



# The Birmingham Civic Society

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## **BIRMINGHAM BIG CITY PLAN**

The Birmingham Civic Society Review of Work in Progress

January 2009

**President: The Lord Mayor of Birmingham**

Vice Presidents: The Bishop of Birmingham, Sir Frederick Crawford DL, Lord Jones of Birmingham, The Rt Hon the Lord Rooker, Bruce Tanner DL

Limited Company registered in England and Wales No: 6426178 Registered Charity No: 1123806 Website:  
[www.birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk)



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4 February 2009

Dear Philip

## **BIG City Plan Work in Progress – Public Consultation**

The Planning Committee of The Birmingham Civic Society carried out a review of the 'Big City Plan Work in Progress' report under the Public Consultation process during December 2008 and January 2009. The following is our submission on behalf of the Civic Society.

We have examined the report in detail and are responding to the following sections:

- Overall strategy.
- Connectivity.
- The city core.
- Southside.
- Highgate.
- Westside.
- Ladywood.
- Jewellery Quarter.
- Gun Quarter.
- Eastside.
- Digbeth.

The Planning Committee comprises Mark Balkham RIBA, Ross Bellamy FRSA, Rob Blyth, Freddie Gick, Marcus Hawley MRICS, Paul Lister RIBA (chairman), Glyn Pitchford FRICS, Adele Pulisciano, and Peter Troy RIBA. The responses have been drafted by the various members of the committee and hence the style of each section may differ. We hope that this does not affect the clarity of the issues raised. If you have any queries about this response or require any further clarification on the matters raised please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Paul K Lister  
Chairman of the Birmingham Civic Society Planning Committee

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## **Overall strategy**

The initiative to prepare a long term strategic plan for the development of the city is an ambitious one, but one that is well worth taking. Wide consultation is appropriate, but care needs to be taken to ensure that the plan does not become diluted by attempting to satisfy the aspirations of the whole population.

Events will, of course, overtake the plan and while the major thrusts may be adopted and implemented there will be significant elements that may not be realised. This does not mean that the plan should not be comprehensive and contain some detail.

The current stage of development of the plan, however, appears to contain too much detail and to have defined too closely a number of distinct quarters. While some broad distinctions may need to be made between very different areas of the city, it would seem appropriate to take a more strategic approach and not attempt to make such fine differentiations at such an early planning stage.

An important issue that needs to be taken into account is the question of for whom the plan is being created. A long-term strategic plan will take at least 20 years to implement, by which time the population is projected to grow by 100,000. Taking the evidence of population shifts over the last 10 years, it is very likely that the white British population will have declined significantly and that the ethnic minorities will have increased substantially. The balance of the ethnic mix will have become very different resulting in potentially very different aspirations in terms of what the city should look and feel like.

Turning to the objectives of the plan, which include the expression 'a global city with a local heart' and the intention to be among the 20 most liveable cities, it must be assumed that the ultimate objective is that Birmingham should become one of the best known and highly regarded cities in the world. This is perhaps a much more challenging objective than is expressed in the Plan documentation so far. This implies at least two substantial requirements - that the city be clearly distinctive and that its development be of the highest quality.

The features that currently distinguish Birmingham are essentially intangible - the heritage of its past as the cradle of the industrial revolution, the openness with which new people and ideas are welcomed and the entrepreneurship of its citizens. The city is not distinctive as a physical entity. True the city centre has improved in the last 30 years - but it is not differentiated from numerous other cities of similar size, nor are the new buildings and other developments of world class quality. Brindley Place is much admired, as is the ICC, but neither stands up to scrutiny as a leading development internationally. Whatever we may think, our standards have been allowed to be tainted by sometimes being prepared to accept the mediocre when only the best should have been demanded. Budgets have taken precedence over style and quality.

To be a truly global city there needs to be an ethos, a physical environment and a lifestyle that people the world over can recognise and admire as being clearly characteristic of Birmingham. Amsterdam, New York, Barcelona, Bath, London and Paris are all instantly recognised from photographic and literary images as distinctive cities, each with its own style and magnetism.

