

FAQs

FAQ1. What is Bristol Charities?

- A.** Bristol Charities is a registered UK charity, and our mission is to provide opportunities and support for people and communities to improve lives through grants, housing and charitable projects.

The charity has transformed and enhanced the lives of those in need in Bristol for over six hundred years.

FAQ2. What does Bristol Charities plan to do with Vassall Centre?

- A.** The charity's broad vision for the Vassall Centre is to create a new neighbourhood centre for multigeneration living and working, with accessible, sustainable work and meeting spaces, alongside contemporary affordable housing for older people and families and facilities for the wider community.

Our proposals aim to establish a balanced, viable future for this site and help meet some pressing needs in the city and local area as well as providing an income stream that will help Bristol Charities support more people.

FAQ3. Who will the new homes be for?

- A.** The new housing facility to be operated by Bristol Charities would be for older people from the local community and across Bristol who are in need of housing. The vast majority of people Bristol Charities supports are on the lowest incomes or housing benefit and all of the housing will be let at affordable rents. The housing to be operated by Brighter Places will offer high quality affordable housing for families.

FAQ4. What will happen to charities and organisations who are currently based at the Vassall Centre?

- A.** We will be able to accommodate all tenants that wish to remain at the Vassall Centre in the new accessible, workspace hub. One tenant that currently has a garage on the existing site which we will not be able to accommodate and we are talking to them about how best we can support them to find other garage facilities. We are working with our tenants on an individual basis to discuss how we can meet their needs in the new centre.

FAQ5: Why is Bristol Charities not retaining the existing buildings?

- A.** The existing buildings at the Vassall Centre were built as a temporary base for US soldiers in 1945. Now more than 75 years old, they have reached the end of their practical life, offer very low levels of energy efficiency and sustainability and would be prohibitively expensive to upgrade and maintain. A full professional building survey commissioned by the previous owners highlighted the need to overhaul the lighting system, recover the whole roof, replace all guttering and upgrade the car parks. The building is poorly insulated with tenants complaining of overheating in the summer and cold and draughts during the winter, as well as pinpointing access issues that need to be addressed. The expert view of our property advisors is that repair and upgrade costs would not only be expensive, but would not be cost effective with a building of this age. Retaining the buildings would also mean that we cannot create much-needed new affordable homes for older people and families.

FAQ6: What measures are you taking to make the redevelopment accessible?

- A. We are committed to retaining a high level of accessibility for which the Vassall Centre is well-known. All new workspaces and meeting spaces will be fully accessible.

We have now appointed an accessibility consultant – Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) - who are sector leaders in this field to provide specialist advice and support our ongoing discussions with tenants and service users. They will start work on the project in January and we feel confident that their work will ensure that the accessibility of the site will be preserved and enhanced.

FAQ7. What are the timescales for your plans?

- A. Bristol Charities has drawn up initial proposals for redeveloping the site and is currently consulting with stakeholders and the local community to help inform the development of these plans, before applying for planning permission in the next few months.

FAQ8. What will happen to the on-site parking?

- A. We are carrying out a full review of parking provision and are liaising with all tenants and regular centre users about our future plans. Our current proposals involve a reduction in parking provision in line with Bristol Council's policies on sustainable transport. We do not anticipate any changes to the current parking arrangements in the short term.

FAQ9. Who will operate the facilities in the new centre?

- A. Bristol Charities is committed to the site for the long-term and plans to own and manage the housing for older people, community facilities and workspace. Brighter Places, a highly experienced charitable housing association based in Bristol, has been selected to develop and manage the affordable housing.