

OLD CITY STREETS



Early Engagement Report

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Executive Summary

Bristol City Council wants to make the Old City area more pedestrian-friendly by restricting vehicles during core shopping hours to encourage walking and cycling, reduce air pollution and make more street space available for commercial and cultural activities. This report details the early engagement stage and provides recommendations for the next steps.

The early engagement process was extensive with door knocking, business drop-ins, on-street surveys and targeted messaging. Nearly 2000 survey responses were received, with 80% of respondents reporting at least one difficulty with the area such as the streets being busy with cars and vans.

93% of respondents stated at least one benefit to the proposal such as improving the environment for walking and cycling.

Some risks and concerns have been highlighted through both analysis of the survey results and from some initial meetings with key stakeholders. These include concerns around deliveries from businesses and meeting the courts requirements for access.

It is essential to address these concerns at the next stage, ideally through collaboration and co-design.

Summary of Responses

An engagement survey was undertaken in February 2020 and 1,941 people completed the survey. Of these responses, 72 were business owners, 49 were residents in the area and 206 worked in the area. The largest group of responses were from visitors with 1,492 responses.

- 94% visitors travel to the Old City by walking, cycling or bus.
- 20% of business owners and just 9% of workers travel to the area by car or van.
- 74% of residents usually walk to/from the Old the City

Nearly 80% of respondents reported at least one difficulty. The top 3 difficulties were;

- The streets are busy with cars/vans
- Not enough cycle parking
- Damaged roads/pavements

93% of respondents expected there would be at least one benefit to the proposal. The top 3 potential benefits (all receiving 1500+ responses) were;

- A better environment for walking & cycling
- Better air quality
- Opportunities for other uses of the road space

Project Location

The area of the Old City selected for this project is defined in the below map. The selected streets have high levels of commercial activity and pedestrian visitors, and no significant through traffic. This makes it a good candidate for reclaiming road space.

Fig 1: Street map of area



Aims

Following the lead from historic city centres around the world, the aim is to make the streets more people friendly and less dominated by vehicles at peak times. The proposal is for increased **pedestrianisation, removal of parking, and public realm improvements**.

The proposed changes would provide more space for people and events and encourage greater numbers of visitors and tourists to strengthen the economic vibrancy of the area.



Project Stage

This stage of the project is about early engagement to better understand how people use the area and what improvements they want to see. This will help us create more detailed plans based on feedback at the next stage.

Historical Context

The Old City forms the historic core of the city of Bristol, and has a strong, distinctive historic character. More than 50% of the historic fabric is listed and the underlying archaeological remains include surviving elements of the medieval town walls are of national and international significance.

A mix of offices, law courts, legal chambers and small businesses reflect the historic commercial focus, but the area has lost many of these traditional day time/active uses.

The Corn Exchange is Grade I listed and built in 1741–43



Current Context

The Old City is an important visitor destination, as evidenced by increasing numbers of hotels whilst the area is experiencing a growing residential and student population.

St Nicholas Market is thriving, providing a home to 60 permanent independent businesses within the indoor market and receiving around 69,000 visits per month.

It is also the focal point around which several weekly themed outdoor markets take place. The Registry Office in the Old Council House plays an important role, holding around 1,100 weddings per year.

Fig 2: Dwellings and businesses within the proposed area

| | Residential Dwellings | Business Premises |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Broad Street | 192 | 27 |
| Clare Street | 51 | 24 |
| Corn Street | 38 | 146 |
| Small Street | 66 | 23 |
| St Nicholas Street | 55 | 45 |
| St Stephens Avenue | 23 | 1 |
| St Stephens Street | 76 | 14 |

Local Transport

The Old City has excellent transport links due to its location in the heart of the city centre.

The main city centre bus hubs (Bristol Bus Station, The Centre and Broadmead) are within a few minutes walk of the Old City. Consequently the area has the top BrisTal score for accessibility to public transport.

Recent improvements mean the area is well connected to the wider cycle network. However, there are no cycle routes through the area itself.

There are several public car parks within walking distance and taxi ranks surround the area in question, including the new 'super rank' on Colston Avenue.

