

JOINT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3 ENGAGEMENT DRAFT July 2010

Comments by the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations

1. The Federation of Bath Residents' Associations (FOBRA) is the umbrella organisation of residents' associations in Bath, which between them have some 4000 members in the city. In the absence of parish councils or a city council, FOBRA is the main representative voice for residents in Bath and is accepted as a key stakeholder in all discussions on the future of the city.

2. Transport issues, including congestion and air pollution from traffic, are a top concern for Bath residents, and the changes we want to see are:

- Attractive public transport in all areas, with positive measures to encourage its use.
- Better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Availability of realistic alternatives to the private car.
- A setting in which the historic and architectural icons of the World Heritage Site can be seen and appreciated properly.
- Good air quality
- Demand management to reduce the volume of traffic.
- Development of east-west and north-south bypass routes.
- Measures to keep HGVs out of the centre of the city.

3. These improvements need to be delivered through a Masterplan for Transport in Bath, which could have as its vision:

"A thriving, healthy city, with an efficient transport infrastructure serving residents, businesses and visitors"

We think the JLTP should promote this joined up approach.

4. The draft JLTP3 acknowledges the unique qualities of the city of Bath and its status as a World Heritage Site. But despite the repeated references to the World Heritage Site and to 'Georgian splendour', the draft fails to recognise that Bath faces very serious economic, social, environmental and health challenges, and that inadequacies in the city's transport infrastructure are a major part of the problem.

5. Much of Bath is clogged with traffic and this has a negative impact on the visitor economy on which Bath relies. Visitors and goods need to be able to move freely around the city. This requires a firmer level of management than is currently applied.

6. The BANES Core Strategy envisages substantial growth in employment and population. The figures may need to be adjusted now that the Regional Spatial Strategy has been

withdrawn, but major expansion seems inescapable. The Council lacks a bold strategy to tackle even the city's *existing* traffic-related problems, and we believe it needs to adopt a masterplan to upgrade the transport infrastructure.

7. There are very high levels of traffic pollution throughout the city's main road network, extending even to the world famous architectural icons of Queen Square and the Circus. This presents a serious threat to the health and well-being of the city's residents, 5,000 of whom live within the current AQMA. Far from matters improving, the 2009 draft Bath AQAP has had to propose enlarging the AQMA to the Circus and surrounding streets.

8. The high volumes of traffic have a major impact on the overall appearance and amenity of the city. Pollution and vibration from vehicles is taking its toll on the fabric of the historic buildings. The city's heritage is being slowly but inexorably degraded. No other world-class visitor destination permits such a situation.

9. Public transport in the city is unreliable, uncomfortable, infrequent and expensive. There are significant areas of deprivation in the city and these are poorly served by existing public transport and/or are blighted by excessive traffic. It is often said that Bath has the potential to be Britain's most walkable city, but the lack of provision for pedestrians (and also for cyclists) means that most people cling to their cars.

10. We welcome the emphasis in the JLTP on the public realm and demand management, and the prospect of traffic-free city centres (Box 9d), but action is needed now to protect and enhance the city. Whether the Bath Transport Package (BTP) goes ahead as planned or not, it is essential to develop other measures to reduce incoming traffic, to cut down on through traffic and to restrain parking. The BTP will have no effect on through traffic, and those who chose to continue to drive into the city rather than using the park-and-ride facilities will be free to do so. Other cities are showing the way, such as Bristol where Queen Square has been transformed from a main through route to a peaceful oasis for people who live and work in the city.

11. The detailed elements of a comprehensive plan should include:

- a. Attractive public transport in all areas, and measures to encourage its use. There need to be more routes, especially in the south west part of Bath and other areas which are currently poorly served, and buses need to run later in the evening. Fares need to be attractive.
- b. Improved school bus services, to eliminate school run congestion.
- c. Better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- d. Encouragement of alternatives to the private car, including car-sharing and car clubs.
- e. Extension of the Public Realm and Movement Programme to the wider area between the Holburne Museum, Bath Spa Station, Queen Square and Royal Crescent. The current programme is good, but limited to a small area in the commercial centre.

- f. Reducing the volume of traffic by means of parking policy and traffic management. The use of congestion charging should be considered.
- g. Proper enforcement to keep HGVs on permitted routes in Bath.
- h. HGV restrictions or a toll on Cleveland Bridge to encourage HGVs to take other routes such as the A350.
- i. Improved signposting to discourage traffic from using the centre of the city as a through route; action with satnav providers to ensure that route restrictions are taken into account.
- j. Greater use of the A420 as a bypass for east-west through traffic.
- k. A bypass/link road to the east of Bath to remove north-south through traffic, on a less damaging route than the previous proposal, to cut out the pollution and congestion on London Road, Cleveland Bridge and Bathwick Street.
- l. A ban on tour coaches which drive around the city without stopping.
- m. A comprehensive rather than piecemeal approach to traffic issues, and integration of transport and planning policies. Planning decisions should take full account of the traffic implication of new developments – particularly those generating high traffic volumes such as supermarkets. No new development should be permitted without the necessary infrastructure.

August 2010