Ashley Down Station Engagement Summary and response

Between 21st September and 1st November 2020 Bristol City Council in partnership with West of England Combined Authority (WECA) conducted public engagement to introduce and gain feedback on the most recent proposed designs for access to the upcoming Ashley Down Rail Station whilst informing on known aspects of the design of the station itself. This is part of the MetroWest Phase 2 project to deliver new and more frequent rail services across the region.

# How we engaged

As this engagement process was taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic there were certain restrictions that applied which meant our face to face engagement had to be limited. The team had planned to carry out door-knocking to local residents where people would have been given an outline of the project and given a paper copy of the survey or asked if they would like to fill it via an iPad. However, the team adapted the approach below to ensure the information and survey reached as wide an audience as possible, the team did the following:

* Individual responses were received via the online survey. To ensure the survey reached as wide an audience as possible paper copies were delivered along with a free post envelope to 3000 local properties;
* 5800 postcards with the web link to the survey were posted to local properties in the wider area;
* 2 vinyl banners displayed on Concorde Way and 32 posters were put up on community noticeboards, education centres, local shops and businesses, and on street to raise awareness of the survey;
* Information about the survey was displayed at local bus stops on Ashley Down Road, Muller Road and Shaldon Rd for the duration of the survey using the Real Time Information digital screens;
* Local stakeholders and community groups were also asked to help raise awareness of the survey and it was promoted via social media platforms, email and WhatsApp message groups;
* Social media posts were sent from Travelwest accounts and amplified by re-posts from WECA, MetroWest and Bristol City Council accounts;
* emails were sent to 143 stakeholders;
* 5 walkabout tours of the site were given to guide people through the proposed design.
* Due to COVID-19 restrictions preventing face to face engagement such as doorstep conversations, the team offered virtual chats and phone appointments to anyone who didn’t want to submit a written response but wanted to ask questions and provide feedback.

We received 457 responses to the survey from the stakeholders, businesses and the general public, and 35 enquiries with comments and suggestions by emails and phone. Of those who responded to the survey:

* 83% are residents in Bristol
* 79% live locally to the new rail station
* 83% said ‘Yes’ they did intend on using Ashley Down rail station when it opens
* 46% are pedestrians and 39% are cyclists who use Concorde Way
* 26% are car drivers using a route near the new rail station

Main concerns raised that respondents to the community survey anticipated experiencing on their journey to the new railway station (number of responses, followed by % of total responses to survey):

1. There is not enough parking – 141 responses, 30.9%
2. The street is busy with traffic – 116 responses, 25.4%
3. No adequate secure cycle parking to leave a bicycle overnight – 115 responses, 25.2%

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| **Main concerns raised by respondents of the survey** | **Number of responses** | **Percentage of total respondents to survey** | **Our response** |
| There is not enough parking | 141 | 31% | The proposed rail station is intended to be a community rail station to serve people who live locally within an easy distance to walk or cycle to the station. The proposed new station is ideally situated on the well-used walking and cycling route of Concorde Way, providing real opportunity for many people to travel there by sustainable modes.  Cycle parking that is sheltered, secure and covered by CCTV will be provided within the station to encourage people to cycle.  We appreciate that not everyone is able to walk and cycle and we are proposing 2 accessible bays on-street for Blue Badge holders with an Equality Act compliant access ramp from Station Road.  There are bus stops within a 5-minute walk on Ashley Down Road (Sefton Park Rd stop for service 70) and Muller Rd (Shaldon Road stop for services 17 and 506 and Muller Rd Lidl stop for services 17, 70 & 506). |
| The street is busy with traffic | 116 | 25% | As the station is located on a well-used walking and cycle route it provides a real opportunity for many people to travel there by sustainable modes. |
| No adequate secure cycle parking to leave a bicycle overnight | 115 | 25% | Sheltered and secure cycle parking will be provided within the station, covered by CCTV, with space for 20 cycles. The current access layout proposals do not include additional cycle parking outside of the station as the site is constrained and this area will not be covered by CCTV. |

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| **Most important key elements of the design to respondents of the survey** | **Number of responses** | **Percentage of total respondents to survey** | **Our response** |
| Reducing conflict between people walking and cycling | 428 | 94% | Careful consideration was given throughout the design process to incorporate measures that would mitigate conflict between all users of the paths.  The proposal will widen Concorde Way and provide an indicative zebra crossing to make it easier to cross the path into the proposed new station entrance. ‘SLOW’ markings are present at either side of this crossing point to encourage people on bicycles to slow down, warning them of the station entrance ahead. In addition, the proposal will improve visibility at the junction adjacent to the tunnel through to Station Lane, helping to reduce conflict.  To slow cyclists that may have gathered momentum travelling down Station Road toward the station, bollards have been used and road markings indicate where cyclists should join the accessible path using the ‘Hop on’ dropped kerb facility. ‘Slow’ markings with a buff coloured high friction surface are spaced out intermittently on paths.  New ‘shared use’ signs will be installed on the entrance to the path on Station Road.  While a segregated path is preferable to shared-use, in this case there is not enough space to allow for a continuous segregated path due to constraints of the site, causing confusion for all users.  To avoid conflict between people exiting the station and users of the path a built out area with tactile pavement and protected by bollards acts as a buffer before stepping on to Concorde Way. |
| Elements to encourage local wildlife | 427 | 94% | The plans for the public realm and lighting have been designed to be as sensitive as possible to the existing environment.  Additional replacement trees have been added to the most recent landscape proposal following the engagement process.  The loss of some trees is required in order to improve accessibility to Concorde Way and to the station; it has always been difficult for those with accessibility issues to traverse the existing gradients.  The majority of replacement trees, will be on the site, with the remainder planted in nearby locations. We will work to maximise the opportunities to preserve and enhance biodiversity. |
| Better lighting | 419 | 92% | A careful balance has been struck between increasing lighting (with benefits for personal safety and better visibility) and the impact on wildlife.  The area will be better lit than at present, with particular improvements at the entrance to the station, the junction between Concorde Way and the Station Road path, and adjacent to the underpass.  Improvements to the underpass have been considered as part of the proposals, with lighting being directed so that it increases illumination within the underpass. Network Rail will further consider the potential for lighting within the underpass itself. |
| More visibility where routes intersect i.e. to reduce blind corners at junction of Concorde way and existing subway | 415 | 91% | On Concorde Way where the path intersects with paths from the subway/Station Road/Muller Road visibility would be improved in all directions at that point. It is expected there would be better visibility exiting the subway with Concorde Way on the right. |

