

## **A36/A46 Link Road (and associated proposals)**

This paper is intended to provide information and insight regarding the above for residents of Bathford. It was provided to those present at the Bathford Annual Parish Meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

### **Background to Link Road Matters**

- B&NES is currently producing a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the years 2006-2011
- This feeds from the results of a study by the Government Office of the South West which recommended that options to link the A36 and A46 across Bathampton Meadows should be further studied. This report documented 3 possible links, viz: a) Dry Arch to the Bypass just east of Mill Lane bridge; b) a longer link from further south than Dry Arch; c) access restrictions to not allow entrance/exit to the link road to traffic traveling between the A46 and A37 (or west of Bath). In all of these options the road would link to the bypass AFTER the merging of the two railway lines – in other words a good distance from Bathford. However the cheapest construction method would have a bridge OVER the existing bypass and railway line – and would be a significant blot in the meadows. A more expensive method of building the road using a tunnel beneath the bypass and railway, and using cut and cover techniques would be far preferable if the road is to be built.
- The B&NES LTP will be submitted as a Joint LTP together with Bristol, South Gloucester, and North Somerset. If included at all, a link road would only be mentioned to establish the policy for building it after 2011.
- The Joint LTP will determine Government funding to assist in capital projects such as link road building.
- The Bath LTP may expand its link road options to include a link from south of Bathford between the A36 and the A363, Bradford Rd. There are no current plans to dual the A363 with or without a link road.
- The Bath LTP has been through 4 phases of public consultation and concentrates mainly on improved bus service, and city centre changes (Bus Gates and pedestrianisation). It is NOT yet clear whether a link road proposal will be included. It appears that B&NES are backing off other initiatives such as Congestion Charging or HGV bans on Cleveland Bridge
- The Joint LTP is scheduled for publication in provisional form in July 2005 and final form in April 2006 – much delayed from original targets

### **Background to Park & Ride matters**

- Three related Planning Applications are pending determination by the B&NES Development Committee, viz: a) to build an 800 vehicle P&R on the existing Bath Rugby training pitches at Lambridge; requiring b) new rugby facilities to be provided to Bath Rugby in Bathampton Meadows; and c) Flood alleviation works. Total cost £6.6 million at the moment.
- This is important since not only will the rugby pitches and flood alleviation works be a significant encroachment into the meadows (and very visible from Bathford) – it will also restrict the location of any possible link road – and it could push the road closer to Bathford.
- Batheaston Parish Council has submitted a Planning Application for an alternate P&R site at Charmy Down.
- The Development Committee at B&NES has already twice considered the three applications and has deferred a decision on both occasions. It was to table them again on April 13<sup>th</sup>, but has deferred until an unknown future date to enable the Council Officers to “do more work”.

### **Bathford Participation in the Process**

- A group of Bathford residents most directly affected by any link road or rugby pitches met in July last year, after which I was elected Chairman of BROLLAC – Bradford Road and Ostlings Lane Link Action Committee. We meet as required and have had four minuted meetings to date.

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- The Parish Council has been represented by Philip Harris in a Non Executive capacity. The PC receives the minutes of BROLLAC.
- BRAVE2, a successor to BRAVE an organisation which fought (and won) the link road concept in 1991, has been formed and widely represents a variety of organizations and institutions who oppose the building of any roads to 'solve' Bath's traffic problem. I sit on the small advisory group of BRAVE2.
- Philip and I have attended all of the public meetings (stakeholder sessions related to Bath LTP, and the Joint LTP; and the B&NES Development Committee) and private meetings (BRAVE2, Batheaston P&R committee).
- I have been asked to join the PC in a Non Executive role on the Planning Subcommittee essentially allowing Philip to gradually withdraw– and will take guidance from the PC and represent them henceforth.