Birmingham needs to decide how it will distinguish itself visually, culturally and economically. Simply aping all other cities and proclaiming that Birmingham has

theatres, concert halls and sports arenas sends the message that the city has the basic facilities to enable it to be called a city - but nothing more.

The approach that will enable Birmingham to make a real global impact will require much more dramatic action than has been evident in the past. Selecting ten global themes and ten local ideas is potentially to dilute the overall strategy and to result in a tick-box approach to satisfying a set of 20 specifications while losing track of the wider objective. These 20 specifications are perfectly reasonable, but should not become the drivers of either the planning process or of its implementation.

The critical point that appears to be missing from the Plan documentation so far is what will be the central distinguishing aspect of the city that will make it great.

If Birmingham is to be distinctive because of its physical environment, it may be necessary to be ruthless in removing many of the buildings we have come to regard as our industrial heritage and replacing them with very high quality imaginatively designed new developments - not built with the intention of replacing them only thirty years later. Birmingham will not gain international significance by retaining and temporarily refurbishing a collection of run-down Victorian workshops. Nor will it capture the huge opportunity presented by the Paradise Circus site if it allows anything other than a world-class development to be commissioned in place of the present Central Library. A development on that site similar to that at Brindley Place would be utter folly. Relocating manufacturing businesses from the edges of the city centre to out of town industrial parks and demolishing the almost derelict nineteenth century workshops would clear the way for exciting high quality developments, open up new transport opportunities and create new parks and other leisure facilities, both publicly and privately funded.

Distinctiveness may also be achieved by becoming a destination for tourists or business people. By developing certain existing features, such as the city's canals, and supplementing them to create a highly attractive tourist destination supported by considerably improved hospitality offerings the city could become the major destination for overseas visitors to the UK.

Similarly by investing in business-related infrastructure, easing access and developing modern digital technology based support services, putting real investment into the Science city concept and ensuring the availability of appropriate properties and technical support from the Universities, the city could become a magnet for high technology, media and professional service companies.

The point being made is not that one or all of these possibilities should be accepted, but rather that a central thrust should be adopted that will create in Birmingham a distinctive city capable of worldwide recognition - but only if the highest quality standards are applied in the execution of the plan. Whichever distinctive model is chosen the only way to make it succeed is to make at the beginning and honour throughout the process a commitment to not compromise on quality. The history of budget trimming and acceptance of the mediocre must end and be replaced by a new focus on excellence in creativity, planning and delivery.

Adopting a clearly differentiated approach will succeed if it is wholeheartedly supported by a willingness to take difficult funding and investment decisions. Whatever approach is taken, the implication must be that some aspects of development will have to receive preferential treatment and others will be at least discouraged. Achieving a consensus among those in charge of the public purse and

potential investors will require considerable strength of leadership and a long term shared commitment to the approach.

By avoiding the opportunity to decide on a distinctive approach to development, the Big City Plan will itself become a mediocre instrument designed to suit everyone but achieving yet another level of blandness that fails completely to make a mark internationally.

Finally, it is recognised that, however imaginative and ambitious the plan may be, and whatever commitment the local authority and others may demonstrate, its ultimate deliverability will depend to a great extent on prevailing market conditions over the next two decades.

## **Connectivity**

### **Introduction:**

The Birmingham Civic Society believes that the questions raised by the Big City Plan Working Progress might best be addressed once the bigger strategic picture relating to CONNECTIVITY is agreed and can be put in place – particularly the issue of an integrated transport policy, how this might work, what modes of transport would be included and by when. Only when this is in place can we sensibly address the issues implied in the questions raised. For the record, however, the Society offers below its detailed views on this single issue of CONNECTIVITY:

### **Question CON 1**

*How should we manage the anticipated growth in people movement, both “natural” growth and growth from new development, bearing in mind the objective of promoting non-car modes and reducing carbon emissions? How can future demands for delivery and service vehicle access to the city centre best be managed? What technological and design innovations could help facilitate deliveries to all types of premises?*

