

South Gloucestershire Environment Forum Consultation Notes

Consultation on the West of England Joint Spatial Plan and Strategic Transport Study

Monday 30 November 2015 (7pm)

Kingswood Civic Centre, High Street, Kingswood, South Gloucestershire, BS15 9TR

The aim of the meeting was to present the West of England Joint Spatial Plan and the West of England Joint Transport Study and to provide opportunity to comment or ask questions on development options to help determine where homes, transport and infrastructure should be provided in the West of England over the next 20 years. The forum agenda included two presentations from South Gloucestershire Council, a question and answer session and group workshops.

Presentations:

Joint Spatial Plan - Patrick Conroy, Strategic Planning Manager, SGC

Joint Transport Study - Emma Blackham, Strategic Transport Manager, SGC

The Chair of the meeting, Councillor Stephen Reade opened the meeting and began by thanking Dave Hockey for chairing the Environment Forum during the past few years. After a brief introduction, Patrick Conroy and Emma Blackham presented a summary of the Joint Spatial Plan and Joint Transport Study. Both presentations are provided.

ATTENDEES WERE ASSIGNED TO WORKGROUPS TO COMPLETE WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES A & B SUMMARISED BELOW.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY A - Transport Planning

Thirteen transport concepts identified to address transport issues in the West of England and documented in the Joint Transport Study were provided for discussion and consultation. They are provided below for reference:

#1. Strengthen and enhance public transport corridors

Improve public transport corridors both in urban areas and between settlements. For instance new railway stations, bigger station car parks, new park and ride sites, public transport interchanges, and better ticketing and information.

Issues: Time and cost required to improve rail infrastructure, reduction in highway capacity, parking and loading along main roads in order to improve bus reliability.

#2. Extended MetroBus network

Build on our emerging Bus Rapid Transit network with more MetroBus routes, potentially including new routes to eastern Bristol, orbital connections, and extensions to North Somerset towns.

Issues: Loss of green corridors, highway capacity, parking and loading on main road corridors.

#3. Extend MetroWest

Further improvements to the MetroWest rail concept which could improve the Henbury line, new rail line re-openings, and more capacity between Bristol and Bath and to South Wales.

Issues: Would include significant time and cost required to make improvements to rail infrastructure.

#4. MetroWest ++

This would be a significant and ambitious upgrade to the local rail network which could make it more akin to a metro or 'tram-train' network, and may include new and re-opened routes along with wholesale electrification.

Issues: The time required to make improvements to rail infrastructure. Such ambition may be unaffordable.

#5. Walking and cycling superhighways

Building on the already high levels of walking and cycling in parts of the area is likely to be highly cost-effective and reduce conflict between people who are cycling and walking. A network of cycling super-highways and better walking routes could be built across the main urban areas and along main corridors.

Issues: Potential reduction in highway capacity, parking and loading along main roads in order to improve walking and cycling routes.

#6. Better connectivity

Tackling a key weakness in the current network, new links could be built to take pressure off key points in the network and remove through-traffic from city centres and inappropriate residential roads.

Issues: Loss of green field land to build infrastructure.

#7. Pinch points and bottlenecks

Intervention to mitigate pressure at key local pinch points such as the A4 at West Town Lane, A4174 ring road junctions, A370 at Backwell, and A37 at Whitchurch amongst others.

Issues: Costs involved in finding and building solutions to deal with these pinch points. Public acceptance for new routes.

#8. Strategic corridor packages

Whole corridor approaches to improving main highway corridors such as the A4 and A38, which could include improved environments for pedestrians and cyclists, linked signals and bus priority.

Issues: Potential reduction in parking and loading along main roads in order to improve traffic flow and bus priority.

#9. Working better together

Closer integration between the local authorities, de-trunking of highway routes to allow for local control and bus franchising which could contribute towards improving services and regulatory regimes.

Issues: Limited by national policy and regulations and requires influencing stakeholders such as national government.

