

Baker Associates Position Statement

4c Projects required to support development

1. The Government has announced the approval in its Autumn Statement of two very major pieces of transport infrastructure which are in part in North Somerset and which very significantly affect North Somerset. These are:
 - The City Centre-Ashton Vale Bus Rapid Transit link, programmed for construction
 - The South Bristol Link, programmed for construction
2. These are two of the five packages in the West of England submitted as major Scheme Bids that had reached the Development Pool. These demonstrate that, on very specific matters where there is direct advantage, the four local authorities have indeed collaborated and these successes demonstrate the merit of joint working.
3. At the time of writing, the announcement on the other three Major Scheme Bids in the West of England which reached the Development Pool is still awaited. This could well be known before the date of the hearing (13 December) and will certainly be known before the conclusion of the Examination. Participants and indeed all representors should have the opportunity to comment on the implications of the outcome. Were the Weston Package not to be approved for instance, the merit and deliverability of the Weston component of the Council's strategy would be even further in doubt and the inappropriateness of the overall strategy even further emphasised.
4. The implications of the approval of funding for these two schemes have to be considered as part of the discussion of infrastructure in relation to other aspects of the plan. What is now known about transport infrastructure to come forward within the first five years of the plan is further strong evidence that the Council is promoting the wrong spatial strategy and that it has got it wrong in terms of deliverability.
5. The developments are further confirmation that to find the plan as stands to be sound provided there is to be a review is not the way forward. The plan is to provide the most appropriate strategy now and it does not, and it is to be justified and effective, and it is neither of these things. The Council cannot be held to a review by the report on the soundness of this plan and could be not be held to the nature of a review or to act upon such a review. Allowing the Council to pursue the wrong strategy in the meantime precludes the identification and pursuit of the right strategy some time hence.
6. It is highly significant that according to the Government's announcement, based on the submissions of the Council as one of the West of England authorities, these schemes will be in place within five years of the adoption of the plan. With that timescale the Council has to proceed now with an integrated and coherent plan where development and infrastructure proposals are aligned rather than in direct opposition. With what is a massive injection of cash into infrastructure, the plan has to embrace this infrastructure, plan for the realisation of the opportunities it presents, and specifically seek to maximise the return from the investment.

7. We deal first with the implications of the announcement of the infrastructure investment for the spatial strategy.
8. The announcement of the investment infrastructure in the Autumn Statement confirms the Government's commitment to economic growth and to the role of infrastructure and development in helping to deliver growth
9. The announcement of the two schemes which are specifically related to the Bristol urban area affirms the Government's belief in the major urban areas as the locations with greatest potential for bringing about sustainable growth and clearly wishes to see the means of achieving this growth out in place. The two schemes are directly related to the spatial strategy set out in the RSS which the Panel found sound and accord with the principles for the West of England included in the strategy for this sub-region in RPG 10.
10. The Core Strategy is to conform with national policy. It is clearly wrong for the Council to persist in its plan with a spatial strategy which is diametrically opposed to the strategy for growth that the Government is backing with its major investment decisions.
11. One of the stated objectives for the South Bristol Link according to the bid and hence the Council is its potentially beneficial role in bringing about the regeneration of south Bristol. The strategy in the Council's plan is somewhat confused in proposing an urban extension as the means of regenerating Weston, but a road scheme as the means of regenerating south Bristol.
12. The Council has sought through its statements and particularly its comments during the Hearing, to cast doubt on the deliverability of the south west Bristol urban extension. This has been a very confused approach. It has suggested at the Hearing that doubts over the deliverability of the urban extension has been the driver in leaving it out of the strategy, rather than the evidenced determination to avoid development in the green Belt which is patently the actual reason. This is notwithstanding the lack of identified alternatives in the strategy. On the other hand it has cited its consultants' advice that 6000 dwellings could be delivered from the south west Bristol urban extension within the plan period.
13. The two transport schemes that have been approved by the Government provide considerable assistance to the timely delivery of the south west Bristol urban extension, were it properly addressed by the responsible planning authority. The City Centre-Ashton Vale BRT connects the likely development site to the city centre and the mainline rail station by a high capacity dedicated public transport route providing a significant opportunity to create development with the minimum addition to car borne commuting and traffic and to establish the expectation of public transport use from the outset. This highly desirable outcome is the exact opposite of what the planning authority will achieve through its promotion of housing development on the edge of Weston and the now proposed dilution of the policy link between housing delivery and job creation. Development of the south west Bristol urban extension incidentally would maximize the occupancy of the BRT by ensuring all-day two way use, providing for high frequency and viability.
14. The SBL crosses the land which would be used for the south west Bristol urban extension linking the A370 and the A38 and connecting through to the Bristol Ring Road at Hengrove. Public investment in this corridor will greatly

assist in delivering the development by for instance facilitating the required rail crossing. Were the development to take place some of the money that was provided for by the promoters for this type of infrastructure could be redirected to other provision, such as increasing the provision of affordable housing.

15. Spatial planning should be joined up with transport planning to get the highest return from investment in capacity and services infrastructure.