### **Answer Con 1**

Aim to reduce commuting by car drivers by provision of “Park & Ride” facilities at the edge of the City on all main radial routes. The key to success will be an attractive pricing/incentive structure together with an efficient means of bringing the commuters to the city centre by a) dedicated shuttle buses travelling directly (non stop ) into the city centre via the use of enforced bus lanes and b) connections with an integrated Metro system. Within the city centre Identify better bus routes/pickup and set down point. Allowing pedestrianisation of more streets and the introduction of a zero emission electric wheeled “Road Train” to travel around the city centre between principal destinations for example, Millennium Point, Custard Factory, Markets, Victoria Square Brindleyplace and Five Ways. Use this road train as a USP for Birmingham using local innovation and design. Use a “Bump and Go” service to ensure sufficient availability and make ticketing easy. Introduce an “Oyster” card/carnet system.

### **Question CON 2**

*How can the A38 corridor within the city centre be reconfigured to reduce its negative impact, whilst still retaining an important traffic carrying function?*

### **Answer Con 2**

Within the City Centre in particular Great Charles Street through traffic should be contained within a tunnel thereby allowing boulevarding of the street and allowing a surface crossing at Church Street to Ludgate Hill. This could also give the opportunity of another vehicular access/egress point from the city centre as the existing exits to Snow Hill, Newhall Street and Paradise Circus can often suffer from gridlock. Outside the city centre on the north side consider introducing public art along the A38(M) but so as not to distract drivers. On the south introduce Metro into the central reservation of the dual carriageway.

### **Question CON 3**

*Should the traffic-carrying capacity of the Ring Road be increased by selective junction improvements (e.g. grade separation) where congestion proves to be a particular problem?*

### **Answer Con 3**

Five Ways island should be reconfigured to change the tunnel from Hagley Road to Broad Street to Hagley Road to the Middleway. This will enable less traffic in Broad Street which will have a metro running along it and will still allow drivers to access the city centre via Bristol Road or Pershore Road. We believe a car-free Broad Street is preferable.

There is an opportunity at Camp Hill to carry Ring Road traffic under the island

### **Question CON 4**

*How much private car parking should be provided for new developments in the city centre? Should we require any or all new development to be 'car free' (i.e. no parking provided) unless otherwise justified for non-commuter purposes?*

### **Answer Con 4**

There is no necessity for car parking provision within new developments within the Ring Road providing adequate public car parking and public transport is available.

### **Question CON 5**

*How, where and in what numbers should publicly available off street parking be provided? What should be the balance between long stay (commuter) and short stay (shopper) spaces? Should the controlled parking zone be extended?*

### **Answer Con 5**

Market research should be undertaken because some existing car parks are underused because they appear to be in the wrong place or are not open at appropriate times. Research will reveal pricing policy and hours of use.

### **Question CON 6**

*What should the Big City Plan say about providing for taxis and for motorcycles and scooters?*

### **Answer Con 6**

The numbers and quality of taxis need to be better controlled. In particular the quality of private hire vehicles needs to be improved. There is already adequate provision of both taxis and private hire vehicles. Motor cycles and scooters appear to already have adequate on street parking facilities in the city Centre though adequate research is recommended to ensure that they are in the most ideal locations or whether they could be better sited.

### **Question CON 7**

*How can rail play a stronger role in providing for commuter and other travel needs into the city centre, up to and beyond 2025, and what infrastructure projects will be needed to support this? Can and should the Big City Plan provide appropriate protection for a future High Speed Train route to the city centre and related disembarkation facilities?*

### **Answer Con 7**

Rail connectivity between New St and Birmingham International Station and the airport is already in place and is currently able to provide high speed access to and from the city centre. Why waste effort in unnecessary improvements? There is still a need for a Metro line along the A45 route to provide a service for inhabitants on the east side of the city. High speed trains could be routed to Birmingham International Station rather than New Street or Moor Street. Where necessary use CPO powers.

