. Run High Street/Local Centres business support event	BCC, DB, FSB, CoBC, CIM, GA	March 15	- Bristol's Enterprising High Streets event taking place on 12 March 15
18. Promote work experience, apprenticeships, employment and skills development opportunities	BCC, DWP, CoBC	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jobs Fairs in Feb, June and Oct. - www.ways2work.org.uk
19. Update business start-up and development toolkit	BCC, businesses, traders' groups, business support agencies, banks	Ongoing	

Building business and community collaboration			
20. Liaison with BIDs, Town Teams, Traders'/ Business Associations and Neighbourhood Partnerships (where high streets/local centres a priority) on improvements, business support, funding	BCC	Ongoing	- Weekly Items of Interest email.
21. Form citywide High Streets Forum	BCC, BIDs, Town Teams, Business/ Traders' Associations	April 15	
Business development and marketing			
22. Improve Broadband connectivity and internet access for businesses	BCC	Ongoing	- Bristol businesses can apply for up to £3,000 Connection Voucher.
23. Run Bristol Pound local currency scheme	BP, BCU	Ongoing	- BCC part of EU DigiPay4Growth project and providing support – business rate/council tax payments, staff pay, procurement. - 800 businesses trading with the currency (539 members) as at 31 Dec 14.
24. Promote and support Independents Day (July) and Small Business Saturday (December)	BI, BP, FSB, businesses, BCC, DB	Ongoing	
25. Organise and support Make Sunday Special events	BCC	May-Oct 15	
26. Update guidance on establishing a market	BCC, market operators	March 16	
27. Promote Green Capital and related initiatives e.g. Go Green, Fair Trade City, Close the Door, Bristol Good Food.	BCC, DB, FSB	Ongoing	

BITC: Business in the Community
 BCU: Bristol Credit Union
 BP: Bristol Pound
 CIM: Chartered Institute of Management
 DWP: Department for Work and Pensions
 FSB: Federation of Small Businesses
 IIBB: Invest in Bristol and Bath

BCC: Bristol City Council
 BI: Bristol Independents
 BW: Business West
 CoBC: City of Bristol College
 DB: Destination Bristol
 GA: Growth Accelerator
 UWE: University of the West of England