

PRIORITIES
FOR
LANDSCAPE
&
ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPROVEMENTS



BRISTOL
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION



BRISTOL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Bristol Development Corporation has recognised the urgent need for landscape and environmental improvements within its 900 acre catchment stretching from Temple Meads Railway Station in the west to St Anne's and Crew's Hole in the east. Large parts of the Urban Development Area (UDA) are run down and generally unattractive with little useable open space, low quality buildings and degraded watercourses. Yet the area offers tremendous scope for innovative and "environment friendly" redevelopment. This could revitalise key features like the river corridor and canal; create new landscapes and open spaces, and provide exciting leisure and recreation facilities for residents and visitors alike.

This brochure summarises the environmental condition of the UDA and lists the Corporation's priorities for making improvements. In essence, these priorities represent the Corporation's environmental guidelines for redevelopment and it will look to developers to take them into account when presenting planning applications.

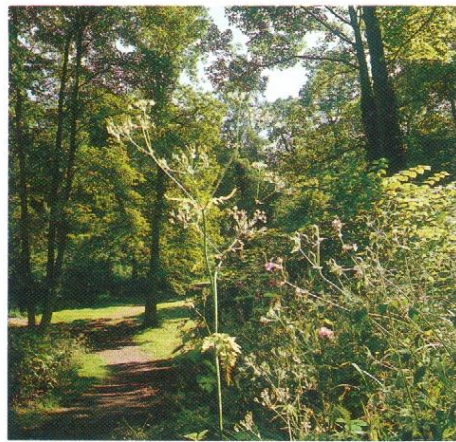
In addition, the Corporation intends to commission an environmental study for its redevelopment programme which will set minimum acceptable standards or limits for key environmental parameters. These will include:- water and air pollution; waste recycling; the energy efficiency of buildings, and the design, layout and landscape treatment of buildings and transport systems.

LANDSCAPE

The landscape of the UDA is criss-crossed by railway lines and roads, but dominated by the River Avon which winds its way from Temple Meads Railway Station, around the edge of the bleak, industrialised areas of St Philip's and Arno's Vale, to the dramatic woodland-clad slopes of Crew's Hole and Conham Vale. The River is linked directly to the City Centre by the Feeder Canal which cuts a straight path from west to east across the north of St Philip's.

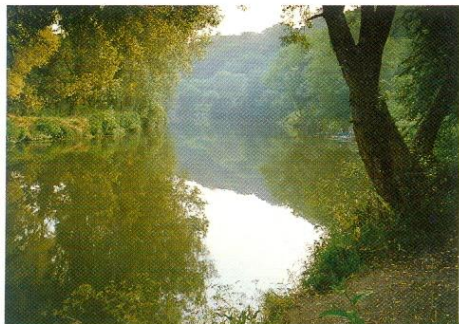
This east-west divide is further emphasised by differences in topography and the distribution of open space. The steep sided Avon Valley between New Brislington Bridge and Conham Vale contains virtually all the woodland and public and private open spaces. Within this area are Crew's Hole, Trooper's Hill, Dundridge Woods, Birch Wood and a particularly attractive stretch of river, which combine to create a unique post-industrial landscape with a very rural character.

In sharp contrast, the largely flat and industrialised areas of St Philip's and The Dings have very little open space (other than derelict railway land), no substantial woodland and are fragmented by a complex network of roads and railways. This, combined with the generally dismal industrial architecture, creates a run-down urban landscape - a landscape which is only broken up by small but important features like Sparke Evans Park, the wooded slopes along the River and some of the older industrial buildings.



WATERWAYS

The River Avon and Feeder Canal are two of the UDA's most important assets which have suffered from years of neglect.



