

# Bristol Local Plan Examination in Public – Policies DS1 and DS3

## A new large Park in the St Phillips Marsh Framework Area.

### Statement by Bristol Parks Forum Representation No 495

### Contribution to discussion on IN4 Appendix 2 - MIQ 4.14 b)

### 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025



Aerial photograph showing location of existing green spaces within and near St Philip's Marsh Framework Area; and St Phillips Marsh Nursery School, Albert Crescent, near the centre of the area.



## 1 Summary of Position

### Is the requirement of enhance Sparke Evans Park justified?

1 The Forum does not oppose the current approach of the Plan and St Phillips Marsh Framework to:

- improve existing parks and green spaces within the area and nearby,
- provide a new linear park along the New Cut, and
- provide green spaces within the development

### Will the enhancement be effective?

2 The change to the Bristol Local Plan to include additional text on “a new large multifunctional park” (Policy DS1) and “new large multifunctional park which is publicly owned and publicly accessible” (Policy DS3) matches the requirements for sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework (September 2023).

3 The Bristol Parks Forum believes an additional new large park will be required to provide benefits for people and wildlife within the St Phillips Marsh area and beyond. This is due to the projected increase in the numbers of new homes by 2039 compared to the area and extent of parks or green spaces likely to be available.

4 The Forum is not proposing that the policies define a size or location of the new park so that the Council and other parties can explore options.

## 2 Background

The Bristol Parks Forum is an umbrella organisation for community park groups and organisations in the city with an interest in their local parks and green spaces.

The Forum is currently the only ‘community voice’ that is dedicated to all of Bristol’s green spaces. We work with Bristol City Council to ensure our parks & green spaces are well looked after and to help local groups enhance their green spaces.

This statement focusses on parks and green spaces that will be formally designated as such.

The definition of the area covered by Central Bristol is given in the Bristol Local Plan (CSD001 3.1.2)

The definition of the area of St Phillips and Temple Quarter Regeneration Areas are as shown in the Temple Quarter Development Framework (EXA009 Pages 8/9)

It should be noted that the City Council’s Parks and Green Space Strategy (REL008 Page 16) states that there is an aspiration for 2.9ha of new open space in Central Bristol. It adds that opportunities are most likely to be created in parts of the City Centre, Temple Quarter, St Phillips Marsh and Frome Gateway.

The change to DS1 is to support the change to DS3.

### 3 Existing large parks and green spaces in the St Phillips Marsh Framework area and nearby



View of Sparke Evans Park from St Phillips Causeway copyright L Wyatt

The table shows the area, and facilities/characteristics of the existing large parks and green spaces:

Name of space	Estimated size (ha)	Facilities/ Characteristics	Source used
Sparke Evans Park	2.71ha	A mixture of green space, trees, paths, disused band stand, areas suitable for informal exploration	<a href="http://www.calcmaps.com">www.calcmaps.com</a> Site visit
The Dings	0.54ha	Basketball Court, Playgrounds, Safe 'Ouse, Community Garden. Formal gardens	<a href="http://www.calcmaps.com">www.calcmaps.com</a> <a href="http://www.thedings.co.uk">www.thedings.co.uk</a>
The Netham	15.86ha	Pavillion, football pitches, cricket pitch, multi – use games area, bowls club children's play area, green space, trees, paths, areas suitable for informal exploration.	<a href="http://www.calcmaps.com">www.calcmaps.com</a> <a href="https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/muse-ums-parks-sports-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/parks-with-play-equipment/park-finder/park?id=46">https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/muse-ums-parks-sports-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/parks-with-play-equipment/park-finder/park?id=46</a> Site visit

Only Sparke Evans Park is located within the Framework Area.

#### 4 Benefits of parks and green infrastructure

The benefits of parks to people and wildlife are well documented, including for green infrastructure generally, in the proposed Local Plan (CSD001) at 9.1.9.

We would draw the Examination's attention to these additional examples:

- National Heritage Lottery Fund report "Space to Thrive" 2019 (<https://tinyurl.com/h5tk9c8b> Page 16), provides an overview of benefits to people and communities. It notes the following health and well-being benefits:
  - positive outcomes for health, mortality and morbidity,
  - increased physical activity and exercise,
  - better wellbeing and stress relief, including through increased social and civic activity, and presence of ecological richness,
  - increased life satisfaction; and
  - improved cognitive functions
- ONS statistic bulletin "Urban natural capital accounts 2023", (<https://tinyurl.com/ycy5dynd> Page 21) where the annual value from house prices attributable to living near to nature (green and blue infrastructure) was £2.8 billion in 2020. This figure is based on the value of free trips to spaces within 500 metres.

#### 5 The benefits of large parks and green infrastructure

Natural England's "Green Infrastructure principles", Feb 2023, (<https://tinyurl.com/58v6z999> Page 9) points out that there are benefits to people of expansive green spaces in terms of removing everyday noise; and that "Green Infrastructure implementation should not always be about intensifying use and maximising activity"

The Lawton Report 2010 (<https://tinyurl.com/39k2tpc4> Page 3), promotes the benefits for wildlife of more frequent, bigger, better quality and joined up areas and networks.