Fig 3: Local bus network and stops



Fig 5: Cycle Network



Fig 4: BrisTal Public Transport Accessibility

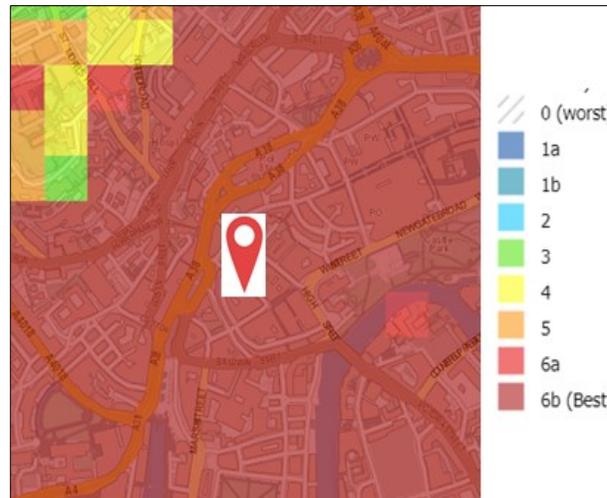


Fig 5: Public car parks and taxi ranks



Challenges

There is a need to address the growing demands on the public realm and services this presents e.g. poor waste management negatively affects the character of the area.

The Old City is unique and much loved, providing key pedestrian and cycling routes across the city centre. Vehicle movements through the area result in poor air quality and lead to additional maintenance costs. Balancing vehicle access and servicing whilst enhancing the experience and movement of pedestrians and cyclists will be key.

In 2011, around 5,000 people worked in the wider area. This has declined over the last 8 years with the loss of Lloyds Bank, HSBC and Natwest. Some of these buildings have been or are in the process of being converted into hotels. At April 2019, the area had a 10.7% retail property vacancy rate, compared to 7.5% for all Bristol high streets/local centres. The overall level of vacant commercial property units in the area is 22.2%.

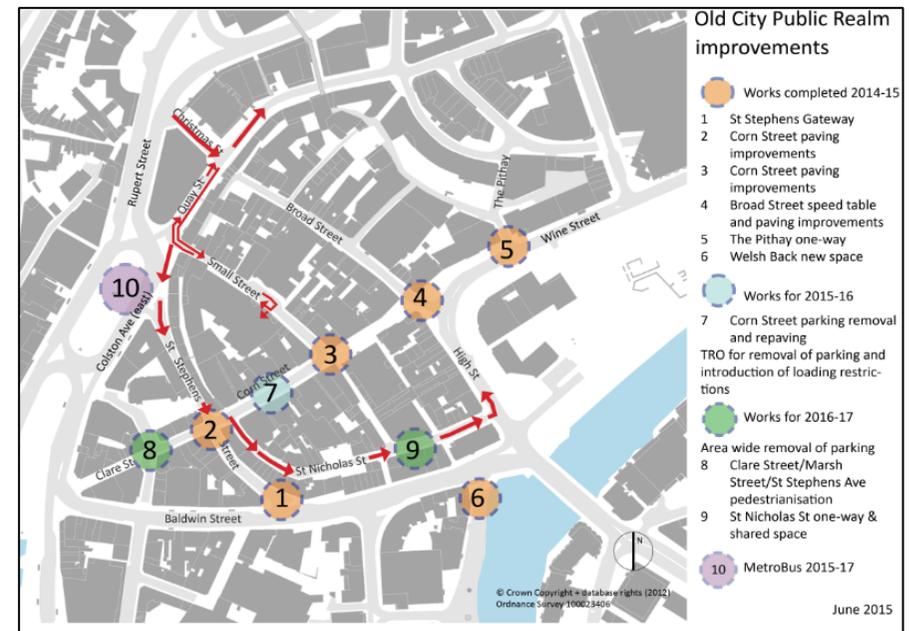
There are also many spaces that are currently underused or poorly used particularly the space on High Street, but also back streets such as Tailors Court and St John's Churchyard. Current vacant properties on High Street and associated poor quality public realm present a poor gateway and disconnect the area from Castle Park.

Recent Street Improvements

Full pedestrianisation was explored in 2012/13. Due to operational concerns and costs the plans were scaled back. The below map shows the scope of works planned in – only the 2016-17 works marked in Green did not go ahead and this was due to funding.

An additional experimental TRO was completed to allow weekend closures of Corn Street. This space is currently utilised for weekend markets.

