

ON KNOWLE FOCUS

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NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR KNOWLE



Twenty years ago Gary was involved with parents and campaigners trying to prevent our secondary school on Daventry Rd being closed by the New-Labour government and Labour council. We lost the battle but the fight produced the Local Opportunity Centre “The Park” which provides training and opportunities for many people and a home for numerous community organisations and services. It has been run by a trust overseeing a combination of paid staff and volunteers, and since receiving a long lease from the Lib Dem cabinet, which included Gary, they have gone from strength to strength, but the old and tired buildings

have only been kept going with cost effective patching. There is a need for a rebuild if the services are to continue in the long term.

We have long campaigned for a new secondary school in Knowle. When, following a Lib Dem motion to council, council officers and central government finally agreed with us, we could see progress. Unfortunately the recent proposal that came from Bristol Grammar School failed as it would have led to the destruction of The Park and potential damage to local primary schools because it included a primary feeder school as well. But demand for more secondary places continued to grow and OASIS received the go ahead by central government for a new school in South Bristol. They initially looked to build near to their school in Hengrove, but thanks to persistent lobbying by us, and to support from Lib Dem Hengrove Cllr Tim Kent, the old Merrywood site in Knowle was chosen. This time though we hope that the well supported trustees will be able to negotiate an outcome with enhanced facilities for existing users and land for a new school to be built on. Some facilities will hopefully be shared. We will keep pushing.

AIRPORT ROAD/WOOTTON PARK CYCLING

Residents may remember the badly thought through plan for a new cycle lane along Airport Rd that had to be withdrawn. This is now resuming in a larger form that will connect Filwood to the cycle lane at Tesco. We have warned that, where possible, there should be separation between pedestrians and cyclists. Our advice has been backed up by central government advice, but despite that, the section beside the nature reserve has been made a “shared space”. Despite clear advance warnings from us officers have failed to think through the conflict with the one way side road by Wootton Park/High Park side. We still wait the result of local consultation. The section outside houses on Airport Rd has received some improvements; pedestrian crossing points and some parking, but again there has been a refusal so far to separate cyclists and pedestrians on the new widened pavement. It is even more important here due to cars emerging from driveways. We are also waiting for a meeting to discuss the ridiculously long time that they plan to close part of Cadogan and Salcombe rd.

HOUSING and MISINFORMATION

We hardly ever comment on other political parties, mainly because we rarely see them locally, but the recent Labour leaflet distributed in Knowle demands a response, as it contains provably inaccurate assertions. We welcome the current administration carrying on the good work commenced by the Lib Dems, of setting housing standards and driving out slum landlords. This drive to improve the lives of tenants was sadly allowed to slip a little under the previous mayor.

We also support efforts to get houses built in Bristol, but it is essential this is done with the efficient use of the limited land we have, and of course Labour should be honest enough to say that their planned borrowing for house building will leave each citizen with a record debt. It is also ironic that our completed scheme, on 1/3 of Salcombe Recreation Ground (now Paignton Park), which contributed a high % of the city's affordable (shared equity) homes recently, was opposed by the previous Labour MP, with a petition that was supported by a large number of her followers.

Despite claims to the contrary, total numbers of new houses and of affordable homes under the current Labour administration are still less than 50% of that produced by the Lib Dems, although it is true that numbers dived under Mayor Ferguson. Building of actual council houses was constrained for many years by Gordon Brown taking money from Bristol housing funds, to send to the North of England (a tax now abolished), where ironically total housing demand was lower. But the Lib Dems had managed to restart council house building after many years of zero numbers and of course we replaced over 300 prefabs with decent homes. All the stats are available and can be verified in council records.

PERSISTENCE PAYS!

For 4 years we have been chasing the road scheme that will complete the traffic chicane on Redcatch Road with a raised table; remodel the pavements at the 3 way junction with Bayham and Woodbridge Road to make it safer for pedestrians, and make Woodbridge Road one way from Wells Road. Funding had been agreed by the Neighbourhood Partnership using the left over cash from the schemes at Axbridge Road and Ilminster Ave. But these took so long to complete that by that time the Mayor firstly froze all funds, and then moved them away from us with the abolition of the Neighbourhood Partnership. We finally got agreement for new funding from planning money levy in September after a huge amount of lobbying. Highways officers have welcomed the funding and we are now waiting for a start date, which is dependent upon staff numbers available to deliver. Glad also to report that of the other 4 schemes approved over the vast committee area of six wards, one was for new equipment in Perrett Park, which a lot of our residents use, and another was for environmental improvements in Arnos Vale Cemetery, which is within Knowle ward.

BROADWALK REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

Gary and Chris have had regular meetings with owners of Broadwalk Shopping Centre, and local residents as part of extensive consultations before planning applications are submitted. They have landscape officers involved and are very keen to minimise any impact on the park and want to actively help improve the landscaping of the shrubbery and ensure park security. Views and concerns of nearby residents is being taken into consideration and comments and opinions of local groups including FORP and RCG.

