

**FOSBR comments submitted in response to Bath & North East Somerset Core Strategy  
Spatial Options Consultation (January 2010)**

## **1. Accessibility and Transport (Core Policy 6)**

*Question DW29 (Chapter 2, p. 67) asks: 'Does the proposed core policy for Accessibility and Transport include all the necessary elements?'*

We welcome the emphasis on improvements to public transport in section 6 of Chapter 2, and the commitment to 'reuse redundant railway routes for sustainable transport' on p. 66.

We suggest that this commitment should be rephrased so as to read 'safeguard former railway routes for sustainable transport use'. This would ensure that, as set out in Policy T9 of the 2007 Local Plan, former railway alignments, even if not to be used for sustainable transport immediately, are preserved for future use, whether by pedestrians, cyclists, or a Rapid Transport system. In the long term, the reopening of some railway lines may be appropriate, and their alignments should be preserved.

We suggest that two additional bullet points should be added to the section headed 'Proposed Policy Direction'.

A bullet point should be added promoting station reopenings, including but not limited to the reopening of Saltford station and the provision of a new station to serve the proposed development west of Twerton. We have commented further on these points in separate submissions on Chapters 3 and 7.

A further bullet point should be added promoting public transport interchanges, as set out in Policy T12 on p. 211 of the Local Plan.

Stations proposed for reopening should be shown on the map on p. 68.

## **2. Bath**

*Question B7 (Chapter 3, p. 81) asks: 'Should the Core Strategy seek to fix certain elements of the strategy for Bath in this way and are there any realistic alternatives?'*

The first of the two primary areas of change identified on p. 81 is the River Corridor, discussed in more detail later in the chapter. We think it should be noted that the old Midland Railway alignment runs through part of this corridor, from Green Park station to Newbridge and beyond. We suggest this alignment, with its bridges over the Avon, should be safeguarded from further encroachment so that it can be used for sustainable transport. It would link with the Avon Valley Railway's proposed extension to Newbridge. Such safeguarding is set down in Policy T9 on p. 210 of the 2007 Local Plan.

The Somerset & Dorset Railway alignment which runs to the south should also be safeguarded, as set out in Policy T9.



We suggest that the Midland Railway alignment should be mentioned as an asset with valuable potential in the River Corridor.

### **3. A New Neighbourhood to the South or South-West of Bath**

*Question B17 (Chapter 3, p. 110) asks: 'What is your view on the preferred location option [for a new neighbourhood] West of Twerton (SWB1)?'*

Paragraph 3.120, headed 'Sustainable transport', mentions that the Bristol–Bath railway line runs through the northern edge of the proposed location.

In order to take advantage of this, we believe that a new station would be needed to serve the new development. Strong ridership at Oldfield Park indicates that suburban railway stations can be successful: a new station west of Twerton would enable the proposed development to fulfil its strategic role, providing access to and from Bath and Bristol for those living and working there. It would be served by existing local services, preferably enhanced to half-hourly as proposed in Network Rail's draft Route Utilization Strategy and discussed in our submission relating to Keynsham.

We suggest that the provision of a new station should be proposed explicitly in the paragraph relating to sustainable transport.

### **4. Keynsham**

*Question K3 (Chapter 4, p. 123) asks: 'Do you agree with the spatial vision and objectives for Keynsham?'*

Spatial objective 7 reads: 'Increase sustainable transport provision.'

Keynsham currently has an hourly train service to Bristol and Bath in the off peak (half-hourly in the peak). We believe that, if the town is to be developed in accordance with either of the two options proposed, an all-day half-hourly service would be needed. This would fit with the Bristol Metro proposal for half-hourly services on key routes into Bristol. Network Rail's draft Route Utilization Statement suggests achieving this by way of a new service between Bath and Clifton Down; such a service could also stop at a reopened station at Salford (chapter 7) and a new station to serve the proposed development near Twerton (chapter 3).

We suggest that spatial objective 7 should include mention of a half-hourly train service for Keynsham.

### **5. A New Neighbourhood at South-East Bristol (Whitchurch)**

*Question SEB5 (Chapter 5, p. 142) asks: 'Do you have any comments on infrastructure and delivery issues [relating to a new neighbourhood at South-East Bristol]?''*

Paragraph 5.27 states that 'Whitchurch is currently poorly served by public transport', and para 5.35 that 'proper [transport] infrastructure must be secured up front'.

Sadly, the former North Somerset Railway alignment between Bristol and Whitchurch has been encroached upon in some places – the result of poor planning decisions in Bristol in the past



although some of it is in use as a foot and cycle path. We believe that this alignment should be preserved from further encroachment as far as possible for sustainable transport use, as provided in the B&NES Local Plan for the section beyond Whitchurch (Policy T9, p. 210).

