

**The Editor
Bath Chronicle**

26 January 2010

Dear Sir,

PLANS FOR BATH RAILWAY STATION

It is becoming clear that the current plans for changes to the railway station hardly address its many defects, such as:

- While vehicular access to the platforms for the disabled can be found via the ramps, foot access is poor due to the absence of lifts.
- The forecourt is congested, with cars and pedestrians competing.
- Taxi provision is disorderly and inadequate.
- There is insufficient short-stay parking for dropping off and picking up passengers.
- There is limited space for passengers who are leaving platforms and passing through ticket barriers (apparently Bath Station has one of the highest platform usages in the country).
- The office for hire cars has to be in a Portakabin.
- Cycle hire is tucked away on the south side, away from most of the travelling public.

The original plan to upgrade was approved in 1997. We understand the work is being financed by removal of the northern ramp and its replacement by a piazza and shops. It appears 1997 may have been the last time any objections to it were considered and accepted, despite much amendment. The current version of the plan was submitted and approved in 2006, with a validity of three years. The purpose of the latest planning application (2008) is principally to extend the validity of the 2006 version but, though the application is still marked as "pending", visitors to the Council's planning website are warned that no objections to it will be considered.

In the 2008 plan:

- The station's north entrance now allows only the dropping-off of passengers.
- All other traffic has to go through the far-eastern tunnel to a mini-roundabout. There it can either turn very sharp left and up the ramp to (some) parking and to the Down platform, or park in (a few) disabled bays, or (if a taxi) return through the near-eastern tunnel where the taxi queue is to form (and with space for only eight vehicles). The head of this queue, where customers embark, is at the point where the tunnel emerges on the north side, some way from the station exit. There now appears to be no shelter for prospective

PROMOTING RESIDENTS' INTERESTS IN BATH

customers. As, at busy times, more than eight taxis are usually required, those which cannot fit into the queue will clog this merry-go-round until they can join the queue.

- There is no provision for pick-up of arriving passengers: those wishing to collect them presumably are meant to park in the multi-storey car-park on the other side of Dorchester Street (which is not opposite the station) and walk across. What is likely to happen, therefore, is that collecting drivers will enter the tunnel merry-go-round (see bullet above) and attempt to idle somewhere along its path, thereby clogging it even further and probably resulting in a tailback into the street.
- Although current provision for locking bicycles is quite inadequate, it appears that no more places than at present are planned and furthermore these are dispersed around the station (making it more difficult to find a vacant one) and few are any longer under cover.
- Loss of the north ramp eliminates about 100 car parking spaces and the vehicular route to the Up platform for disabled. In its place is to be a single small lift (1500x1100mm), only large enough for one wheel chair and attendant. This will have to be the route also for bicycles and their riders to reach the platform, as well as (for example) babies in prams. Furthermore, the top entrance/exit of this lift is very close to the top of the stairs, so the two streams/queues of people are bound to interfere. Of course, if the lift breaks down there will be no access to or from this platform for disabled.
- Early versions of this plan had hire cars parked in two blind tunnels next to the west one but this has now been abandoned. There appears now to be no provision for this facility.
- The result of all this rearrangement is that a large paved and stepped piazza is created on the north west end of the station with a few shops ("Vaults Square"). Pedestrian-only access to it from the south side is retained through the remaining (western) tunnel (currently a road tunnel).

As can be seen, this plan has many disastrous aspects to it which will annoy the railway-using public immensely. Luckily, it does seem possible to improve it fairly simply, provided action is taken quickly. For example:

- Eliminate all traffic from the station's north front, thereby improving safety and permitting Dorchester Street to be slightly widened at this busy crossing, and the traffic light sequence to be eased.
- All taxis to enter via the near-eastern tunnel and queue for custom under the south entrance canopy, allowing more than eight to be accommodated.
- All other traffic to enter via the far-eastern tunnel. At the mini-roundabout it can then turn either left and up the ramp (as before) or right and round again to the front via the western tunnel. On emerging from this tunnel it has choices – it can either carry straight on to Dorchester Street and rejoin the traffic flow (only a left turn being permitted) or pause in short-stay parking for set down or pick up (at least ten spaces can be found, and probably more,

including for disabled and a few for hire). Reducing the size of the piazza would be the consequence but it seems too big for the number of shops anyway.

- Space needs to be found for at least one, preferably two bigger lift(s), and in better position(s).

Even at this late stage, Bath Residents urge that the station plans should be re-examined and improved.

Yours sincerely,

Henry Brown, Chairman