

Our concerns about Outdoor Advertising

There is a growing concern amongst Bristol residents about the quantity of outdoor advertising sites across the city. A recent application for a new electronic display billboard in St Werburghs received 64 letters of objection in 2017. Other applications are passing through the planning system without significant public knowledge. Bristol City Council is currently consulting on proposals to introduce advertising spaces to our parks and green spaces as a way of boosting revenue. This pamphlet lays out some of the concerns with corporate outdoor advertising and some solutions for the council to consider.

We are calling on Bristol City Council to

- 1 Keep our parks and green spaces advertising free.** The council is currently consulting on a proposal to introduce advertising to parks to generate revenue. This would detract from the value of our parks in terms of connection to nature, wellbeing and amenity. This proposal is a particular concern for children who it has been shown are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of advertising.
- 2 Include a preference against new outdoor advertising spaces in the revision of the Council's Local Plan.**
- 3 The Council should remove existing billboards from residential areas where they negatively impact the visual amenity of our neighbourhoods.**

The future benefits to Bristol of removing billboards would outweigh the current financial benefits to the council. Bristol could be the first UK city to ban billboards, leading the way to a happier future for our cities which prioritises citizens' wellbeing over corporate profit. This would be a great move for eco-tourism, as well as being a decisive step towards a less polluted, unhealthy, debt-burdened and stressed population.

Our concerns

- 1 We have no choice as to whether we are exposed to outdoor advertising messages.** Unlike other forms of print, radio or digital advertising, when we walk down the street we are confronted outdoor ads whether we like it or not. As the industry itself boasts, "It's the one medium you can't turn off."
- 2 Advertising impacts our mental wellbeing.** Marketing messages regularly present new goods and services as *must-have necessities*, often tapping into our insecurities, our identities and our aspirations to do so placing extra pressure on us to spend.
- 3 Advertising impacts us at a subconscious level.** Psychological research into advertising shows that we do not have to consciously engage with adverts in order to absorb their messages.¹ We can process them quickly and subconsciously.
- 4 Advertising prioritises big business over the local economy.** Bristol is famous for its independent spirit and thriving culture of small to medium enterprises. Large format and high volume outdoor advertising is typically more available to large multinational corporations. As such, they encourage us to spend our money on firms that take money out of the local economy.
- 5 Outdoor advertising undermines our ability to solve collective problems.** Billboards provide space for those with the money to pay. Typically, this privileges larger firms. Whilst Bristol City Council tries to tackle air pollution for example, polluting car companies will continue to roll out advertisements that link car ownership and car brands to concepts of success, power and wealth. Our ability to solve major issues of the day such as air pollution and climate change depend on regaining public control of public space and our economy.

For more info see
www.AdblockBristol.org.uk
or email
adblockbristol@gmail.com

Precedents from around the world

Residents in **St Werburghs** successfully removed 6 out of 13 billboards from the area between 2009 - 2012. A survey of two streets in 2004 showed 93% of people wished for all local billboards to be removed.

Two petitions organised against their remaining presence gained 1300 and 800 signatures. These boards are very unpopular.



BEFORE 3 billboards were removed



AFTER Ashley Hill, St Werburghs



Grenoble, which removed 324 ad hoardings and replaced them with trees

The French city of **Grenoble** became the first European city to remove outdoor advertising in 2015. Over 300 ad spaces, including 64 billboards were replaced with new trees and community spaces. The city's deputy mayor Lucile Lheureux explained: "Advertisers want to upgrade to digital screens. We don't want to make that move. We don't want our city's children bombarded with animated advertising on TV screens in the street."

Sao Paulo in Brazil introduced a ban on outdoor advertising in 2007 labelling it as a form of "visual pollution".

Farida Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, has called on UN member states to be mindful of the influence of commercial advertising and marketing on public space. "*The constant bombardment of our senses intrusively impacts our cultural lives,*" she says. *Outdoor advertising bans are a much-needed step to "re-balance the use of public spaces"*.²

Christmas Steps Arts Quarter billboards that had been erected years ago without planning permission were removed following action from the local planning scrutiny committee.



BEFORE above the Red Lodge Museum



AFTER Christmas Steps Arts Quarter

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References

1. University of Bath: "Measuring Affective Advertising: Implications of Low Attention Processing on Recall" (2005)
2. UN Special Rapporteur: "The impact of advertising and marketing practices on the enjoyment of cultural rights" (2014)