



**Statement to Communities, Transport & Environment  
PDS Panel, Bath & North East Somerset Council**

**23 February 2017**

**Proposed east of Bath park and ride  
(Decision E2861)**

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.

We consider that the scale of the development proposal would scar the landscape for many years into the future, and would mar the wonderful views experienced from Solsbury Hill. Following the cabinet meeting, we have the following outstanding concerns:

1. That the Council has not fully gauged the level of **harm** to landscape and heritage that would be caused by the proposed development. This is illustrated by Historic England's letter of 24<sup>th</sup> January, which stated that the report to cabinet appeared to "underplay the importance of the WHS". The letter identified eight separate clarifications that needed to be made, which implied further work was needed before a site-selection decision could be made. The decision to proceed appears to disregard this important advice from a statutory consultee.
2. That the **mitigation** proposed, in particular tree planting to screen the development, would not be very effective in reducing the harm. The trees would lose their leaves in winter, reducing the effectiveness of tree screening, which would take a long time to establish in the first place. The tree planting would also not mask the fundamental change in the character of Bathampton Meadows, to give way to large areas of tarmac and parked cars; nor is it likely to mask the light pollution that would result.

3. We have not seen a convincing case that the public **benefits** of an additional P&R site would amount to enough to outweigh the harm the development is likely to cause. A new P&R site to the east may simply attract more traffic towards the city, creating new areas of air pollution and traffic congestion, and impacting on existing bus services.
4. From a procedural perspective, the cabinet resolution seems to be premature in advance of the adoption of the **Placemaking Plan (PMP)**. Transport matters were discussed at the examination into the PMP last year, but whilst the report to cabinet quoted from the earlier Submission version of the plan, the final wording of the Plan is not yet known.

In conclusion, we are very concerned at the cabinet's resolution to press forward with a development that is likely to cause significant harm to the green setting of the city, but whose overall public benefits have not been clearly or convincingly set out. We would ask the panel and the council as a whole to recognise the current public benefits derived from the green setting of the city, and ensure that this green setting is protected for current and future generations.