

## Stapleton Road Appendix

### Area overview

Stapleton Road is both a busy thoroughfare and a local shopping street serving a very diverse community. It is divided into three relatively distinct sections by the busy A4320 Easton Way and the railway line linking Temple Meads to the North and these different sections have differing issues and needs. The street has several bus routes and access to Stapleton Road train station serving local train services.

Most of the shops are independents, primarily food-related, and these are interspersed with housing and community venues including the Easton Leisure Centre, the Wild Goose drop-in centre and faith venues. There are two post offices, one in the southern section and the other right at the northern end. Within a few minutes' walk, there are two schools and two health centres. Old Market and the city centre are only a few minutes' walk from the southern end. The area south of Easton Way has a lot of greenery, but this is notably absent from the more northern sections. There needs to be more improvement to the street scene and overall appearance of the area and an attempt to combat the negative stigma of the area. There is an appetite from various local people to host and create cultural events to benefit the area and make it a destination high street.

There is an increasing concern with anti-social activity, particularly on-street drinking. Despite this concern and the feeling of neglect, there is a real pride in the diversity of the area and a sense of culture, creativity and strong community spirit, together with a feeling that it has huge potential.



## Engagement

We engaged with businesses and members of the public in two phases: first in late 2021 to identify issues and priorities and then again at the start of 2022 to gather more in-depth ideas and suggestions relating to these. This was done through a combination of face-to-face engagement, on-line workshops and on-line surveys with a paper alternative, as well as attending the Easton and Lawrence Hill Neighbourhood Forum.

The majority of businesses (52%) are reasonably confident about the future despite a decline in footfall over the last 12 months. There is, however, general dissatisfaction with the street's appearance and the amount of traffic, and a desire for a more varied retail offer. The biggest concerns among both businesses and residents were parking provision and enforcement, (complaints about constant on-pavement parking, disregard of double yellow lines and road obstructions).

Local people visit the street frequently, to shop, to access transport and community facilities, but visits tend to be short, mostly less than 30 minutes. Two thirds of people come on foot, with car being the second most popular option at 15%. Both businesses and members of the public expressed a desire for other shops and services on the high street. Suggestions varied from fishmongers to cafes and included a small supermarket, coffee shop, and a drop-in service for those seeking mental health or homelessness support, but the common theme was a more diverse offering of shops and services.

Nearly half of all businesses and a majority of residents commented that parking provision and parking enforcement need to be improved and a wide range of issues were mentioned, including constant on-pavement parking, disregard of double yellow lines and road obstructions, and the lack of short-stay parking for shoppers. In addition to parking issues, people also noted that the high street attracts anti-social behaviour, in particular street drinkers.

The area around the railway bridge is seen as a potential focal point for this section of the street and was a popular suggestion as a venue for a regular market. There is also interest in developing the area under the M32 at the end of Stapleton Road, next to the area used as a skate park, to make this more attractive and accessible.

The most popular options for improvements were:

- Culture & events, the area has a very diverse population including a high number of very creative people, which could provide a base for community events to bring people together. It is unlikely that any one event will meet the wishes of the entire population, but a range of different activities could encourage people to come out and mix.
- An annual street-party-type event with a temporary road closure that is not tied to any one community could also provide a source of cohesion, although this may need to be separate for the two parts divided by Easton Way.
- There was some interest in a public art installation.
- More greenery, while the southern part of the high street has a lot of greenery, the outer sections have very little and there is a general feeling that more is needed there, particularly trees and permanent/sustainable planting.
- Improved litter/recycling facilities, litter and fly tipping were a major concern, both by shoppers/residents and by businesses. In some places concerns were raised about how this encouraged vermin.

## **On-Street Creative Engagement (Play Disrupt)**

Stapleton Road falls into several different areas with different feels and identities. It is clear there is a great deal of community energy and intervention around Stapleton Road, and with it, some friction and disagreement between some factions.

Due to length and urban layout, Stapleton Road is physically divided and would benefit from interventions to join up pockets of activity. There are also several large, prominent empty units which would benefit from being animated.

At the western end of the street, issues around bins and antisocial behaviour were cited, however there is a thriving population and many busy businesses. At the eastern end, more themes of traffic, rats and polarisation were identified while around the far end, by the skate park several residents talked of the need for safe family spaces and dwelling spaces. The skate park has brought much energy to the area but also brings noise and some mistrust there is also a lack of ethnic inclusion cited. Positive interventions and their impact were cited- e.g., the improvements to Fox Park and the alley behind the Black Swan have made them feel safer.

There is a strong desire for multicultural events in different formats. There is a clear passion for sharing of cultures, learning from each other and inclusion. There is a clear identity around multiculturalism that can be drawn on and celebrated. Food, faith and music were key. Celebratory events were key to work against the notion that it is run down and unloved.

Many mentioned that there is a need for but few places to dwell. This also connects to a perception that seating can attract street drinkers and antisocial behaviour. Pockets to dwell could help to join up the areas and bring activity. Exploring other ways to demark spaces as family friendly such as painting, types of ground/painting ground. There were several suggestions about recycled bench seating with connected bins highlighting issues of rubbish and climate.

The area under the M32 is a relatively new area to be animated by the DIY skatepark and flea and might provide an opportunity to create a gateway to Stapleton Road as a destination, connected to the vast parking at Eastville IKEA. This may also help to alleviate traffic.

It could be a possibility to explore art projects to connect businesses and build networks, a block colour shop shutter painting scheme has been initiated already by a business owner. This could help connect areas, stakeholders and boost identity. Painting the shutters block colours also works against tagging as the shopkeeper can keep the paint and touch up where needed after vandalism. Animating shops with arts activities was another suggestion.

There is real passion and energy here and a huge creative population that could be harnessed to creatively activate spaces, breathe new life into the street and connect areas through a range of representative and inclusive activity to cater to many ages and ideas.