

Planning, Transport and Environment Policy
Development and Scrutiny Panel – Tuesday, 26th
July, 2011

Comment on Agenda Item 7

Having heard the discussion on transport policy at Full Council on 14 July, and that on the defeated amendment, the policy for a more modest Bath Transport Package – as overwhelmingly agreed – seems very sensible. It is clearly more affordable than the previous BTP, and vastly more likely to win some Government funding, by excluding the two grandiose – and evidently largely ineffective – schemes: the BRT and the A4 Park and Ride.

The new policy makes the best of a bad job, in that, as Cllr Haerberling told the Council, it often takes years to develop schemes such as Park and Ride facilities, requiring the full resources of Council officers, but no alternatives to the BRT or the A4 P&R had been developed in the earlier Package. There was no fall-back plan.

As she implied, it is therefore impossible for the Council, let alone any outside body, to develop such alternatives in the short time between this Panel making its comments and the Sept 9th latest date for bidding for this cycle of Government funding. So para 2.15 sensibly seeks to “work on alternatives to Bathampton Meadows P&R, possibly involving rail, as part of our future Transport Strategy”, which obviously goes beyond merely re-siting the parking area, and embraces possibly different measures eg demand-reduction measures.

I therefore support the positive transport policy as put before this panel, but I feel that the documentation given you is inaccurate in part. It actually over-stresses some of the disbenefits of Council policy, without the balancing benefits, and it omits matter in support of the policy it purports to espouse.

Thus I put before members of the Cabinet, for their information, a revised version of three paragraphs on this agenda item [**see Annex**]. This attempts some necessary correction and balance to them (which could also benefit other paragraphs as well).

P Davis

ANNEX to Comment on Agenda Item 7 of Planning, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel Meeting, 26th July 2011

Cabinet Policy – Negative Wording	More Balanced Wording & Corrected Facts
<p>4.5 A4 P&R site:</p> <p>The site was selected after a thorough review of the alternatives and remains a deliverable location for this much needed facility.</p> <p>The new administration has indicated their wish to delete this element from the BTP. Its deletion from the BTP at this time might raise questions from DfT (and others) on the Council's core strategy for delivering economic and housing growth on key brown field sites in the city itself.</p> <p>There is a risk that DfT might, as a result, not fund the remaining elements of the project. However, given the relatively small amount of DfT funding required for the remaining elements, if the facility is not included in our bid, we might still be successful in December. Alternative P&R sites are being considered but it is not possible to include a credible or deliverable option within the bid in the very short timescale remaining.</p>	<p>4.5 A4 P&R site:</p> <p>The site was selected after a review of the alternatives. Further options have emerged subsequently, conditions have changed, and arguments on file exist that some of the considered options were rejected prematurely.</p> <p>It may no longer be a deliverable location, since proceeding with it would preclude obtaining the additional floodwater storage needed – in advance – to allow Council-sponsored major development in Bath with the associated jobs this would provide (see Inspector's concerns on core strategy, Annex 1, A23).</p> <p>Improvement to traffic flows east of Bath is much needed. This and other facilities could contribute to satisfying that need.</p> <p>Both deletion, and retention, of this element from the BTP at this time might raise (different) questions from DfT and others on the Council's core strategy for delivering economic and housing growth on key brown field sites in the city itself (see above for flood risks to that delivery). But such questions are hypothetical. The Council's consultants have made it clear that removal of the BRT would undermine the case for retaining the A4 P&R.</p> <p>There is also a risk that DfT might, as a result, not fund the remaining elements of the project, were this facility deleted (or retained). However, given the relatively small amount of DfT funding required for the remaining elements, if the facility is not included in our bid, we might still be successful in December. Alternative P&R sites are being considered, together with other measures to attain the same wide objectives. It is notable that whilst the business case for the A4 P&R had, as its more limited and achievable</p>

	<p>objectives, the reduction in congestion and air pollution in Bath, the Council reports on the application showed that (even on higher growth figures than at present) there would be no or negligible improvement in those key performance measures. However, it is not possible to include a credible or deliverable option, from all the alternatives, within the bid in the very short timescale remaining, nor to undertake a desirable strategic review of those options (including the option of the A4 P&R).</p>
<p>5.2</p> <p>As mentioned in paragraph 5.5 above we are reviewing the options for a new P&R to the east of the city. Sites have been considered in the past and one of the major constraints on locating a P&R further from the city is that operating cost will rise while patronage will fall, reducing revenues.</p> <p>In any event the development of a new P&R would need to be funded by the Council, without DfT support, as we cannot identify a deliverable site for this bid other than the previously approved site on the A4. In addition we would need to seek further planning permission(s) and acquire any such site.</p>	<p>5.2</p> <p>As mentioned in paragraph 4.5 above we are reviewing the options for a new P&R to the east of the city, and other complementary measures. Some sites - but not all - have been considered in the past and one of the major constraints on locating a P&R further from the city is that operating costs would rise while patronage could fall, reducing revenues. But that hypothesis assumes that a single site would answer all the objectives. This is not necessarily true. Although some split sites were (perhaps prematurely) rejected earlier, the Council's detailed assessment of the single A4 P&R shows (even under high-demand assumptions) that some 46% of the demand for it would come from drivers coming down the A46 from the north and from the A420 also in the north. Since that demand could be satisfied by further expansion of the Lansdown P&R, patronage at Lansdown would rise, not fall, increasing revenues and allowing more modest and cheaper developments of transport options for residual demand on the A4 corridor.</p> <p>The development of a new P&R (as opposed to expansion at Lansdown) would need to be funded by the Council, without DfT support, if it had to be developed before 2015 (the next bidding cycle, conceivably in improved economic circumstances), as we cannot identify a deliverable site in time for this current bid (other than the previously approved but contentious site on the A4). In addition - for a purely P&R-based solution - we would need to seek further planning permission(s), and acquire any such site. Other options would not necessarily require such steps to be taken.</p>
<p>8.1</p>	<p>8.1</p>

The major option currently available to the Council is to retain the A4 P&R and associated bus lane within the BTP. The inclusion of this element would bring additional P&R capacity back up to over 2,200 for the city as a whole allowing projected demand to be met.

These elements can be delivered without CPO or other statutory procedures. This would significantly reduce the amount of traffic entering the city from the east along an existing heavily congested corridor. It would also allow more city centre car parks to be redeveloped as part of the Council's core strategy. Removing the A4 P&R proposal reduces the cost of the project by £5.5m.

The major options currently available to the Council are to retain the A4 P&R and its associated bus lane, and/or retain the BRT, within the BTP. Both are contentious, with doubtful benefit and significant cost. The inclusion of the A4 P&R element would bring additional P&R capacity back up to over 2,200 for the city as a whole but would not cope with "suppressed demand", so that fully-projected demand (ie including currently suppressed demand for travel into Bath) would still not be met, and neither would there be the desired reductions in congestion and air pollution.

Although the A4 P&R elements might be delivered without CPO or other statutory procedures, that benefit is illusory since there would be no significant lasting reduction in the amount of traffic entering the city from the east along the existing heavily congested corridor. It is possible it could invite possible expensive and time-consuming legal challenges to the Council. It would preclude development in the remaining parcels of land identified in floodable areas of Bath (most of the candidate sites), although it might allow some city centre car parks to be redeveloped as part of the Council's core strategy. Removing the A4 P&R proposal reduces the cost of the project by £5.5m.