In large parks, families will find more space to be together to relax and play games; individuals will find areas where they can find less stressful environments; and wildlife will have spaces to live, in ways that would not be possible when they are in closer proximity to people.

A larger area would also provide more opportunities for larger areas of natural flood storage, community food production, carbon capture and climate cooling.



## **6 Publicly accessible and publicly owned parks and green spaces**

Accessibility to parks and green spaces is an issue, not just in terms of the ability of people to physically use areas, but also in the way that landowners can, if they wish, restrict use of the areas created. To set a principle for public access now would save discussions closer to delivery.

The Forum believes that the ownership of new parks and green spaces should be placed with local authorities (even if their management is by third parties). This would ensure that decisions on the areas are taken in the public domain by democratically accountable bodies. These authorities also have existing relationships with other organisations responsible for planning, public health, community development, and environmental issues which means they are best placed to maximise the inter-related benefits of the areas created.

## **7 Requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework September 2023**

The National Planning Policy Framework asks for benefits to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across economic, social and environmental objectives. Additionally, plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development (Section 2, Paragraph 11).

Bristol Parks Forum's proposed changes would contribute to sustainable development and would mean that there is sufficient capacity for the provision of measures to manage flood risks, conserving and enhancing the natural environment, increase green infrastructure and address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The changes will also ensure that there is a positive contribution to the health and well-being of communities, so that they are healthy, accessible, inclusive and safe; and improving the overall quality of the area for the long term.

## **8 Why St Phillips?**

St Phillips is now the only area in Central Bristol where there is the possibility of providing a large park. All the other areas have detailed Frameworks or Masterplans which would not allow any such provision.

## **9 New homes in the in the St Phillips Marsh area and design considerations**

The Council's SHLAA (EVEH01 Page 19) states that the St Phillips Marsh Framework area will be the location for around 4,627 homes (including an allowance for student accommodation) by 2039.

Additionally, it is highly likely that even more people will need the benefits of parks and green spaces in the area from the following sources:

- Temple Quarter Framework Area (SHLAA EVE H01 Page 17) - 3,674 homes by 2039)

- Areas just outside of the Regeneration Area – eg: (Totterdown Basin/incomplete Boatyard development) between 40 to up to 400 homes (Local Plan Development Allocations CSD002 BSA1101 and Representation 425).

The Forum is very concerned that the public realm will be dominated by “hard surfaces” such as those seen in recent planning applications in Bristol, such as Temple Island which is proposing to provide 520 homes and other development. (Application 25\_10013\_P Public Realm Plan, <https://tinyurl.com/53mv4u9s> ). These areas have some value, but do not provide the range of benefits to people and wildlife that large parks can.

### **10 New parks and green spaces in Local Plans and Frameworks**

New parks have featured in other local authority Local Plan policies.

Southwark Local Plan (2022) (<https://tinyurl.com/3ufbv6fp> Page 96) in AV13 Old Kent Road Area Vision, states the following:

“Growth opportunities in Old Kent Road: Para 2.

The Area Action Plan will identify the opportunities for growth and benefits for local communities including delivering 20,000 new homes, over 10,000 jobs, 9ha of new parks, civic spaces, green routes and raingardens, two new tube stations and two district town centres for shopping”

In the St Phillips Marsh Development Framework (EXA009 pages 275/287), Sparke Evans Park is potentially due to be revitalised to provide the following for use by the new neighbourhood, and potential new primary school:

- Informal play
- Formal sports provision
- Quieter spaces
- Enhanced planting and seating
- Children’s play areas
- Event space
- Mixed use games area
- Café
- Lighting