### **Question CON 8**

*What steps need to be taken to ensure that the New Street Gateway project radically improves access to the station from all points, especially Southside? How can we best integrate Snow Hill, Moor and Jewellery Quarter stations with their surroundings (and a relocated Bordesley station, which would need to be moved as a result of the proposed rail chords)?*

### **Answer Con 8**

There needs to be a co-ordinated strategy between network Rail, Rail Operators, Centro and BCC. There could be a good opportunity here for use of a "Road Train" The surface route from New Street to Moor Street is not that user friendly particularly in inclement weather. Consider a pedestrian tunnel (Works OK in London between Marylebone and Baker Street over a similar distance).

### **Question CON 9**

*Where should the city centre metro routes go and how should they operate? What are the alternatives to Metro in different locations? Should an underground option be re-looked at?*

### **Answer Con 9**

Provide Metro on all principal arterial routes – A45, A38, A34 and A41. Underground is preferable through the city centre but may be precluded on cost grounds. The metro needs to go out to the edge of the City e.g. Quinton and connect to "Park and Ride" facilities.

### **Question CON 10**

*How should we go about developing a genuinely 21st century bus system, in terms of quality, reliability, safety, comfort, image and fuel efficiency/environmental performance? What is the future role of the bus in the city centre relative to other public transport options? What streets should buses use, where should they stop in the city centre and where should they interchange with other modes of transport?*

### **Answer Con 10**

Re-regulate buses! Upgrade existing services. Ticket machines at bus stops and ability to buy "Oyster cards/Carnet. Undertake a strategy of "Quick Wins" at congestion hot spots.

### **Question CON 11**

*How can we go about making the city centre the UK's most walkable centre? What streets and spaces should be the top priority walking routes? Where does attention need to be targeted to improve walkability, such as barrier removal and crossing improvement? What other kinds of improvement might be carried out?*

### **Answer Con 11**

Identify main connecting routes within the city centre and provide a high standard of lighting and CCTV. Remove barriers to walking i.e. superfluous street furniture signage and clutter. Improve street guide maps at obvious corners.

### **Question CON 12**

*How can cycling to, from and within the city centre be encouraged and where should investment be targeted? How can the hostility of the highways environment to cyclists be removed?*

### **Answer Con 12**

Need a workable cycle lanes strategy.

### **Question CON 13**

*How can Birmingham provide a digital infrastructure to enable new and existing businesses to have a competitive advantage, globally and locally? Can a 'Virtual Birmingham' improve people's understanding and appreciation of the city centre, increase opportunities for the visitor economy and attract global business interests to trade with or invest in the city centre and enable the city to achieve its 'Connected City' aspirations both locally and internationally?*

*How should Birmingham ensure that the development of new households within the city centre have a digital infrastructure that supports family living across all generations and supports the flexible lifestyle requirements of 21st century living?*

### **Answer Con 13**

Consider opportunities raised in a brand new "City Region" initiative as yet unannounced on the subject "Next Generation Broadband for the City Region. Ensure fibre optic cables installed when development or major street works are carried out.

Consider a Birmingham "Intranet" to which businesses and individuals subscribe/register which would be a public/private collaboration giving all ownership and which could develop like for example Wikipedia.

## **The city core**

### **Response:**

The proposals to the Core seek to provide an area that visitors will identify as being “Birmingham”. The Big City Plan seems to deal with this by providing proposals in respect of retail, office, landmark buildings and connectivity. The proposals also consider whether Birmingham should be dealt with on a regional or global scale.

There is no strategy for implementation however it would probably be too early to deal with this. It would be useful to consider implementation strategy once the plan is in final form.

Dealing with each of the points in clause 6.2 in turn we note that:

6.2.1 The plan states that visitors to Birmingham presently identify the Core as having a lack of connections. We most certainly agree with this.

At a local level the Big City Plan assumes that the Core of the City is a place where local people want to live. Although we broadly agree with this statement, care should be taken in relation to making such assumptions and their application as this may inadvertently underpin a policy for excessive residential development within the Core, in which certain areas such as the canals and ‘Southside’ seem to be suffering from an imbalance in terms of residential stock in relation to other uses.

