

Councillor Alison Millar - statement to Special Cabinet meeting on 25th Jan 2017

I have no words to express my disappointment today. I really thought that, after the findings of the scrutiny panel and with all the evidence produced by the incredibly motivated people of Bathavon North, that common sense would dictate that this project would never see the light of day. That the cabinet would acknowledge that it will not work, that is it so environmentally destructive of the green valley approaches to our World Heritage City that it would be beyond contemplation to pursue it. That the land would be given to residents to save it from any future development, to show this Council's commitment to the principles behind the idea of the greenbelt. Then I woke up.

So what is there left for me to say to you? I have been wracking my brains, for a new train of thought, for new ideas, for more clearly enunciated reasoning to show you the folly of this project.

The only thing I can truthfully say is that this is a terrible, terrible decision. You do have the power to take this council in whichever direction you lead it. If I were in your position I couldn't inflict something of this magnitude on a whole section of the community who are so vehemently opposed. IF a solid business case had been presented with indisputable facts, then there would be nowhere near this level of opposition and residents would have had no choice but to accept it for the good of the whole community.

But to come up with the same project as before and then present it with the same low level of justification– that is unforgiveable. To end up with senior officers having to come up with every trick in the book to FORCE it through - is wrong. What's worse is that up to £21 million of public funds is going to be wasted yet it will, as all the Council's reports agree, lead to hardly any impact on congestion and pollution levels. Don't the people of Bath deserve a scheme which will fully address their public health and transport concerns? Vague justification of it being required for the "future economic development of Bath" doesn't cut the mustard. Many residents feel strongly that future economic development is simply not worth it if projects as devastatingly harmful as this are the price we have to pay. We could lose our City's World heritage status and that is unthinkable.

I can't finish today without reiterating my key concerns:

As long as there are car parking spaces in central Bath people will drive in. You can build all the Park & Rides you like – but you can't make people use them!

Ask anyone and they will tell you that access to Bath in the school holidays is bliss. This project does not address that issue. Any Councillors in touch with the real world would tackle the school run as a priority. The HGV traffic also is not dealt with by the scheme and simply to say that a link road is coming in 10 – 20 years – well that won't help now.

What will happen when drivers park at the new Park & Ride, get on a bus and almost instantaneously hit congestion on the London Road? They might do that for a couple of days perhaps – but not long term. People will realise that Lansdown park and ride has none of these issues as the bus route is unimpeded and it's the most timely bus route in Bath (according to the MD of First Bus.)

A fully integrated transport policy for the 21st century is what is required for this City and this Tory Council has failed to produce it. Instead, purely for short term political reasons, it has come up with a rehashed version of an utterly discredited scheme that has huge drawbacks and nothing going for it.

You have said that you have no choice. I stand here now and say you have every choice. Please do not do this.

Thank you