



Agenda Item No: **3a**

Bristol City Council
Minutes of Development Control Committee B
Wednesday 27th August 2014 at 6.00pm

Councillor Members Present: -

Councillors: Peter Abraham (Chair), Richard Eddy, Colin Smith, Martin Fodor, Helen Holland, Margaret Hickman, Christian Martin, Olly Mead, Alex Woodman.

Officers in Attendance: -

Zoe Willcox, Gary Collins, Lynne Harvey, Patricia Jones, Laurence Fallon and David Grattan.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lucas, Councillor Payne, Councillor Leaman and Councillor Windows. Councillor Eddy and Councillor Clark attended as substitute for Councillor Lucas and Councillor Payne.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3. Public Forum

Statements were heard before the application and taken into consideration by the Committee when reaching a decision. Copies of the Public Forum submissions can be found in the Minute Book.

4. Planning and Development – North Fringe to Hengrove Metro Bus

An Amendment Sheet was provided to the committee in advance and circulated again at the meeting.

The Service Manager provided an overview of the issues affecting the application and the principle considerations to be taken into account in reaching a decision. It was noted that the proposed scheme formed part of a wider transport package for the West of England sub-region – the already approved South Bristol Link and the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads Metro Bus route.

It was reported that the principle of the scheme and its proposed corridor was firmly supported by the Development Plan and Bristol Core Strategy. On balance, the application was considered to be consistent with Council policy and did not raise significant adverse impacts to warrant refusal of the application. Overall an assessment of the scheme would provide significant benefits to the transport infrastructure and economy benefits for the wider sub-region.

With the assistance of a powerpoint presentation, the representatives of the Service Director for Planning outlined the key points of the application as set out in detail in the report: -

- Officers provided an overview of the proposed development for the following four sections of the route and related impacts: -
 - South Gloucestershire – Cribbs Causeway and Emersons Green to A4174/Coldharbour Lane Junction
 - Coldharbour Lane to Bond Street via M32
 - Bristol City Centre – Bond Street to Bedminster Bridge Roundabout
 - Area D: South Bristol – Bedminster Parade to Hengrove Park

- **The Centre**

The proposals represented a significant change in the circulation around this area by all highway users and included 2 way traffic along the west side of Colston Avenue.

Overall officers took the view that that appropriate signal control and traffic restraint measures have been proposed in the interests of safety, subject to the investigation of amendments to the design at Colston Street. Forecasts indicated that the proposals would assist in increasing the use of the centre by those travelling by non-car modes and in turn, this was predicted to reduce the level of traffic within the centre.

The scheme would provide an appropriate level of public realm improvements including new surface treatments, trees and landscaping. Subject to condition, officers were satisfied that the revised drawings provided by the applicant would also provide improved facilities for pedestrians, the provision of a segregated route for cyclists and the reduction of bus journey times.

- **Bedminster Parade/East Street**

Amendments to the scheme included the relocation of pedestrian crossing closer to the junction with Regent Road and the adjustment of kerb lines to provide a smoother alignment for cyclists turning left from Bedminster Parade into Regent Road. Other improvements included new paving, planting, cycle parking and seating.

In transport terms the relocation of the crossing was considered to offer an improved level of safety.

The principle changes in this area in terms of highways related to the extension of bus lanes along Bedminster

Parade and the re-configuration of the junction with Regent Road. To ensure a greater reliability for buses along the route, this has resulted in adjustments to and the loss of existing footway outside the Imperial Arcade, and potential removal of parking on both sides of the carriageway along Bedminster Parade.

On balance it is felt that the proposed improvements along Bedminster Parade / East Street effectively balanced highway safety whilst providing advantages to public transport along this route. Concerns relating to the re-routing of traffic were not considered to generate a major safety implication, whilst the adjustments to the Regent Road / Bedminster Parade junction were considered to result in a significantly improved situation for pedestrians and cyclists.

It was reported that the proposed route would affect the setting of listed buildings in the Bedminster Conservation Area (The Wills No. 1 Factory and Rock Cottage).

- Officers drew attention to the significant growth predicted across the city in terms of jobs and homes and the impact this would have on movement and the use of transport. It was emphasised that people would not be connected by increasing car reliance and that part of the package of measures included substantial investment in walking and cycling and a choice of transport modes.

Officers were satisfied that the submitted Transport Assessment was reliably informed and represented a robust basis upon which to forecast future patterns of movement in the area. It demonstrated a reduction in movements along the proposed route with traffic being displaced to the surrounding network. In turn, it was reported that this would facilitate frequent and reliable public transport, bypassing existing congested routes to access South Bristol, the City Centre and the North Fringe.

Significant changes in journey times and reliability together with improved passenger transport would reduce car dependency.

The proposed scheme included an access to the M32 via a new slip road via a bus only road and bridge over the M32. The assessment concluded that the bus only junction resulted in journey time savings because of the avoidance of congestion on the M32 at Junction 1. A further shift was anticipated due to increased cycling.

- Officers reported that their determinations had been based on evidence in the context of the application's compliance with environmental policies and its significant benefits to the city and sub-region. The authority was satisfied that the submitted scheme had mitigated its effects insofar as possible.

In conclusion, the committee's attention was drawn to the large number of objections relating to the impact of the scheme on Stapleton Allotments and the Feed Bristol project. The committee was advised that Paragraph 112 of the National Planning Policy Framework recommended using areas of poorer quality land where significant development of agricultural land was demonstrated to be necessary.