#10. Local Sustainable Transport Fund

Building on the success of this programme to improve journey choices: this would offer information and work with employers, schools and communities to make small changes in local areas to prompt behavioural change and other initiatives, including smart and multi-modal ticketing, wider use of broadband and home working, and shared mobility such as public cycle hire, car sharing and car clubs.

Issues: Would rely on revenue funding, which is increasingly limited.

#11. Regional connectivity

Better links to London, South Wales and the Midlands by road and rail.

Issues: Would require the influencing of stakeholders such as Highways England and national government to improve regional links.

#12. Freight

The local freight consolidation service used by the local authorities can help tackle freight, along with low emission zones, HGV restrictions and routing changes, as well as improved routes and parking facilities to reduce HGV impact on local communities.

Issues: Would rely on increasingly limited revenue funding, and would require enforcement.

#13. Travel demand management

Would not only act as a driver for change but as a potential income stream to help pay for transport investment. This could include more residents parking, workplace parking levy, congestion charging, or a reduction in parking levels in the main settlements.

Issues: Public acceptance.

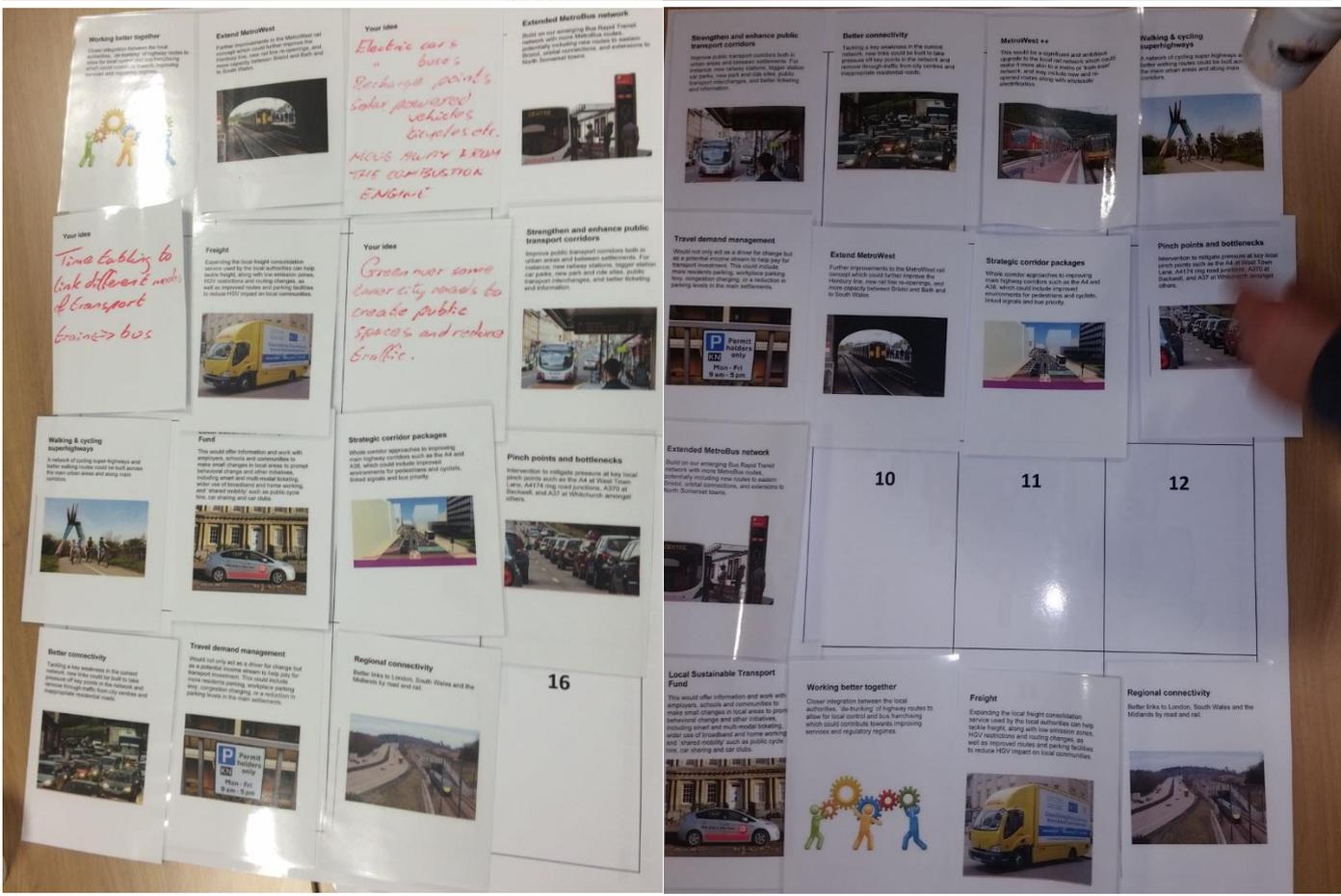
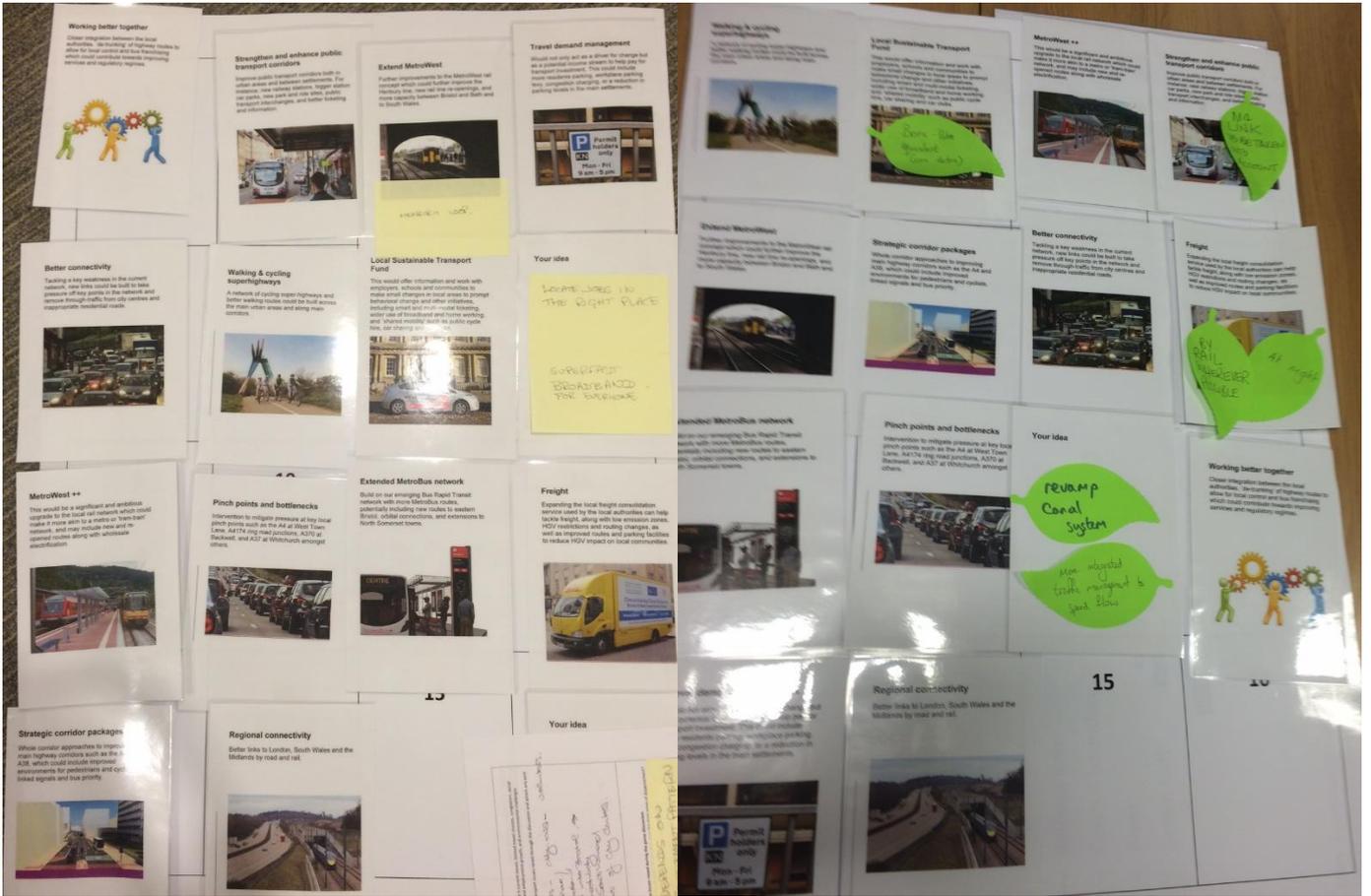
Workgroups were asked the following questions and comments combined below:

