

Representation by S. Mackerness to the O&S Committee of B&NES on Tuesday 26th July 2011

Good afternoon.

I am grateful for the opportunity to further address the issues surrounding the bid for DfT funding with respect to the Bath Transportation Package.

Our Council was asked to review our earlier bid and provide a revised bid which included an improved cost/benefit ratio when compared to our original funding request. In order to comply with this request, it would not have been sufficient to simply increase the contribution offered by B&NES. To do so would not have affected the cost/benefit ratio of the scheme. The proposal to simply increase B&NES contribution was most likely going to fail. It would have resulted in a failure to secure any government funding at all.

The new administration had, therefore, a completely impossible task to re-work the original BTP by the deadline of 9th September. Since the previous administration had no alternatives which had been worked through, it was simply not possible to produce a credible alternative package in the time available.

You will all be aware of the shortcomings which have been debated on many occasions over the past few years. With respect to the P&R proposed for Bathampton Meadows, the following matters have never been countered in public by your Officers, viz.

- a) the proposed car park is simply too small for the projected demand (and incapable of being expanded to meet it, due to flood zoning constraints). If your Officers have worked out (as they have done) that the car park will be full by 10.00am – then how do you envisage that it will be effective during the day? Not until after 4.00pm (according to your Officers) will it have any vacancies. It is not difficult to deduce that between these hours, it will have no effect on the congestion along the London Road. And moreover, the fact of demonstrable suppressed demand (simply never addressed by your Officers) exacerbates the ineffectiveness of the scheme.
- b) As a result of the above, your Officers concluded that the scheme would have no material effect on congestion...and
- c) Would result in no improvement in air quality.

It is, therefore, little wonder that this element of the scheme could simply not survive the DfT request to improve the effectiveness of our bid. It was clearly incapable of delivering the benefits which were claimed for it. It would be very interesting to hear how those who support the previous administration's plans would argue the case to continue to support this discredited scheme.

If the previous administration had had the diligence and determination to properly review its own proposals, it would have concluded that alternatives were required to be sought. Alternatives were suggested, but were dismissed in a pre-emptory manner. The current administration had no alternative, therefore. The ill-conceived scheme could clearly not have passed the higher level of scrutiny which the DfT were now demanding. The scheme simply had to be deleted from the revised funding bid. To do otherwise would have prejudiced the entire funding bid.

The Parish Councils to the east of Bath and the various community organisations are, therefore, convinced that there is no credible case for supporting the retention of the P&R on Bathampton Meadows. We applaud the recognition of this fact by the current administration, and we support their call for a fresh and open-minded review of alternatives to this plan, which, by admission of your own Officers, was incapable of producing the necessary solution to congestion and pollution concerns on the London Road east of Bath.

I appreciate the opportunity to reiterate these arguments in this forum – and respectfully suggest that the current plan, which includes the removal of the P&R from the funding bid, is the only credible way forward.