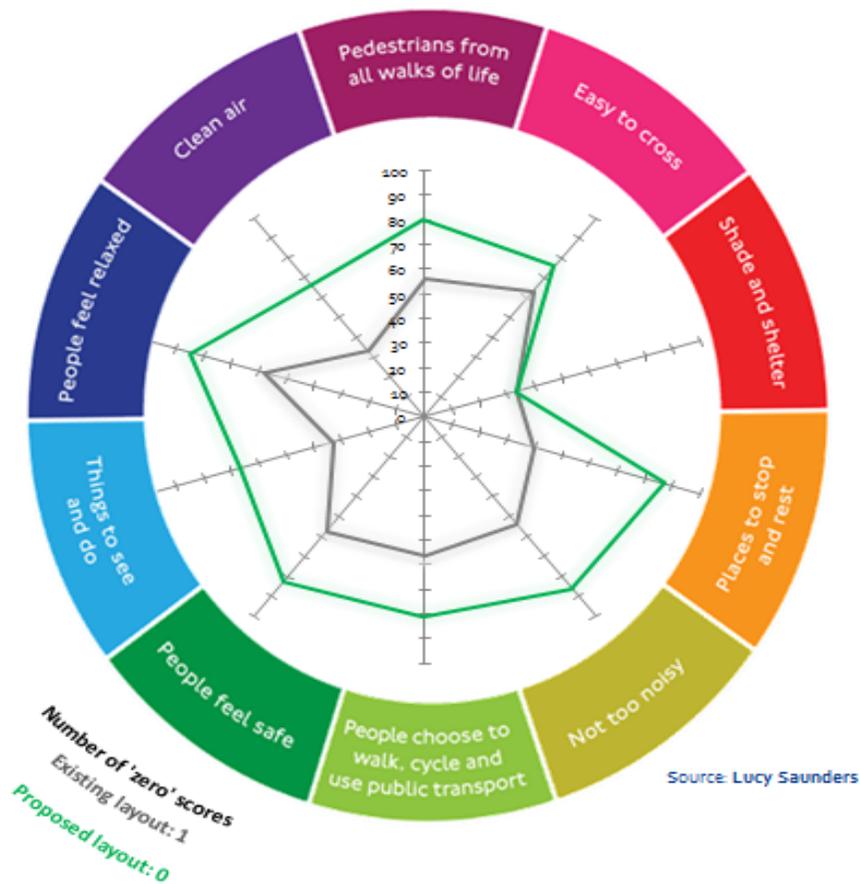
Fig 6: Recent planned improvements



Healthy Streets Assessment

The proposed layout is indicative only for assessment purposes. Assumed measures are low to medium cost only and include timed road closures, removal of parking, benches, planting and cycle parking.

Ref - <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/healthy-streets>



| | Existing layout | Proposed layout |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Pedestrians from all walks of life | 56 | 81 |
| Easy to cross | 63 | 77 |
| Shade and shelter | 33 | 33 |
| Places to stop and rest | 40 | 87 |
| Not too noisy | 53 | 87 |
| People choose to walk, cycle and use public transport | 56 | 81 |
| People feel safe | 57 | 83 |
| Things to see and do | 33 | 67 |
| People feel relaxed | 58 | 85 |
| Clean Air | 33 | 67 |
| Overall Healthy Streets Check score | 55 | 80 |
| Number of 'zero' scores | 1 | 0 |

Engagement Survey Results

Survey – March 2020

Approach – meetings with key stakeholders, phone calls to businesses followed by drop-ins, door knocking & leafleting residents, on-street surveys, social media promotion and targeted emails.

