



Transport for New Homes

BRINGING TRANSPORT AND PLANNING TOGETHER

Western Gateway - Consultation on Draft Strategic Transport Plan 2020-2025

Please find our comments regarding the consultation on Western Gateway Consultation on Draft Strategic Transport Plan. Transport for New Homes is a project that aims to bring planning and transport together. We are funded by the Foundation for Integrated Transport. For more information see: <http://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/> and <http://integratedtransport.co.uk/>

Overall. There seems to be a lack of aspirations for growth around sustainable transport provision. What is proposed is by and large, orientated around more travel by road, with too little attention given to other modes. Government policies for a different kind of future that is low carbon, around local and active life styles and use of modern public transport, feature too weakly. An evidence base and discussion of stakeholder input is lacking. It is unclear how the list of schemes has come about.

Comments as follows:

1. **Lack of modern transport and planning aspirations.** The vast majority of the text appears to concentrate on what must now be a transport model from a bygone era of increasing road capacity. The Western Gateway Transport Strategy appears to accept a future of car-based housing, retail and employment and aims to accommodate this 'growth' by expanding the capacity of the strategic road network. We believe that this doesn't sit well with modern aspirations for future life styles, environment and transport.

The language of road 'corridors', 'link capacity', 'growth' and 'congestion' are similarly from a different time and are not part of a wider view. Using this terminology, the document conjures up seven bigger motorway junctions, and well over a dozen other major road schemes. We feel that the approach is now outdated.

2. **Misunderstandings about recent government policy.** The document talks about growth, including new homes. We believe that these should not be associated with large scale road building to open up out of town locations for car-based estates and that transport priorities need to reflect a more modern approach. In his ministerial forward to the 2020 consultation Decarbonising Transport - Setting The Challenge, Grant Shapps, Secretary for State for Transport explained:

'Public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will use our cars less and be able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network'.

From the Government's Prospectus for Garden Communities on transport:
'..integrated, forward looking and accessible transport options that support economic prosperity and wellbeing for residents. This should include promotion of public transport, walking, and cycling so that settlements are easy to navigate, and facilitate simple and sustainable access to jobs, education, and services'.

Things are really changing and the Western Gateway Transport Strategy needs re-writing to reflect this.

3. **Local and strategic traffic – conflict and confusion.** The resultant overload of the motorway network as junctions are enlarged, and the consequent slowing down of long distance traffic is not evaluated. The risk is that you will draw more and more traffic onto the M4 and M5 and cause more traffic jams into Bristol and other major conurbations. These places meanwhile are hoping to become more car free.
4. **The new A350 Corridor.** In terms of local traffic conflicting with strategic traffic, there are many contradictions. However, the suggestion that the A350 can be turned into a fast 'strategic' route seems particularly far-fetched.
- Our project has in looked at housing estates built alongside the A350 including Castlemead in Trowbridge, Clackers Brook (Melksham) and Ashton Park (West Ashton/ Trowbridge) and we have been critical of their car-based layout and design. A number of further housing estates are being put forward along this route. Given that the A350 is primarily a link between new housing estates, out of town development, the West and North Wilts towns and junction 17 of the M4, how can it then become a strategic corridor?
 - As a local route with development at nearly every of the 20 or more roundabouts and junctions between the M4 and Warminster, how can it be upgraded to a new fast road to Poole?
 - Beyond Warminster, the A350 is merely a country road. How much will the complete upgrade of this 'corridor' cost and are grade-separated junctions planned? The Bristol Bath to South Coast Study recommended the A34/A37 and motorway system to access the ports.

- We imagine what the same cash as needed to upgrade the A350 could do for the Trans Wilts railway, upgrade of Westbury and Trowbridge stations as a bus interchange and so on, and very importantly providing a much-needed cycle network within and between the towns of West and North Wiltshire.

5. **Words on paper may look fine but geography and environment and social impact are important too.** We feel that it is essential to visit the real places, and appreciate the real geographical, social and environmental implications of transport proposals early on. It is very easy to name schemes and expound their merits but this is putting the cart before the horse – life styles, landscape, biodiversity the right place to build, etc. are really important today. A bypass for Banwell, Melksham, Westbury, etc. may sound plausible. However a visit early on to the site and an idea of any environmental consequences is an essential reality check.

A bypass for Melksham involves the River Avon flood plain near the National Trust property at Lacock, and at Westbury the impact a bypass on the landscape and a favourite beauty spot has already been tested at public inquiry and rejected (2008).

The Banwell Bypass has a number of local objections which also involve neighbouring Churchill. Both are sites of garden villages which we think will end up as car-based estates for commuting to Bristol and other areas using the M5. Is this what is wanted?

6. **Meanwhile sustainable transport in the area is greatly underfunded.** Within the Western Gateway areas are very substantial urban places (Greater Bristol, Bath, Weston, Gloucester / Cheltenham, Poole, Bournemouth, Southampton, Southampton) as well as number of larger towns. We welcome the sustainable transport elements of the plan, but they are far too few. Economic and social progress for the area must now surely involve a fantastic investment in really good walking and cycling networks, in European-style integrated transport (better railway services and new stations, rapid transit, light rail, trams, modern bus infrastructure etc.).

In conclusion

7. This is a large growth area in terms of plans for new homes and employment. Let's build on the basis of really good places to live and work, and concentrate on transport which really does enable better places to do business rather than just faster travel from A to B by car.

Growth of the area should follow sustainable transport corridors, not road corridors.

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