

Statement of Councillor Tim Rippington

I have been one of the Councillors for the Brislington East ward since January 2020, and a resident of Brislington for nearly 13 years. I took over from the previous councillor Mike Langley who sadly died in 2019. Mike was a staunch opponent of the development of Brislington Meadows and spoke on several occasions at Council in opposition to the idea that the land be built upon.

I would like to focus on the impact that the proposed development will have on the local community.

In an appearance on the Laura Kuenssberg TV programme on 30th October 2022, the current Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities stated:

"What we critically need to do is ensure that we have local communities consenting to development. That means homes need to be more beautiful, we need the infrastructure alongside them but it critically also means we need to ensure the environment is protected as well."

I would suggest that these proposals fail on every single point mentioned above.

1. Consultations

- 1.1. The inclusion of Brislington Meadows in the 2012 Local Plan was done against overwhelming opposition from the local community – during the consultation on the plan, 310 people did not agree with the principle of developing the site, whilst only 1 was in support. By contrast, the next highest response to a site in the consultation which was taken forward was 26 responses, of which 21 were in favour. If local people's views had been taken into account, this site would never have been included in the previous local plan.
- 1.2. This current planning application has received over 700 responses, almost every one of them in opposition to developing this land. This is a hugely significant number and I would argue that it must be taken

into account when considering this application.

2. Changing circumstances

- 2.1. Since 2012, many things have changed. We have begun to recognise as a society the significant harm that we are doing to the natural world around us. Bristol City Council has declared both a Climate and an Ecological Emergency and has reversed its position on the development of this important piece of green space as a result – the new Local Plan now out for consultation removes it altogether as a site appropriate for development. Bristol City Council's Full Council has passed a resolution calling on greenfield land not to be developed, and the Mayor has also made it clear that he no longer believes the land should be developed because of the ecological value it adds to the city.

3. Impact on the Community

- 3.1. Brislington East is an area of the city which suffers from a lack of community facilities. In the most recent Quality of Life survey:
- those satisfied with activities for children/young people 17.1% (Ave 34.3 %)
 - those satisfied with leisure facilities/services 18.6% (Ave 37.6 %)
 - those satisfied with the range and quality of entertainment and hospitality venues and events at night 52.8% (average 64.0%)
 - % who shop in their local shopping street at least once a week 34.0% (Ave 46.1%)
- 3.2. The access road to the new development is Broomhill Road, an area which is in the 2nd centile of most deprived areas in the country.
- 3.3. All of this goes towards enforcing the view of many local people that the area has been "left behind" and their needs are not listened to. Ignoring strong public consultations and views about this new development will only go to strengthen these feelings in the local community.
- ## **4. Environment**
- 4.1. One of the reasons why there has been so much local opposition to the development of the Meadows is because it is a well-used green space.

This became even more evident during the pandemic, when people were searching out new open spaces in which to take their recreation. This public use goes back many generations, with the previous land-owner making no attempt to restrict access to the site.

- 4.2. Brislington is one of the green lungs of the City of Bristol – many other areas are not lucky enough to have many or indeed any green spaces. As part of its Ecological Emergency declaration, Bristol City Council has set an ambition that at least 30% of land in Bristol be managed for the benefit of wildlife by 2030 (One City Ecological Emergency Strategy). In many other areas it is not possible to significantly increase the space allocated to the environment, so taking away an area of this size and diversity will have a highly detrimental impact on this goal and, as a result, our environment.
- 4.3. Bio-diversity net-gain is a concept still in its infancy, but it is almost impossible to envisage a situation where digging up and concreting over large areas of Brislington Meadows can be compensated for elsewhere in the city. The destruction happens only once, and it is irreparable.

5. Local Transport connections

- 5.1. As shown by the BCC 2022 Quality of Life Survey, Brislington East is the 9th highest ward in the city (out of 34) for car ownership, despite having several areas of high deprivation. This is a direct result of the poor public transport links in the area, and the length of time it can take to reach the City Centre by public transport. Furthermore, most transport links in Bristol are radial, putting other areas of the city even further away in terms of time and number of buses that need to be used to get there.
- 5.2. This is not a situation which is likely to be resolved any time soon, and so local residents rightly have concerns about a large new housing estate bringing with it a significant increase in the number of cars in the area. At a time where Bristol is looking to invest millions of pounds in new “Liveable Neighbourhoods”, the outline plans submitted by

Homes England take no account of the principles of a Liveable Neighbourhood. The plans are extremely car-centric, as they know that most people moving into this estate will need to drive a car in order to access shops and businesses.

- 5.3. Broomhill Road is already a major rat-run for cars trying to cross Brislington without using the A4 corridor. Adding a large number of vehicles using this road for access will only add to the issues already faced by local residents. There have been a significant number of road accidents on Broomhill Road in 2022, and safety is a real concern for local people here. Again, this is an issue which was raised during the 2012 consultation by a large number of respondents.
- 5.4. The idea that most people living on this new estate will use public transport or active travel is illusory in my opinion. Travel by public transport has been declining since the pandemic and bus services are in crisis – the services shown in the Homes England documentation are now out of date, with frequencies cut and some services discontinued (the 36 bus no longer serves The Rock for example). There can be no doubt that this development will bring many more cars, and the area will suffer as a result.

6. Concluding remarks

- 6.1. The people of Brislington East have been serially disregarded in the past when it comes to the proposals to build on Brislington Meadows. No other area in the city has had anything like the volume of opposition to its development. People feel their views have been totally overlooked because they are in a “forgotten” part of the city.
- 6.2. Bristol City Council now recognise the valuable part that the Meadows play in the ecology of the city and have recommended that the site is not built of for environmental reasons.
- 6.3. The outline plans put forward by Homes England have done nothing to re-assure local people that the poor outcomes they fear from this development will not be realised should it be allowed to proceed.

Tim Rippington
Councillor, Brislington East Ward
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