Car parking as a key design element ranks the lowest importance in this context, with only 56% saying it was important in a range of ‘Extremely’ to ‘Somewhat important’, compared to 44% said it was ‘Not at all important’

Of the 291 comments that were made by respondents to the survey about the design for access to Ashley Down Station (number of responses, followed by % of total respondents to the survey):

1. Keep path by steps (Station Road to underpass) – 24 responses, (5.2% of total responses to survey)
2. Sheltered and secure cycle parking – 21 responses, (4.6% of total responses to survey)

Further comments and suggestions made relating to Ashley Down Station:

1. Requesting Residents Parking scheme to mitigate perceived influx of those parking to use the new railway station – 72 responses (16% of total responses to survey)
2. Car park for Station (for example locating it on Station Lane) – 21 responses, (4.6% of total responses to survey)

Main themes of comments and suggestions about the access design by respondents to the survey (number of responses, followed by % of those who left a comment or suggestion):

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| **Most frequently raised comments and suggestions made by respondents of the survey** | **Number of responses** | **% of total respondents to survey** | **Our response** |
| Requesting and supporting a Residents Parking scheme to mitigate perceived in flux of those parking to use the new railway station | 72 | 16% | This is not within the scope of the scheme. The position of Bristol City Council is that members of the public should contact their local councillors so that it can be considered in consultation with the local community.  Find your local councillor: [ModernGov - bristol.gov.uk](https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/mgFindMember.aspx) |
| Keep path by steps (Station Road to underpass) | 24 | 5% | The levels differences around the Ashley Down station site are significant and it is necessary to provide a longer path to achieve the required 1 in 20 gradient.  Keeping the path in this location would result in a similar situation to existing – a path that is not compliant with accessibility legislation and which disadvantages people with difficulty walking and those using buggies. |
| Sheltered and secure cycle parking | 21 | 5% | Sheltered and secure cycle parking will be provided within the station, covered by CCTV, with space for 20 cycles. The current access layout proposals do not include additional cycle parking outside of the station as this area will not be covered by CCTV. |
| Car park for Station (for example locating it on Station Lane) | 21 | 5% | This is a community rail station intended for people who live locally within easy distance to walk or cycle to the station which is ideally situated on the well-used walking and cycling route of Concorde Way, providing real opportunity for many people to travel there by sustainable modes. There are bus stops within a 5 minute walk on Ashley Down Road (Sefton Park Rd stop for service 70) and Muller Rd (Shaldon Road stop for services 17 and 506 and Muller Rd Lidl stop for services 17, 70 & 506).  We appreciate that not everyone is able to walk and cycle and we are proposing 2 accessible bays on-street for Blue Badge holders with access ramp from Station Road. |

Other suggestions received with responses to survey:

* A double handrail should be provided on the 1:20 path created from Station Road: This path is 3m wide. Whilst handrail on both sides of the path would not benefit users as both handrails cannot be reached at the same time, handrail with two rails at differing heights will be installed
* CCTV at the station and/or on Concorde Way was needed for personal safety: CCTV is proposed as part of the station design, covering the entirety of both platforms.
* Cycle priority on Station Road given more cycle through-traffic than motor vehicles: This is not within the scope of the scheme, but something for Bristol City Council to consider as part of their wider cycle proposals.
* Muller Road toucan crossing improvements and Muller Road segregated cycle path: This is not within the scope of the scheme, but is being considered as part of Bristol City Council’s Muller Road improvements scheme
* Rail and bus services synchronised and tickets integrated: This is not within the scope of the scheme. However, harmonisation of ticketing is an aspiration of the Joint Local Transport Plan, supported by all West of England local authorities.

Taking into consideration comments gathered from the engagement exercise the design was further refined and has been formally approved to be sent to Bristol City Council’s Planning Team as a Prior Approval submission by Network Rail. No major changes were requested with suggestions made having been already explored during the design process.

The changes made to the design are as follows:

* Handrail on eastern side of accessible path is continuous in vicinity of steps and alongside blue badge holder parking bays
* Handrail with two rails at differing heights will be installed on the 1:20 path.
* The other path from the direction of Station Lane to the station entrance is to be reassessed to determine if installation of handrail, either single or double height handrail, will be appropriate.
* Extra bollard at accessible parking
* Junction protection – double yellow lines on corners and at the crossing point on Station Road
* Additional replacement trees have been added to the most recent landscape proposal following the engagement process.