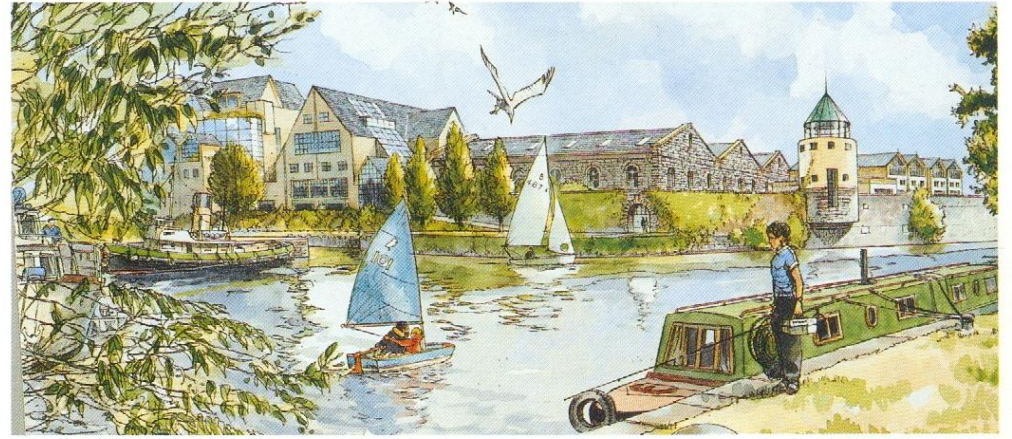
Their potential for recreation and leisure has hardly been tapped. With imaginative redevelopment, these waterways could become vital and attractive links between the City Centre and open countryside for use by pleasure boats, pedestrians and cyclists.

At present the River Avon is only open to pleasure craft upstream of the Netham Dam. Below the dam, the river is completely tidal and large areas of mud and rubbish along the river banks are

exposed at low tide. Boats which travel out of the city do so along the Feeder Canal, joining the River Avon by the New Brislington Bridge. Both waterways are bordered by unsightly industrial units, overgrown towpaths and strips of wasteland. They also suffer from low level but chronic pollution which adds oil films and floating debris to the surface.

Footpaths run alongside most of the water but it is not possible to walk their entire length because of difficult access, poor general condition and partial flooding when river or tide levels are high. The waterways also suffer from a lack of moorings.

OPEN SPACE



Totterdown Basin.

At first glance the UDA seems well endowed with some 240 acres of open space. Much though is derelict land, with a large proportion earmarked for redevelopment. Virtually all of the remaining useable space is found in the Avon Valley. It includes large woodlands on both sides of the River Avon, and

grassland at Trooper's Hill and Nature's Garden in St Anne's. Although these are exceptional landscape features, they only cater for a limited range of recreational uses.

Within the UDA there are two small parks - Sparke Evans Park in St Philip's and a play space at Oxford Street in The Dings. Elsewhere, there is a marked lack of recreation grounds and small areas for relaxation. Several large recreation grounds exist on the edge of the UDA, but are concentrated at the eastern end.

Most of St Philip's, Arno's Vale and The Dings is deprived of useable green space. In these districts can be found the largest areas of derelict land, usually connected with or adjacent to the railway. They offer the chance to create new open spaces through redevelopment.

The largest, most neglected but potentially attractive open spaces are along the River Avon and Feeder Canal. By a combination of walkways and cycleways; imaginative waterfront redevelopments; better controls on water levels and pollution; and the mass planting of trees and shrubs, these two waterways could become substantial and exciting "greenways" linking the centre of Bristol with the rural scenery of Crew's Hole and Conham Vale and beyond to Conham River Park and Eastwood Farm.

FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS

The present network of footpaths is poorly developed, neglected and badly signposted. Most of the definitive footpaths are around Crew's Hole and Trooper's Hill, where they link open spaces with surrounding housing. However, they do not provide continuous links between open spaces along the Avon Valley or offer particularly convenient or attractive routes. There are no official footpaths through St Philip's Marsh or The Dings.