6.2.2 The City Plan refers to the Golden Triangle of New Street, Bull Ring and High Street. This neglects to include Corporation Street and the frontage there which surely links into the other streets mentioned. If Corporation Street is ignored at this early stage, this could lead to a lack of future development / redevelopment in this area. This paragraph also refers to New Street station as a key arrival point, which is true however the Plan does not seem to envisage any other key arrival points by other forms of transport.

6.2.7 This paragraph identifies that the traditional core is too small for a City the size of Birmingham and refers to the City Core Block - the Queensway. However the Plan emphasises physical blocks and fails to deal with mental blocks eg a lack of retail or office offering which could encourage a foot fall circuit to the wider part of the City Core.

6.2.8 This paragraph assumes that developments from the 1950’s to the 1980’s do not contribute positively to the building environment and that such buildings may become the focus for redevelopment during the life of the Big City Plan. Further detail is required here as this general assumption is very dangerous in a plan which will form the basis of planning policy.

6.2.10 This clause deals well with the areas required for redevelopment for the first impressions of the City. However we feel that this paragraph has failed to recognise the importance of Hill Street and the potential for redevelopment in that area. Although it does refer to the wider area around New Street Station, it would be interesting to see more detail here.

## **Core Options:**

### **C1 Regional retail centre:**

This would involve modest growth of retail to support the existing street based shopping pattern rather than seek further major growth. Investment would then instead be concentrated on the public realm. This option seems to present us with an appealing public realm option but as an alternative to significant retail investment.

### **C2 Retail centre with a global appeal:**

This option involves a substantial increase in retail floor space including major development south of the Bull Ring, high end market retailing and specialist and niche retailing. This option does seem ambitious but surely should also be supported by investment in public realm in order to improve the likelihood of success.

### **C3 The core is a regional office centre:**

This option envisages the expansion of the existing office corridor, Five Ways, Brindleyplace, Colmore Row and Snow Hill. Development however is envisaged as being modest to enable the market to absorb the floor space development at Snow Hill and Colmore Circus. The principals of this option are agreed with; however, this option should not be seen as an alternative to retail but could be part of a joint retail and office expansion.

### **C4 The Core as a global business hub:**

This would involve a major expansion of office floor space in locations including the area of New Street station, east side and south side. Care however should be taken not to saturate the city with empty office floorspace. Mixed use office development should therefore be encouraged.

### **C5 The core as the focus for 'landmark' buildings, great streets and fine walking routes:**

The option envisages that large highways such as the A38 would be greened and made into a pedestrian friendly boulevard. Better connections would also be established across Queensway into Jewellery Quarter. This seems the most ambitious option and visionary of them all. Connectivity is a key point here and correctly recognised. However, the use of the wording 'landmark' buildings should be used with caution. Perhaps this can be replaced with 'quality' buildings or 'buildings for the long term future of Birmingham'. Perhaps different wording here could save Birmingham from further buildings attempting to be "iconic" – only to fail.

## **General Conclusions:**

Preferred options are C2 and C4 (subject to the comments made above). Importantly, public realm improvements should not be ignored. Public realm should have a uniform design (same paving / layout / street furniture / signage) to encourage footfall movement around the city and the feeling of a united design centric place. There should also be a sharp focus on encouraging independent retail into the city to support the desire for creating a global appeal retail offering.

Section 6 does not deal well with proposals for getting people into and around the Core. C5 envisages moving people around the core as pedestrians. It would be

better to see comment here on other proposals e.g. road train, bicycles, underground etc. These things will impact on the use of space and public realm in the Core.

## **Southside**

### **Introduction:**

Southside is a collection of areas each with distinctive uses and is not a historically definable area of Birmingham. It's the bit between Highgate and Lee Bank and the City Centre / Digbeth and the Middleway. It includes:

Part of the City Centre.

The markets area.

The entertainment area.

The Chinese quarter.

The Gay Village.

An old industrial area.

A former motor retail section.

A 1970s residential area.

### **Response:**

The name 'Southside' is associated with the successful apartments by Glenn Howells; no one would naturally call this vast area 'Southside'. It seems to be an area with an entirely arbitrary boundary line and a contrived name. Would some sections not be better included within the City Core, Digbeth and Highgate? Then a new name should be found for the area - perhaps based on the historic names of the area.