Responses – 1941 completed responses to the survey

Fig X: Type of respondent

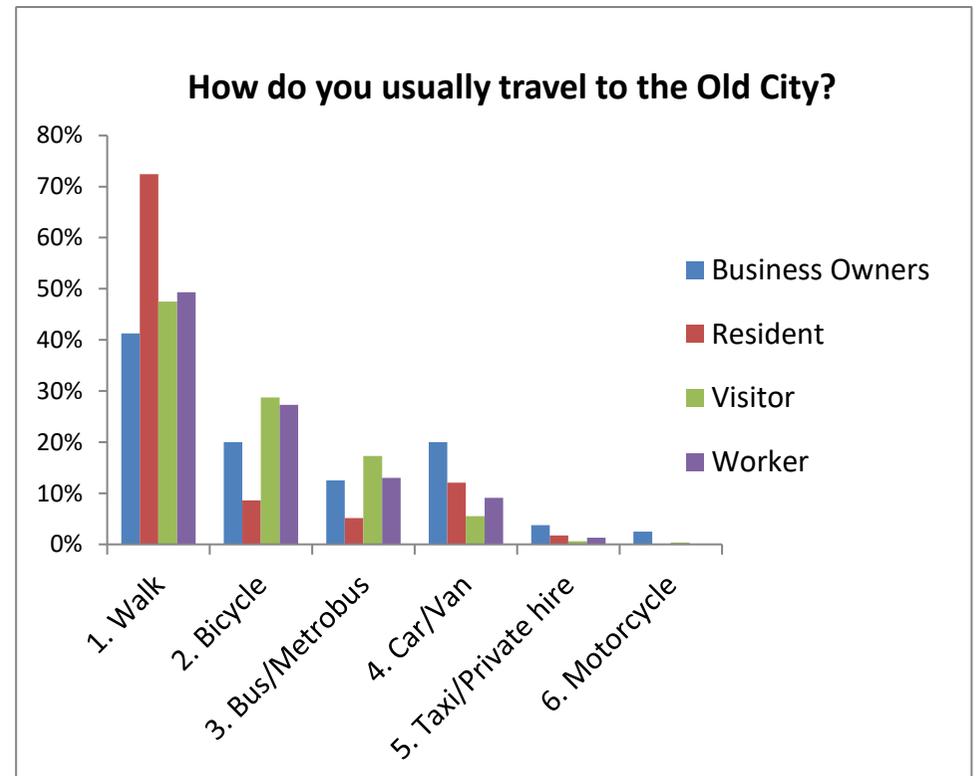
| Answer Choice | Response Percent | Response Total |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| 1 I am a business owner... | 3.7% | 72 |
| 2 I am a resident in the Old City area | 2.5% | 49 |
| 3 I work in the Old City area | 10.6% | 206 |
| 4 I am a visitor to the Old City area | 76.9% | 1492 |
| 5 ...On behalf of voluntary group | 0.9% | 18 |
| 6 I am a taxi / private hire driver | 0.7% | 13 |
| 7 I am a councillor | 0.2% | 3 |
| 8 I am an MP | 0.0% | 0 |
| 9 Other (please specify): | 14.0% | 272 |
| answered | | 1941 |

Many of the responses in the 'Other' category described themselves as Bristol residents.

How people travel to the area

- 94% Visitors travel to the Old City by walking, cycling or bus.
- 20% of business owners and just 9% of workers travel to the area by car or van.
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Fig 7: Potential benefits of pedestrianisation for you

