



Church Road – high street engagement and plans

Area overview

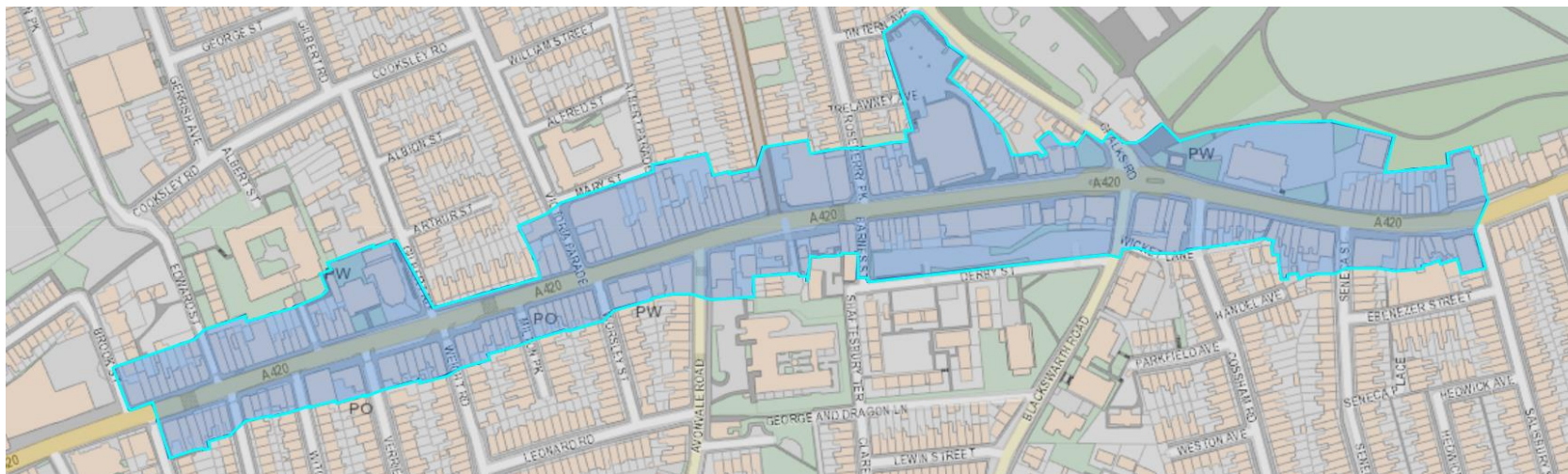
Church Road is home to one of Bristol's most diverse and fast-changing communities.

Located on the A420, it is a major route into Bristol City Centre with several bus routes running along it. Lawrence Hill Train Station also serves local routes nearby. Church Road links St George and Redfield, suburbs of Bristol, located approximately 4km east of the city centre.

Church Road has a selection of hospitality units, international delis, major supermarkets and various retail shops as well as a Post Office located within a newsagent. There are a number of free-to-use ATMs, however there are no high street banks.

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 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.

The centre includes a mix of purpose-built and converted retail properties on both sides of the road with a mix of residential housing in some places. The centre is well served with 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 and 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 businesses are generally satisfied with the current situation of the street and feel confident about the future although many (64%) said that they would like to see a wider range of shops and services available. The main improvements they would like to see are more greenery, litter and recycling facilities and more events, while improved parking and traffic calming were also mentioned.

People most often come to Church Road more than once a week, spending less than an hour there, reflecting its primary role as a shopping street. The overwhelming majority (87%) of those spoken to come on foot with the next largest group (6%) coming by bike. The biggest issues mentioned are traffic, litter and the general appearance of the street. Anti-social behaviour was also mentioned by some respondents. The idea of adding greenery or floral displays met with a lot of interest, as did improving litter and recycling facilities.

There is also a lot of interest in more events and activities especially in the evenings, including an increasing lobby to restore the former cinema in St George's Hall (former Wetherspoons).

The second round of engagement asked people to expand on their responses, giving more detail on the main issues raised and suggestions as to how these could be resolved.

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. A concern about anti-social behaviour was also common, including graffiti and tagging, aggressive begging and on-street drinking.

Businesses and members of the community alike would like to see more shops and services on the high street, suggestions included:

- Butchers
- Greengrocers
- Bookshop
- Fishmongers
- Independent clothes, gifts, accessories
- Bars and restaurants, particularly active in evenings
- More activities and things to do including cinema and theatre

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 across both businesses and community were

- 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 and 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.
- Culture and 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.

High street plans

Issues and Opportunities	Proposed Action
Need to support businesses and organisations	Business Development Officers to provide support, information and signposting Promote the area and its offer using a variety of channels, including www.wheresittobristol.com and @shoplocalbris social channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
Attracting new and desirable shops and services	Monitor property vacancies to identify opportunities and promote the vacant property grant scheme to potential occupiers
Desire for more greenery, particularly trees	Identify appropriate greenery and specific locations for placement and initial designs produced. Link to Liveable Neighbourhoods project
	Work with local residents and organisations to develop a group for maintenance of greenery/plants
	Install new greenery/plants
Install better cycle parking provision	Identify locations and possibility of integrating with greening measures and initial designs produced, link to Liveable Neighbourhoods project
Concern about levels of litter and fly tipping in area	Identify possible locations for additional/new litter and recycling facilities initial designs produced. Link to Liveable Neighbourhoods project
	Focused public education campaign around litter/recycling/dog fouling, working with Bristol Waste and enforcement teams
Desire for more community events/projects to bring people together and increase footfall to local traders	Commission/grant fund organisations to deliver events/projects, including festivals/parade, community events/fund days and music
Interest in regular mixed market	Explore options for delivery of market
Concern about anti-social behaviour (street-drinking, tagging, aggressive begging etc)	Work with stakeholders on education and enforcement measures