This lack of clarity about the area seems to be reflected in the nine options in the work in progress. Improvements are clearly needed in sections of this area and there are areas where new or further significant development is possible. Connectivity with the city core is vital and routes from Digbeth, Highgate and the south side of the city must be created or improved. Future development in the area should build on the existing identity of the area.

We do not support the view that this is an area for tall buildings (S8) nor is it an area for significant office development (S1).

We do support:

- The urban design concept of medium rise (6 to 8 storey) development based on streets and squares.
- Retention and improvements to good existing buildings and streets such as those from Holloway Head to Bristol Street.
- A mix of uses generally across the area.
- Active street frontages.
- Streets of speciality shops and food shops but NOT more of the same large brands and NOT large corporate style developments as proposed for the Bristol Road.
- Development of the entertainment quarter based around the Hippodrome.
- Integration of Suffolk Street and Smallbrook Queensway into the city core.
- Further breaking down of the concrete collar at Queensway and Bristol Street.
- High quality developments marking the entrance to the City Core at Bristol Street, New Street Station and Digbeth.
- Development of a new city square that includes the major outdoor events space for the city.

## Highgate

### Introduction:

The area is defined by Bradford Street to the north, the Middleway to the east and south and the River Rea in a culvert to the west. The area is regarded as the site of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century Anglo-Saxon settlement known as Beorma which is the origin of the name of the City of Birmingham. It rises up from the River Rea and affords good views of the City Centre to the north west. It was largely built up between 1850 and 1900 and in the 1970s large areas were cleared for social housing. It has seen a range of regeneration initiatives but little maintenance and real improvement since. There is however a sense of community that is diverse and multi ethnic being made up from successive waves of immigration. This is not adequately reflected on in the work in progress report.

One quarter of Highgate consists of industrial buildings in various states of use and condition. They are an important element in the area but they form a barrier to easy links to Digbeth, the Bull Ring and the City Centre.

There are many important buildings in the area – not all are acknowledged in the Work in Progress report – and these include:

- Stratford House (Grade 2\*) and dating from 1601.
- Numerous 19<sup>th</sup> Century houses on the east side of Moseley Road.
- St Albans Church by Pearson (1880).
- Lench's Trust Almshouses by Chatwin (1880).
- St Anne's RC Church (1883).
- Birmingham Central Mosque.
- Paragon Hotel, formerly Rowton House (1903).
- Also several good 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century industrial buildings and public houses.

### Response:

Highgate has great potential but needs detailed investigation on the ground and with the community. Our initial assessment is that this is not an area that should again be cleared away for transformational change as implied by Highgate Option H1 but rather an area that needs to be more carefully improved in a considered way. A soft approach is required. We do not support the further development of vast blocks of small apartment. Working with the community some large catalytic insertions are perhaps required but lots of smaller scale interventions to knit the whole together would provide a more sustainable and 21<sup>st</sup> Century approach to planning. A greater mix of housing tenure and type would benefit the area. Links with the City Centre should be improved as the area provides an ideal location for sustainable family living and working close to the City. New and improved schools, local shops, and facilities are required and the area needs a heart and an identity. The River Rea in a culvert and at the rear of industrial buildings is largely hidden. We would like to see the development potential of this asset explored in the development of the area and the connections with future developments of the adjacent area (Southside). We would propose that an investigation of the potential of expanding the river into a lake in part of this area be undertaken.

Highgate Option H2 but with more inspiration would seem to us to be the preferable option.

### **Highgate Park and other landscape areas:**

Highgate Park is a great and largely forgotten asset that should be improved. It is a good size, largely enclosed, a little neglected but a great local asset. We do not think that it should be extended. Investment should be made to improve the existing park with an emphasis on high quality long life insertions for the benefit of the local community. A future maintenance strategy should be established so that it does not revert to its present sad state. Perimeter development overlooking the park should be considered to improve security.