Given a number of representations had cited that the soil was Grade 1 agricultural soil and therefore unsuitable for development, a soil survey of the land had been undertaken by an agricultural specialist and BCC Allotments Office. It was concluded that the land at Stapleton Allotments was too heavy to fall within Grade 1 agricultural land as cited in the objections. It was also noted that the statutory advisors, Natural England had not raised objection to the application because the area in question was less than 20 hectares. Whilst the principle was there to protect the most versatile Grade 1 soil, this soil did not fall into this category and the objections should be balanced against the wider

benefits of the scheme. Existing allotments would be relocated and less than 12% of smallholding affected. This evidence had been relied on when considering the extent of harm

Below is a summary of the principal points raised in the discussion that followed: -

- Officers stated that the linkages with existing bus routes were evident and it was inevitable that people would use the quicker mode of transport. It was suggested that it was not the role of the committee to consider the possibility of a rival competitor cutting fares on pre-existing services that cover similar routes.
- It was recognised that a single lane into the city centre was a valid concern but the predicted reduction in traffic, better air quality, and journey time savings were the associated benefits of the scheme. Members questioned the conclusions reached on journey time savings on the basis that there were too many variables in relation to congestion and delays for this conclusion to be meaningful.
- Clarity was sought around the precise number of allotments that would be lost as a result of the scheme. It was reported that there would be no net loss of allotments and that the route affected 12 small holdings. Some allotments would be displaced but additional plots provided.
- Officers clarified the methods of consultation undertaken in compliance with BCC policy. Attention was drawn to page 91 of the report where it was demonstrated that the consultation undertaken was commensurate with the Statement of Community Involvement. Referring to page 10 of the report, the Chairman summarised the consultation process undertaken between 17th May 2012 and 13th July 2012. The point was made that members had been contacted by large numbers of constituents who were unable to access information in relation to the scheme. It

was suggested that nothing had been learnt from the RPZ consultation.

- Officers were invited to comment on the policy aspects of the application and the weight that was attached to the relevant policies which led to the scheme being recommended to the committee. It was reported that some policies were strategic and therefore key and others provided more of a steer to the decision making process. The high level policies in the core strategy that drive growth and development in the city should be given significant weight. The rationale behind this application was set out in the adopted core strategy.
- Improvements around the Cenotaph and access improvements around Bedminster were welcomed. However it was suggested that the scheme in its present form did not merit the anxiety and unease being caused in the communities affected. Officers were asked to consider an alternative and perhaps longer route that would have less impact. Officers stated that the avoidance of congestion was key to the viability of the scheme, providing operators with surety in relation to journey times. This was essential to encourage patronage.
- Members felt that the south Bristol section of the route had been overlooked in the briefing held earlier in the day and the subsequent site visit. It was suggested that the plans for this part of the route and Bedminster parade were dubious and justification was required for taking pavement space away. Officers provided an overview of this part of the route. The committee was advised that the network had to be used to the best of its ability. Congestion in this area had the potential to hold up buses. To address this, a bus lane was proposed which would result in the loss of a 1 ½ metres of footway. A condition would mitigate against any impact on public safety. There was a clear benefit to public transport along this route.

- the principal changes to the M32 would allow for the integration of bus access and bus lanes. This required approval of the Highways Agency as the changes represented departures from their regular standards. The changes had been approved and the holding direction placed on the scheme lifted accordingly.
- Officers were asked to comment on proposals to re-route of traffic around the Cenotaph and Electricity House. Officers stated that too many competing movements on The Centre made it impossible to provide for every desire line. Metrobus would come through Broad Street into Prince Street and would add minutes if cars were taken out of this movement. To achieve a reliable bus service, a robust approach to cars was necessary as they impeded buses. Baldwin Street would be accessed via Bristol Bridge. Re-routing would also allow options to improve the public realm in this area.

Officers were asked how they anticipated visitors approaching from the north would access this area. It was suggested that they would use Bristol Parkway Station.

- Information was provided on the proposed enhancements/upgrades to existing bus stops to achieve Metro Bus standards.
- The committee was advised there was no possibility of the scheme being re-designed and presented again for approval if members were minded to refuse the application. The scheme would fall and Bristol would lose the opportunity and scale of investment presented. This was the third part of a transport package and Bristol had to be alert to the sub-region as a whole and plan effectively across the boundaries.

- The comments in relation to south Bristol were acknowledged. The point was made that the report had focussed on objection areas.
- Reservations were expressed in relation to the financial viability of the scheme and the estimated journey time savings. It was suggested that the changes proposed for the city centre were likely to worsen congestion and that cars would simply use other routes to access the city centre. It was felt that the case for attracting bus users from other routes had not been made and there were concerns that fares would increase. Attention was drawn to the listed buildings affected by the scheme and their importance as heritage assets. It was emphasised that if the scheme failed, the impact on communities and the financial implications were irreversible.
- Other members were generally supportive of the scheme but raised some concern about the robustness and extent of the consultation process and proposed bridge over the M32. On balance, it was accepted that notwithstanding its drawbacks the application was a step to improving the transport system and promoting growth in the city. The point was made that the scheme ostensibly achieved the overall objectives set out in the core strategy and that some of the land lost/affected by the scheme would be brought back into use in the future. The loss of the small holdings was a matter of regret.
- Officers maintained that the critical factor was growth and this required investment in public transport. It was suggested that the concerns about patronage were not well founded as the scheme was effectively providing more options as demand increased. However some members remained doubtful that existing users would transfer to the new scheme, thus affecting its overall viability.

In conclusion, it was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Woodman and on being put to the vote (6 voting in favour and 4 against): -

RESOLVED - that that permission be granted subject to the conditions and advices as set in the officer's report and the Amendment Sheet.