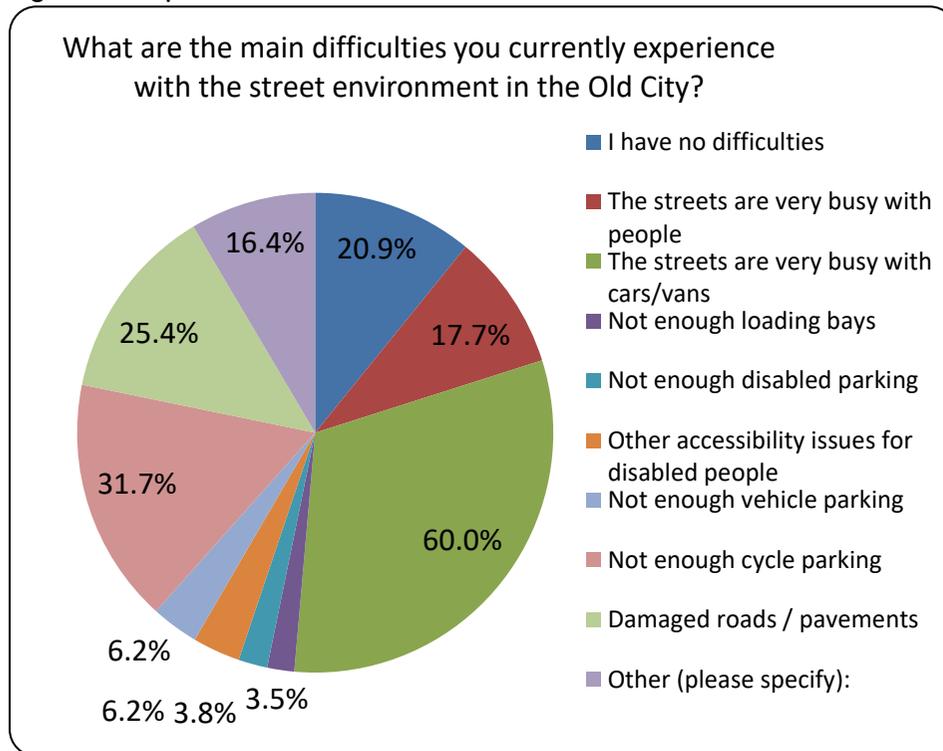


Current Difficulties

Just over 20% of respondents reported no difficulties in the area, while **nearly 80% of respondents** reported at least one difficulty. The top 3 difficulties were;

- The streets are busy with cars/vans
- Not enough cycle parking
- Damaged roads/pavements

Fig 8: Main reported difficulties in the area

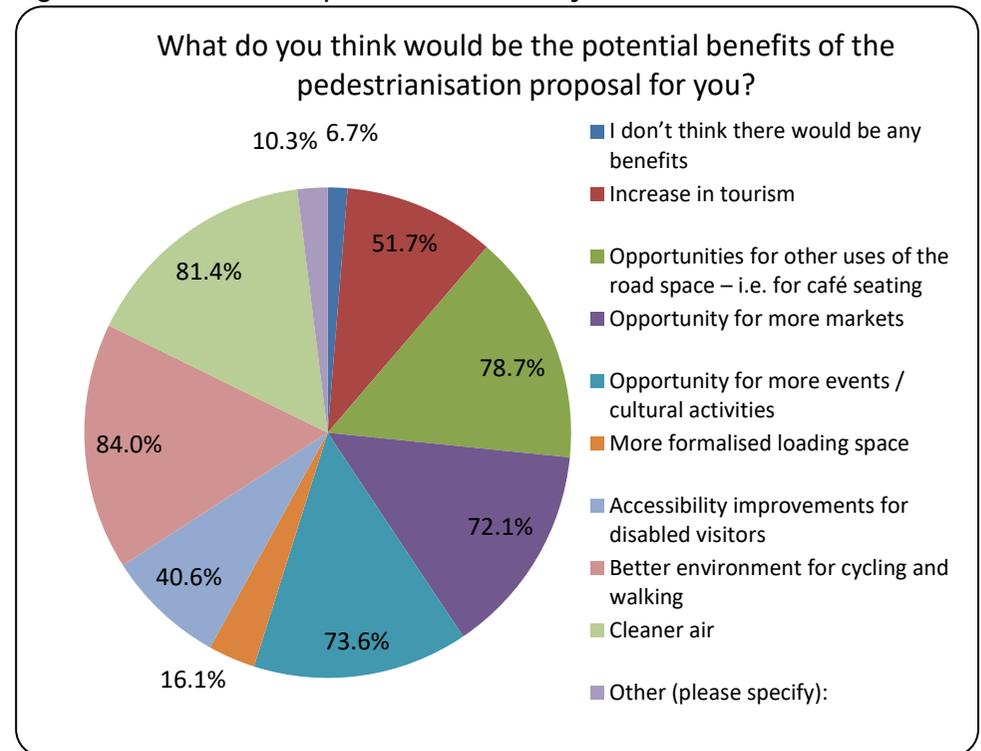


Potential Benefits

Just 6.7% (131) respondents did not think there would be any benefits to the proposal. The top 3 potential benefits (all receiving 1500+ responses) were;

- A better environment for walking & cycling
- Better air quality
- Opportunities for other uses of the road space

Fig 9: Potential benefits of pedestrianisation for you



Appendix 1 - Images



From top left going clockwise;

1. At peak times people are pushed into the road due to lack of space. In this instance a wheelchair user resorts to the road due in part to the lack of dropped kerbs and poor condition of the footpaths.
2. Footpaths blocked by signage and seating. No nearby dropped kerb.
3. People informally using the road as a footpath
4. Example of ongoing ad-hoc deliveries and van parking
5. There is a general lack of cycle parking
6. Broad Street in particular suffers with goods vehicle parking and hazardous reversing.