Highgate contains another large green space at the west end of St Albans Church which is not mentioned in the Work in Progress Report. We believe that this has great potential for development and improvement as public open space and to improve links with Southside running parallel to the Middleway and stretching up to St Luke's Church at Bristol Street and across to Park Central and Five Ways. We would also like to see more crossing of the Middleway by surface crossings and or bridge.

## **Westside**

### **Introduction:**

Like Southside this is another arbitrary area with a contrived name. We would again advocate that a new name based on historic references is adopted. The area takes in Brindleyplace, Baskerville House, Alpha Tower, ICC and NIA, Mailbox and Park Central, as well as Islington Row, Bath Row, Suffolk Street Queensway, Summer Row, Vincent Street, Sheepcote Street, Broad Street and Five Ways.

### **Response:**

Existing Westside has a mixed character which includes offices, cultural, entertainment, specialist shopping with residential around the canal, alongside Broad Street and at Park Central. Connectivity with Centre Core is unfriendly along Queensway. Pedestrian links with Core through Paradise Circus and Holloway Circus and between Broad Street and adjoining residential areas should all be improved with attention given to better separation of people and vehicles with wider pavements. Consideration should be given to redirecting the majority of incoming Hagley Road traffic to Islington Row / Middleway.

We broadly support Options W1, W2 and W5 and would like to see:

- Expansion of the high value commercial office and leisure uses in the area.
- A high quality mixed use Broad Street – a pleasant environment for all ages and ethnic groups not a brash and sleazy drinking / clubbing zone
- Further encouragement of specialty shopping on the edge of the City retail zone.
- Tree lined boulevards.
- Pedestrian friendly street crossings.
- Calmer traffic.
- Removal of the Navigation Street flyover.
- Improved pedestrian links generally.
- Improved quality of public realm and wider and less cluttered footpaths.
- High quality new developments in Broad Street and behind, and to Bath Row / Holloway Head.

## **Ladywood**

### **Introduction:**

The boundaries are Ladywood Middleway, Summer Hill Road/Sandpits, Vincent Street, Sheepcote Street and Grosvenor Street West. The area is dominated by characterless public housing at relatively low densities and inward looking. Schools, supermarket, local shops and a mix of small scale commercial and industrial. Overall the public realm is unattractive.

### **Response:**

Gradual transformation in Ladywood could create a quality residential, family friendly neighbourhood and make it a desirable place to live. This would entail the redevelopment of some of the existing housing and probably the relocation of the industrial uses to outside the Quarter in order to maximise the potential of the canal frontages.

In Ladywood and all other areas where housing developments are to take place we would like to propose a planning policy that states:

*Everyone should be able to see a tree from their window.*

The aim should be to have trees on all streets and every development should be encouraged to include landscaped squares and/or open spaces, preferably with seating, accessible to the public to rest and relax especially along canal frontages.

This could help to make Birmingham's quarters distinctive and give them an individual style.

## **Jewellery Quarter**

### **Introduction:**

The JQ is a vibrant creative mixed use one, and an important tourist sector of the City, with its museums, art galleries restaurants and wine bars. It has an overall strategy with many organisations, including links to City departments.

It produces some 40% of UK manufactured jewellery and has a wide range of associated retail outlets, in addition to professional and business activities.

### **Response:**

The focus should be on expanding the number and range of quality freehold premises for business, specialist and niche retail use with parking. There are some 50 derelict sites many BCC owned in the quarter which need to be tackled, whilst preserving the historic character of the listed buildings, dating back to the C17th

Residential mainly 1 and 2 bedroom apartments have increased its population to 3,000 projected to grow to 4,000, but lacking family ones.

It is essential that through the JQ Design Guide and JQ Management Plan the Golden Triangle and Industrial Middle are protected against residential development, to help preserve the critical mass of the jewellery industry, and its all important School of Jewellery

It is well served by road and rail transport, but urgently needs better connectivity to the city core, with a new footbridge over Great Charles St

Additional hotels in Newhall St and on Ickneild St will help with its international reputation.

## **Gun Quarter**

### **Introduction:**

A smaller quarter than originally, dominated by industrial and commercial premises, with a family friendly element of schools and open spaces.

