

**Please reply to: The Chair, 63 Moncrieffe Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 2LA
Telephone E-Mail**

Lawrence Munyuki
Senior Planning Officer
City Centre Planning Team,
Planning and Development,
Birmingham City Council,
PO Box 28,
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B11TU

15th September 2022

Dear Sir,

JEWELLERY QUARTER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION

Sustainable Travel West Midlands (SUSTRAVWM) is an organisation promoting the use of sustainable transport such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport such as buses, rail and Metro. We want to see the creation of a transport system that is a real alternative to the private car. Until the 29th February 2020 we were known as West Midlands Campaign for Better Transport.

We are writing in connection with the publication of the Jewellery Quarter Neighbourhood Plan and the consultation into the plan. We welcome this. The Jewellery Quarter is an important part of Birmingham, an historic asset and has now evolved into a mixed residential and business area.

It is right that the plan recognises this in its chapter on Transport and restates commitment to the measures adopted by the city council to encourage modal shift and move away from car dependency. As in other districts of the city and the rest of the city and the rest of the city centre a default 20mph speed limit should be adopted, with streets reviewed to make them spaces more liveable for people, rather than solely as a way of moving vehicles or parking them.

The plan refers to the need to make the Jewellery Quarter more permeable from the rest of the City Centre, referring to the Princes Foundation Report "Unlocking the Industrial Middle" of 2012. A key way this permeability can be improved once and forever is for the city council to commit to a deliverable scheme improving pedestrian and cyclist access over the A38 Queensway which is the remnants of the "Concrete Collar" Inner Ring Road that encircled Birmingham City Centre. It performs an important role in getting traffic between the north and south of the city, but effectively acts as a barrier between the Jewellery Quarter and the Colmore Business District for pedestrians and cyclists.

At present the only satisfactory crossing point for all pedestrians and cyclists is the crossroads junction linking Great Charles Street and Newhall Street. The other crossing points are the subway at Livery Street or the overbridge over Great Charles Street. Both of these are only suitable for fitter able bodied pedestrians because of stairs; cyclists and the disabled only have the option of the Newhall Street crossing which is at street level. There is a need to make it easier to get over here if permeability between the Jewellery Quarter and the top end of Livery Street leading into the Colmore Row is to be achieved.

The city council had suggested placing the entirety of the A38 Queensway into a tunnel through the city centre. That would cause significant disruption, take years and be expensive, with the risk that through traffic does not dissipate but migrates over to the A4540 Middle Ring Road, which now seems to be taking the mantle of the "Concrete Collar".

One option that might be quick and allow the better permeability between the Jewellery Quarter to be realised would be to "hump" over the Queensway at the Livery Street end, effectively taking Livery Street over the A38 and effectively making it a through street. I understand the city council has a plot of land in its possession between Lionel Street and Great Charles Street which is currently used for parking and is semi-derelict; this could be useful if such a project was to be pursued. It would also allow the elimination of the Livery Street subway. It would be easier than lowering the Queensway then covering it over.

This would allow the objective of the city councils "Big City Plan" of 2010, as detailed on page 47 of the neighbourhood plan to be realised.

We agree that on street parking should be reduced to just what is needed for supporting local businesses in loading and unloading, with Jewellery Quarter residents using active and public transport for most local trips. The plan is very scant though on what can be done to improve public transport. What ideas are there?

Connectivity between the Jewellery Quarter and the other parts of the city centre has been improved by the expansion of the Midland Metro; it is now possible to travel easily from the Big Peg to New Street station easily by tram, with local rail connectivity across Birmingham available across Birmingham and beyond via the Cross City line and other routes. The ongoing expansion of Metro will also improve connectivity between Eastside and the Quarter, helping support other regeneration and development in the city such as the establishment of the new BBC Studios in Digbeth.

Jewellery Quarter of course has its own local rail station, with services to Stratford-on-Avon, Stourbridge, Worcester, Solihull and Dorridge, as well as a direct link to the capital with some services to and from London Marylebone calling at the station. The station has been neglected though since 2007, when the then rail franchise operator London Midland took over the operation of local services and reduced the booking office opening hours to a couple of hours a week on a Friday afternoon.

The advances in technology make it unlikely the station could justify a ticket office which could be staffed from first to last train. But the ticket office which is at street level could be repurposed to allow retail use such as a coffee bar with the opportunity to purchase tickets from that, as has been done at the new station opened in recent years at Kenilworth in Warwickshire.

A presence of people also deters crime and anti-social behaviour; unstaffed urban stations often see vandalism and crime and actually deter passengers from using the railway.

Jewellery Quarter deserves better than that fate. The plan should include some commentary and ideas to make better use of the station, to maximise the benefit of this asset.

In all, the plan is an excellent document which sets out a long term strategy for the neighbourhood. We hope these comments are helpful, and we look forward to the publication of the finalised plan to be put forward to local residents and businesses in a vote. We trust you will let us know when the finalised neighbourhood plan is published by the city council.

Should you wish to discuss our comments and observations further, please contact the writer.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Chapman,
Acting Chair, SUSTRAVWM