The Avon Valley Walkway is the largest and most continuous footpath running through the UDA, starting at the east at Conham Vale and following the Avon to the western end of the Feeder Road by Marsh Bridge. Only small sections of it are well used, and there are many parts where walkers are forced to negotiate narrow strips of land between

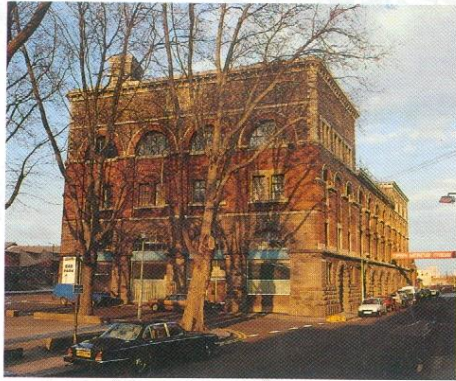
steep river banks and unsightly industrial premises. The stretches where it passes under road and railway bridges are dark, damp and particularly uninviting.

A substantial number of people in the Bristol area use bicycles not only for recreation, but also as a form of transport. At present, there are no cycleways in the UDA and only a small number of designated cycle routes, but the redevelopment programme offers considerable scope to create cycleways and routes for both pleasure and commuting.



BUILDINGS

The majority of buildings in the UDA are industrial and generally unattractive. A typical view over St Philip's from the Bath Road presents a sea of monotonous grey corrugated roofs, ugly warehouses and vehicle depots. Many were built in the 1960's and 70's when more importance was paid to utilitarian considerations than to the creation of pleasant working conditions. Others are old, and their appearance is often decayed and generally unattractive. The result is a cluster of tightly packed 'light' industrial units mixed with older workshops, showrooms and depots. Some of the more attractive areas are also blighted by low-quality industrial buildings and a degraded environment. In the Avon Valley, for example, bland industrial units, which do nothing to complement the dramatic scenery, have been allowed along the river at Crew's Hole and St Anne's.



Listed building in Broad Plain.

However, there are many properties worthy of conservation, including Temple Meads Station, the Rheemco buildings in Silverthorne Lane and Trooper's Hill Chimney, all of which are listed. There are also attractive buildings adjoining Totterdown Basin, old artisan's cottages around Crew's Hole and some industrial "period pieces" in St Philip's and The Dings.

ARCHAEOLOGY

The UDA is rich in industrial history. During the 18th and 19th centuries it was associated with the lead, silver, tar, chemical and pottery industries. Now only a few visible relics of that industrial period remain - the chimney and sulphur flue on Trooper's Hill being the best known.

Most of the 18th and 19th century buildings have been destroyed, leaving only a few cobbled streets along with some early brick and stone industrial buildings. The area is criss-crossed by railway lines, albeit only partly used. Railway embankments, cuttings, sidings

and iron bridges still remain, but largely unchanged. The waterways have also changed little over the last century.

Protecting remaining industrial relics is important, not simply for their intrinsic historic value but also for their visual interest, educational value and visitor potential.

An opportunity exists to set up an industrial heritage centre within the Crew's Hole area, where the industrial impact on the dramatic landscape is so strikingly evident.

WILDLIFE

There is a surprising variety of wildlife in the UDA. The Nature Conservancy Council and Avon Wildlife Trust have recognised seven sites of special importance of which five are within the Avon Valley east of New Brislington Bridge.

With the loss of wildlife habitat that has occurred since the last war, the protection of remaining wildlife sites is more important today than ever before. For growing numbers of people, wildlife is

a principal interest and it should be considered in all redevelopment and land use changes.



ENERGY, WASTE AND CONSERVATION

Most of the buildings and transport systems within the UDA were built before environmental issues became important topics. The Corporation intends to adopt environmentally sound policies which promote the efficient use of energy,

encourage waste recycling and protect the environment. The Corporation will look to developers to demonstrate their commitment to such policies in the design, layout and construction of new buildings and transport systems.