### **Response:**

The strength of the GQ is that it follows a traditional street pattern and old warehouses, with opportunities to introduce other land uses, particularly high tech manufacturing and commercial ones.

Over the next 20 years it could be a major source of potential development, commercial, industrial and residential, including re-location of industry from Highgate etc (see Option GQ2)

It urgently needs better connectivity with the city core.

It requires an organisation to represent the area, directly linked to BCC

## **Eastside**

### **Context and analysis generally:**

Item 6.9.1 refers to *“The removal of the barrier created by Queensway has paved the way for the eastwards expansion of central area uses into Eastside.”* It is considered that there still is a barrier between Eastside and The Core and the connectivity between the two areas still needs to be improved.

In item 6.9.4 it states that *“The physical design of the Park (City Park) will be subject to detailed consultation at a later date.”* There has been concern regarding the competition process that has taken place for the design of the City Park and the position relating to the winning design proposals is unclear. It is understood that the original design has been reviewed and we are concerned that the final proposals will be a compromise and mediocre.

In item 6.9.5 it states that *“... there are a number of development proposals currently in the pipeline.”* These include Curzon Gateway, the City Park Gate Scheme, Curzon Park, Eastside Locks and a masterplan for Aston University Campus. The Birmingham Civic Society Planning Committee would welcome presentations and review of the current proposals for Curzon Park (subject to an outline planning permission) Eastside Locks (planning permission sought) and the masterplan for Aston University and BCU Campuses.

### **Response:**

Four options are included for the future development of Eastside and include Option E1 *“... the learning and leisure quarter”*; Option E2 *“... a new office quarter”*; Option E3 *“... a residential quarter”* and Option E4 *“... a media and creative quarter”*.

Eastside as a learning and leisure quarter (Option E1) is considered the most appropriate option as it does not replicate other area uses. It is generally considered that there are already too many offices and apartments in the City and therefore Options E2 and E3 should not be supported. Eastside as a media and creative quarter (Option E4) is considered a possible appropriate option although but there are replication of some of the activities in particular those in the Jewellery Quarter and Digbeth and this causes confusion.

In conjunction with appropriate uses for Eastside, it is considered that any new development should be of the highest quality design. Connectivity (particularly for pedestrians) with The Core should be reviewed and improved.

## Digbeth

### Context and analysis generally:

Digbeth contains a range of warehouses and manufactories dating from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Item 6.10.4 notes that the Digbeth, Deritend and Bordesley High Streets Conservation Area is “... *an area of archaeological significance.*” It is important that the historic significance of the area is taken into account in developing any proposals for new uses etc.

In item 6.10.5 it states that “... *Selfridges and, indeed the wider Bull Ring at present seem to turn their back on Digbeth ...*” and in item 6.10.8 it notes that “... *many of the objectives set out in these documents have not yet been achieved, which gives us a chance to review existing policy and progress ...*” If new uses and development of areas are to succeed it is important that again connectivity within the City and between areas of the City are improved, particularly from a pedestrian point of view

### Response:

Three options are identified which include Option D1 “*Start-up Digbeth ... evolve as a neighbourhood where business ventures can begin*”; Option D2 “*Business Digbeth ... modern city centre business quarter, involving refurbishment of the best buildings ...*” and Option D3 “*Living and working Digbeth ... would accommodate a significant amount of housing ...*”.

Development of the area as a neighbourhood where business ventures can begin (Option D1) is considered the most appropriate option as a large proportion of the existing building stock could be reused and the original character of the area maintained where appropriate. The development and use of the area as a modern city centre business quarter involving the refurbishment of the best buildings (Option D2) is considered a further possible appropriate option. This is on the basis that new development would mainly be for small to medium enterprises and would reuse and refurbish the best buildings in the area. The possible development of housing (Option D3) which might include student housing could have a negative impact on the character of the area and detract from the development of creative industries.

**Finally:**

In relation to any new proposals for development in all of the areas, we consider that an informed approach (in relation to the historic significance of the area) in conjunction with only high quality design and improved connectivity with The City Core (particularly for pedestrians) must be considered priorities.