<https://planningonline.bristol.gov.uk> 18/05184/P | Outline planning application

MINIATURE RAILWAY

Although outside of Knowle we know from e-mails that many local people care about this wonderful little institution that is run by a charitable group of volunteer engineers and provides education and entertainment to many children and adults. They have occupied a small corner of Ashton court for 45 years; cost the council nothing and pay a small annual fee. Gary helped them to organise a protest at Full Council against the mayor's plan to evict them, and talks are underway to solve the problem. Bullying small charitable institutions is not the way that any council should behave, especially when they have no alternative use for the land or any constructive plans.

THE ARENA



PROMISES PROMISES



AND THEN THEY WERE GONE

The 4 party Scrutiny Commission that examined reports and cross examined all the key players in this drama (except the Mayor who failed to turn up), voted by 10 votes to 1 that the arena should go ahead as planned at Arena Island next to Temple Meads. Frankly it was shocking to hear some of the provably inaccurate information spouted by highly paid officers employed by the mayor, and we concurred with the advice that the arena was low risk, a solid investment for the city and was to be sited in the right place. Despite this the mayor is ignoring the commission and continues to push ahead with his very unpopular alternative plans.

These have already been challenged by councillors, and the mayor has replaced from the Scrutiny Committee any Labour Councillors, whose opinions he dismissed, with other nominations. The decision not to build on Arena Island will likely face an external legal challenge and claims for compensation from contractors. Even if the decision is not reversed the new plan is unlikely to get planning permission, so in 18 months when this Labour mayor is voted out of office. there will be an empty site and the possibility of

reviving the scheme. Within a day, and before the decision had been ratified, the mayor had the signs at Temple Meads taken down which had promised the arena. Not quick enough though to stop Chris and Gary getting before and after shots.

Very reminiscent of the previous mayor tearing down the sign promising the new recycling centre on Hartcliffe way. The present Mayor made a solemn promise to get this built but no sign yet and time is running out. Polls continuously show a vast majority of Bristolians want the arena at Temple Meads .



REMEMBER THIS PROMISE?

ROUGH SLEEPERS

People will have noticed the homeless couple sleeping rough in the door way of the old Coop Bank on the Wells Road over the past two months. Both Gary and Chris have contacted Street Link and St Mungo's outreach team for the city council making them aware of the plight of this married couple. There are however only three spaces available in Bristol for married couples, and they are on the waiting list. Chris has spoken to them regularly to check how they are and has been pushing for them to be given emergency accommodation as soon as possible. Understandably they do not wish to be seperated and most hostels do not accept couples. The homeless team are actively working with them and local police are aware and are monitoring the situation.

A Record of Hard Work

THE 51 BUS

Readers may remember when 2 years ago First Bus cancelled the 51 service which goes through Knowle, Hengrove, Whitchurch and out to the South Bristol Hospital. The information was suppressed by the city council, and when we found out we had just days to get in a replacement. We managed this with Wessex. It ran for 2 years and with lower fares. It was a popular replacement, but it suffered a little due to their lack of a large network. Wessex though, partly because of the very cosy relationship that First seems to enjoy with the council, completely pulled out of the Bristol area some weeks back. This time the First Bus tactics were different and they registered a partial replacement on the 51 route calling it the 2A.

Lower frequency; not going to the hospital; no evenings and no weekends, but occupying the most profitable part of the route and timetable. When we discovered this we found another company ready to run a full replacement, but they were clear they could not compete head to head with First on the route.

First were approached to withdraw but said "No" and asked the council for £100,000 a year to replace the full service. So we return to the private monopoly of First and no doubt future irregular service. The mayor seems happy with this private monopoly situation, but powers are now available to councils to bring in a franchising control, where operators pay for the privilege of running the most profitable routes and the money is used to either keep fares down, or subsidise other needed routes. It is about time that the mayor realised that we need this bus service in South Bristol.

LOCAL MEETINGS - Two successful Knowle Community Forum Meetings were held this year at Redcatch Centre and The Park Centre. These replace the previous Neighbourhood Partnership meetings. The third will be in the new year - tba - at The Knowle Park Centre, The Square.

RESIDENTS' PARKING

There has been growing concern about parking in our streets and a fair amount of it close to the Wells Road has been caused by commuters parking up and hopping on a bus into town. This has not yet led to concerted demands for a residents' parking scheme. but the planned development at Broadwalk Shopping Centre MAY tip the balance. Although there will be a significant increase in parking spaces for shoppers and residents, there are currently many people using the car park as an unofficial park and ride and these will inevitably be evicted. There could be a particular temporary squeeze during the period after the old car park is pulled down and before the new one is completed.

The developers have promised to help fund a residents' scheme if it is wanted, so we have distributed surveys to several hundred local houses from Broad Walk to Woodbridge and Priory to part of Maxse asking for local views, but if you feel your road should be included in the consultation and has not been, please contact us.

CONTACT YOUR COUNCILLORS - We are available every day not just at elections

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