

Bath Preservation Trust Statement to Cabinet re Placemaking Plan 8/5/13

Bath Preservation Trust welcomes the fact that the Cabinet is considering this paper, which identifies the work ahead. The report states that the timetable before you is ambitious, but it is the Trust's view that it is essential to meet it. Until the Placemaking Plan is in place, the Local Plan is incomplete, and as a result we believe that Bath remains vulnerable to applications for inappropriate development which may succeed at Appeal as a result. Indeed this was evident in the Development Control Committee which preceded this meeting.

We would therefore encourage Councillors to reassure themselves by checking with the Planning Policy officers whether they have sufficient resources actually to deliver the Placemaking Plan to this timetable.

We note that the Report recognises the added challenges in Bath itself, as it is unparished and there is not an obvious 'community' with which to consult. Yet it is Bath that is the World Heritage Site, of which 60% is a conservation area including all of the Central Area, and which contains the largest development sites both within and outwith the City boundary. Some of the crucial elements of the evidence base for the Placemaking Plan, for instance a compliant conservation area character appraisal for Bath, are not even remotely in place: we have been suggesting that the Council should get on with this for years now and lack of resources has always been given as the reason for lack of progress.

It is therefore even more important that enough resources are directed towards delivering the appropriate evidence base for the Bath Placemaking Plan. We are not convinced that the Council does have sufficient capacity in its planning policy team to deliver to this timetable, and while third sector parties potentially have a role to play, working with volunteers alone can be difficult against a really challenging timetable.

We would ask Councillors to look again at whether further resources can be found to direct to the Placemaking Plan to achieve the fastest realistic timetable possible given its crucial importance in managing the appropriate development of the City over the next decades.