### **Major Arguments Against Any Link Road**

- In the same time frame as a proposed link road, it is likely that a bypass will be built around Westbury, and the A350 will be improved and even dualled. Similarly, the road infrastructure south of Bristol will likely be improved by dualling the A358 up to the M5, and extending the Bristol ring road to the South and improving the northern access to the M4 from the Bristol ring road. These two schemes will create clear alternate routes for north-south traffic to the east and west of Bath. A link road would simply compete for this traffic. Historical evidence clearly shows this to be true for other road building schemes.
- The meadows are in Green Belt, and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They provide the habitat for protected species of bats, badgers, hawks. They are overlooked by hundreds of residences. They may well be shortly included as part of the buffer zone to our World Heritage City (a Steering Committee has been set up to determine the desirability of a buffer zone – with a schedule to report to UNESCO early next year). This is a vital area providing lungs to our city and a quiet tranquil environment for residents and tourists. These considerations cannot be ignored by B&NES.
- A link road would not significantly reduce traffic on the London Road and Cleveland Bridge with any small gains (7% using B&NES figures) be negated by suppressed demand. There is currently NO public DATA to even estimate the effect of a link road with the access restrictions in place (option c) overleaf).
- The Chronicle has waged a campaign to ban HGV's from Cleveland Bridge. B&NES appears to have discounted this option (too difficult, costly) despite supporting statements from the Government Office of the South West reports. Clearly a ban or a charging scheme would deter vastly more traffic than a link road (using B&NES figures).
- Similarly, strategic road signing, advising HGV's of the approved trunk routes (A350 and A37 onto the Bristol ring road) again suggested by the GOSW reports does not appear to be given serious consideration. This, of course requires B&NES to work closely with surrounding Unitary Authorities.
- In any option regarding the A363, all talk about not dualling the A363 must be discounted – the original bypass was not going to be dualled in the original Planning Application.

### **Major Arguments Against the Rugby Related Applications**

- A P&R at Lambridge is in the wrong location – too close to the city – and already in a traffic congestion zone. Who would sit in a traffic queue for 20 minutes to get to Lambridge – and then decide to park & ride with negligible time benefits from Lambridge to Bath centre?
- A Lambridge P&R would NOT reduce traffic on the London Rd due to suppressed demand.
- A Lambridge P&R would not provide any benefit to Air Quality Management issues (according B&NES estimates).

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- A Lambridge P&R is too small at 800 vehicles and has no options of future expansion. Charmy Down has space for more than 3,000 vehicles on a Brown Field site and can be built progressively (as demand increases).
- With the related Rugby re-siting and flood alleviation works, the capital cost is currently estimated to be £6.6 million – or £12,000 per car. Another ‘Bath Spa project’ could be in the offing.
- We believe that Bath Rugby would have improved their current site at Lambridge had it not been for the fact that the P&R scheme has blighted that site. They have no desire to relocate to the Meadows.
- Rugby pitches in the Meadows have all of the same environmental arguments as does a link road.
- We understand that B&NES will need to pay an additional £124,000 for the land acquired almost 10 years ago - if the land is developed for ‘activities associated with rugby’.
- Access to the proposed new rugby site would be via the tollbridge and Batheaston High Street – totally unsuited to coaches – and a danger to tourists and residents.
- Flood alleviation works is entirely required due to the P&R scheme at Lambridge. The creation of mounds will be incongruous in a flat landscape, just as are the excavations themselves. Planning Guidelines will be contravened. These works will not be insignificant.

### **Crystal Ball and What to do Next**

- It may well be that the link road options are not progressed by B&NES and are not mentioned in the LTP. I have a suspicion that this will be the case. However, public consultations are now complete – and we do not know whether the link road will be included, and if so, with what options. We must press B&NES to continue public consultations on this vital matter. They have offered to do this but we have no details as yet. BRAVE2 is pushing for further clarity.
- We must participate in the development of the concept of a buffer zone around the WHC – work being undertaken at the moment. The buffer zone should at least reach to the ridge along Bathford Hill. The Planning Subcommittee is meeting with the Steering Committee chairman shortly.
- If we lose the arguments and a link road is recommended (becomes B&NES policy in the LTP), we must remain connected to ensure: a) it is not built connecting to the A363; b) it is built by tunneling beneath the bypass and railway, and using cut and cover techniques to minimize visual impact.
- All three of the P&R related Applications have hit serious difficulties at B&NES and have come up against strong opposition. We can add weight to the opposition by supporting Batheaston in their petition to be presented at the next Development Committee.
- Any opportunities to lobby District Councillors should be taken whenever presented.

I am happy to hear from any Bathford residents who would like clarification on any of the above, or who may feel that other approaches should be tried. I can be contacted at Lower House Farm, 36 Church Street, on telephone 859467, mobile 07776-314702, or on eMail at SandLMackerness –at –btinternet – dot – com.

Steve Mackerness