

Church Road Appendix



Area overview

Church Road is home to one of Bristol's most diverse and fast-changing communities, with a selection of hospitality units, international delis, major supermarkets and various retail shops as well as a Post Office located within a newsagent. While there is no longer a high street bank presence, there are a number of free-to-use ATMs. Located on the A420, it is also a major route into Bristol City Centre and there are several bus routes running along it, with Lawrence Hill Train Station serving local routes, nearby. Other community facilities include a Sikh Gurdwara, a Hindu Temple, a purpose-built community centre, a library and St George's Park. The Park is also a central focus for Redfest, a free community and arts festival based in the Redfield and St George areas that has been running since 2008.

Church Road serves St George and Redfield, suburbs of Bristol located approximately 4km east of the city centre. The centre comprises a mix of purpose-built and converted retail properties situated on both sides of the road, interspersed in places with residential accommodation. The centre can be said to be anchored by an Aldi and Tesco, which are roughly centrally located (in terms of the main concentration of footfall).



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Engagement

We engaged with businesses and members of the public first in Autumn 2021 and again in January / February 2022 to gain further insight into issues and preferences raised during the initial engagements. This was done through a mix of face-to-face on-street engagement, on-line focus groups, on-line surveys with a paper alternative, and attendance at the Easton and Lawrence Hill Neighbourhood Forum meeting.

The engagement showed that the main improvements wanted are more greenery, litter and recycling facilities and more events, while improved parking and traffic calming were also mentioned.

The biggest issues mentioned are traffic, litter and the general appearance of the street, and a concern about anti-social behaviour was also common, including graffiti & tagging, aggressive begging and on-street drinking. There is a general concern about the number of empty shops and how these can be brought back into use, and also for improving the general appearance of the street, including the shop fronts.

There is a strong sense of community in the area and a real desire to celebrate the diversity of the population. While residents recognise the importance of the road as a major route in and out of Bristol, they were eager to mitigate the effects of this by improving air quality, encouraging sustainable transport options and discouraging poor parking practices.

The most popular options for improvements were:

- Culture & events, many people called for a return of Redfest and its possible extension to more venues in order to broaden its reach within the local population. There is universal recognition of the value of St George's Park and a desire to see this used to hold a range of community events.
- Occasional road closures to allow community events to take place were frequently raised, especially an annual street party/parade, possibly at Christmas, with part of the street closed for a few hours, as a way to get residents out on to the street and mixing positively.
- More greenery, particularly trees and sustainable planting. There was also interest in hanging baskets from lampposts and some people expressed a desire to see living/green walls. Greenery is seen as valuable both for improving the general appearance of the street and as a means of countering the adverse effects of the heavy traffic.
- Improved litter/recycling facilities, the main concern is the amount of general litter and the need for more bins, particularly at bus stops and near fast food outlets. Fly tipping was also raised, with car parks and side streets the main locations mentioned.

On-Street Creative Engagement (Play Disrupt)

There is much positivity and pride in Church Road, and a community which is passionate about positive development and wellbeing. The most popular type of intervention on Church Road was community led arts activities. There are many arts and community organisations within the area who would be keen to lead, and there are also spaces.

There is also a strong interest in pop up shops to trial activities, with a feeling that ultimately more community, arts and youth centres were needed. A series of arts activities and events led by existing arts organisations (workshops, lantern parade etc) using a pop-up format in empty shops could be explored. More use of existing spaces could be effective.

Church Road is a busy arterial route into the city, and this pollution and traffic is seen as a challenge within the area. Creative interventions to reduce this or to remind drivers that this is a residential area could be beneficial. Interventions which encourage traffic to slow down, possibly green walls or graphic transfers could be utilised. Making use of 1st/2nd floors for greenery would fit with mural style already evident on Church Road and be an innovative solution.

Accessible family events- fairs, markets with games/activities were desired. The BS5 market by St George Park Skate Park enjoyed high footfall in the past but has stopped operating. St George's Park could be a location for market activities. The Wetherspoons/Cinema development was often spoken about, with a strong desire that this be developed for community use, as a cinema and serving additional purposes.

Through the target workshop with Barton Hill Activity Club, it was clear inclusion needs to be considered in terms of alcohol, transport and cost, and community involvement in future plans.