Restoring the railway as a through route from Bristol through Whitchurch to Radstock and Frome would also facilitate development at Midsomer Norton and Radstock (chapter 6) and the intervening villages (chapter 7). That this desirable outcome would now be difficult and expensive illustrates the importance of preserving former railway alignments so that they can be reused when development requires it. If this ideal is possible only as a long-term objective, perhaps Rapid Transit could be considered to make use of this corridor.

If 'the Callington Road link' refers to the North Somerset Railway alignment between Callington Road and St Philip's Causeway within Bristol, we believe this should be reserved as part of the public transport, cycle, and pedestrian corridor discussed above rather than used for a road.

The North Somerset Railway alignment should at least be protected as a foot and cycle path, if not used for public transport.

## 6. Midsomer Norton and Radstock

*Question MNR3 (Chapter 6, p. 149) asks: 'Do you agree with the spatial vision and objectives for the Midsomer Norton and Radstock?'*

The summary of challenges for Midsomer Norton and Radstock includes the following:

- 'Recognise and enhance the area's distinct industrial heritage.'
- 'Improve transport links needed within the Somer Valley as well as to Bath and Bristol, especially public transport, while reducing traffic congestion.'

We support these points, and would like to see them reflected more strongly in the spatial vision and objectives. The point about industrial heritage should be mentioned explicitly in Objectives 3 and 4 on p. 148.

The area's 'distinct industrial heritage' includes the Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Trust at Midsomer Norton, which now has  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of track and is extending towards Chilcompton. This railway has great potential as an important attraction in the area, and we believe that the S&D alignment through Radstock and Midsomer Norton and beyond should be safeguarded to enable further extensions. In the meantime, it should be used as a green corridor for cyclists and pedestrians, as set out in Policy T9 on p. 210 of the B&NES Local Plan. The proposed Town Park should respect the integrity of this route.

We should also like to see a stronger emphasis on the safeguarding, and possible reopening, of other former railway alignments. The North Somerset Railway from Bristol to Frome should be safeguarded, and the section from Radstock to Frome, which still has track in place, should be considered for reopening, as suggested in Network's Rail's draft Route Utilization Strategy. The site of Radstock West (GWR) station should be safeguarded for this purpose.

Finally, we believe that the former Somerset & Dorset Railway alignment between Radstock and Bath should also be safeguarded, again as already set out in the Local Plan. This is important in



view of the volume of commuter traffic between Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Bath, as shown in the diagrams in the Local Plan, p. 203.

## 7. Rural Areas

*Question RA1 (Chapter 7, p. 164) asks: 'Do you agree with the vision and objectives for the rural areas?'*

Key Objective 4 of the proposed Spatial Vision for the rural areas reads as follows:

'4. Improve sustainable travel options including high quality public transport provision which is accessible to people's homes and places of work, car sharing schemes and improved walking and cycling routes to help reduce rural isolation.'

We believe it is important that the 'high quality public transport provision' mentioned here includes reopened rail stations where appropriate.

Possible villages for selection as policy C villages are listed on p. 168. Among the 'very most sustainable villages' is Saltford, which is situated on the main railway line between Bristol and Bath. That line is already served by local services which call at Keynsham and Oldfield Park stations. The old station site at Saltford is available and still in railway use. The Council should seek the reopening of Saltford station as a priority in order to sustain the development planned for the village.

Batheaston is also listed among the 'very most sustainable villages'. It is on the main line between Bath and Chippenham. That line does not currently have local services, but the West of England Partnership Joint Local Transport Plan proposes the development of such a service between Bristol and Chippenham, serving a new station at Corsham (Supporting Statement 12, p. 104). A station at Batheaston would also serve Bathford, mentioned as a possible policy C village in Option 2. Reopening of this station should be pursued if Batheaston is to be developed.

Also mentioned in Option 2 is Bathampton, which also had a station on the main line between Bath and Chippenham. Reopening of a station here should be considered if Bathampton is selected as a policy C village.

The list of possible policy C villages includes two villages which once had stations on the former North Somerset Railway between Bristol and Frome (Clutton, Pensford), and two nearby villages (Paulton and High Littleton). Policy T9 in the 2007 B&NES Local Plan, which has been saved, requires that 'development will not be permitted which would prejudice . . . the use of former railway land shown on the Proposals Map for Sustainable Transport purposes'. This includes the former North Somerset Railway, which is mentioned as a Sustainable Transport Route on p. 210. While it may be impracticable in the short term to consider reinstating this route as a working railway, we believe this option should not be ruled out in the long term. The railway alignment should be safeguarded for this purpose and used as a green transport corridor for walkers and cyclists in the meantime.

Finally, two other villages mentioned, Peasedown St John and Timsbury, are close to the former Camerton Branch between Hallatrow and Limpley Stoke, which is also mentioned as a sustainable transport route on p. 210 of the Local Plan. This too should be safeguarded.



In summary, we believe that the key objectives for rural areas should include the reopening of Salford station as a priority, with consideration to be given to other reopenings, and the safeguarding of former railway alignments whose importance as Sustainable Transport Routes will increase with further designations of policy C villages.