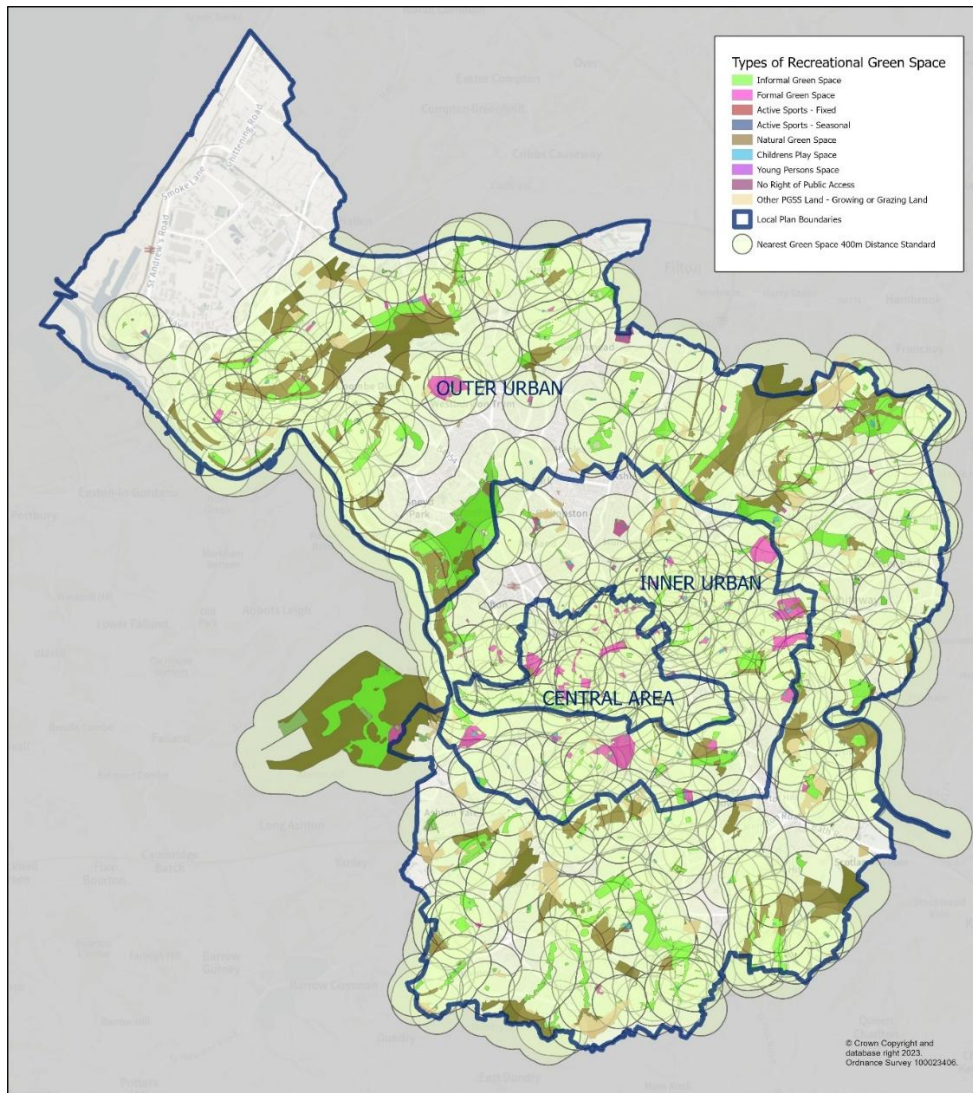
The new linear park along the New Cut could potentially provide alongside flood defences (Pages 272/287):

- Habitat enhancement
- Landscaped public realm
- Public walks and cycle paths for commuters; and leisure riders, walkers or runners within the neighbourhood.

The Framework suggests under Scenario 3 (7,000 dwellings) (Page 295), that further open space may be required in addition to that included in the Framework.

**11 Standards are useful, but abilities matter as well.**

The Council, within its Parks and Green Spaces strategy (REL008), provides a number of GIS based plans to illustrate the current availability of type of space and distance. The example below relates to recreational green space.



There is a risk that this approach does not address the ability of potential users to access those different types of spaces in a way which is appropriate for them, especially if they are less able to travel.

In a test of how long it would take to reach the nearest entrance of a park/green space from the St Phillips Marsh Nursery, Albert Crescent, using a mother with a toddler in a pram (see picture at end of this document) walking at a steady pace, the following times one way were recorded:

To Sparke Evans Park (entrance by Crossing)	7 minutes
To The Netham via Feeder Road (National Cycleway Network post next to Marsh Lane entrance)	16 minutes

The weather at the time was heavy to torrential rain.

When trying to access the play facilities at The Netham, a further 15 minutes was taken to get to the relevant entrance using Marsh Lane, rather than try and access the facilities across the green space itself due to the presence of a steep slope and ground conditions. However, this was not long enough to actually reach the play facilities.

How easy will it be for others who may be less able to travel, to reach the currently proposed improved larger green spaces; and to gain the health and well-being benefits the areas are intending to provide?

## 12 Conclusions

While recognising the physical constraints of the area in terms of the existing infrastructure and the range of ownerships likely to be involved, it has to be remembered that this is the last opportunity for Bristol to achieve a new large multi-functional park in Central Bristol in the current strategic plan cycle.

When the next local plan cycle comes around this opportunity is unlikely to be available as development proposals will be fixed and change underway.

The change requested has a lack of detail on size and location so it fits the tone of the policies. It is also designed to facilitate a positive consideration of providing a new large multi-functional park which is publicly owned and publicly accessible through the appropriate channels in the future, without being overly restrictive on the ability of the Council and others to achieve it.

Leaving it to a masterplanning process could mean that the positive benefits of a new large park will not be delivered. Inclusion in the Local Plan in our view reduces this risk significantly.

For future generations, such as the toddler in the picture below, we believe this change will make all the difference between living in a liveable, sustainable community; and living in a poor environment with fewer health and well-being benefits.

**Acknowledgements:** Bristol City Council Parks Department for use of the picture of GIS map from the Parks Strategy. Mum X and toddler Z for walking the routes, and agreeing to the use of their images.

Word Count: 2154 All websites accessed 01 Feb 2025



Mum X and Toddler Z who took part in the walking of the routes mentioned in the Statement.