



East of Bath Park and Ride

National Trust statement to B&NES Cabinet – 25 Jan 2017

Tom Boden, General Manager, Bath Portfolio, National Trust

The National Trust owns and looks after Solsbury Hill, a scheduled monument and popular viewpoint which overlooks the city and the Avon Valley. The Hill lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and overlooks Bathampton Meadows, which are part of the setting of the AONB, and part of the green setting of the city itself. The Trust has a statutory duty under the National Trust Acts to promote the conservation of places of historic interest and natural beauty.

Whilst the Trust is aware of the impact of traffic and pollution within the city itself, we are concerned that a large scale park and ride development on Bathampton Meadows would cause significant harm to the green setting of the city.

Whether for 800 or 1200 cars, it is clear that this scale of development would scar the landscape for many years into the future, and would mar the wonderful views experienced from Solsbury Hill.

Whilst we note from visualisations featured in the local press, that the Council is considering mitigation in the form of tree planting, that would mature and help screen the development and the parked cars in some 15 years' time, it should be noted that the trees would lose their leaves in winter months, reducing the effect of such mitigation. In addition, consideration should also be given to the additional light pollution caused by a large P&R development, and the effect of cutting through the existing screening on the north side of the A4 to create a new junction.

We are also concerned that the Council is considering taking a decision on its preferred option before the final version of the Placemaking Plan, and its policy ST6 relating to park and ride, is available. We note that the excerpts from the Placemaking Plan in para's 4.16 and 4.17 of your report are from the earlier Submission version, and do not reflect the modifications that the Council is currently consulting on, which change the wording of key parts of the policy.

Finally, we note the complex nature of the recommendation within the report, which favours two sites as the 'least damaging' options, notwithstanding the significant damage that may be caused if either of those sites was developed.

We would therefore advocate that the selection of a preferred site for an additional park and ride site is deferred, so that councillors and officers can better understand the environmental impacts of developing a site on Bathampton Meadows, including whether mitigation would have any success in reducing the landscape and visual impacts.

We also remain concerned about the sustainability and the effectiveness of a solution that would attract cars to the edge of the city, but might not actually reduce congestion and pollution within the city.

Overall, we would stress the significant impacts on the green setting of the city that are likely to result from choosing either site B or site F, and urge the Council to give as much weight to the green setting of the city as to the city itself when coming to its decision.