- *Do you agree with these concepts (1-13 above)?*
- *Which do you think will make the most difference to improving local transport?*
- *What other ideas and possible solutions do you have?*

Combined comments on the 13 Transport Concepts

- Some of the solutions are Bristol centric and based on transport corridors in and out of Bristol. Many South Gloucestershire journeys are cross country and not on public transport routes. Community transport is thought to be important for these journeys
- Debate over pros and cons of congestion charging and car park charging
- The key to moving people with public transport is to make it fast and cheap
- Routes directly into town from the suburbs/surround area should be complemented by radial network, with well-timed interconnections
- The aggregation of freight was generally considered to be a good idea. Freight should be moved into town in low emission vehicles, preferably at night. Is freight consolidation cost effective? Don't want to see extra vehicle journeys as a result of breaking the loads into smaller vans
- M4 link at Emerson's Green would aid in the development of our strategic transport corridors
- Trams and rail favoured
- There is a need to keep journeys flowing well – implement intelligent traffic management systems to reduce standing traffic
- Adopt modern work modes to reduce commuting needs
- Creation of transboundary problems
- Need to decrease public transport fares
- Creation of transport corridors may have associated impacts: increased house prices, noise, light, poor visual amenity

Each group was asked to prioritise the 13 transport concepts and provided scope to add any additional ideas. Photos from 3 of the groups are shown below and summarised in the table following.



	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
HIGH PRIORITY	Working Better Together	Walking and Cycling Superhighways	Working Better Together	Strengthen and Enhance Public Transport Corridors
	Strengthen and Enhance Public Transport Corridors	Local Sustainable Transport Fund	Extend MetroWest	Better Connectivity
	Extend MetroWest – Henbury Loop	Metrowest ++	Electric Vehicles and charge points	Metrowest ++
	Travel Demand Management	Strengthen and Enhance Public Transport Corridors – MS link to be considered	Extended MetroBus Network	Walking and Cycling Superhighways
MEDIUM PRIORITY	Better Connectivity	Extend MetroWest	Timetabling to link different transport modes	Travel Demand Management
	Walking and Cycling Superhighways	Strategic Corridor Packages	Freight	Extend MetroWest
	Local Sustainable Transport Fund	Better Connectivity	Create Inner City Green Areas	Strategic Corridor Packages
	Locate jobs in right place; superfast broadband for everyone	Freight – by rail and at night where possible	Strengthen and Enhance Public Transport Corridors	Pinch Points and Bottlenecks
LOW PRIORITY	Metrowest ++	Extended MetroBus Network	Walking and Cycling Superhighways	Extended MetroBus Network
	Pinch Points and Bottlenecks	Pinch Points and Bottlenecks	Local Sustainable Transport Fund	Blank
	Extended MetroBus Network	Working Better Together	Strategic Corridor Packages	Blank
	Freight	Integrated traffic management; revamp canal system	Pinch Points and Bottlenecks	Blank
	Strategic Corridor Packages	Travel Demand Management	Better Connectivity	Local Sustainable Transport Fund
	Regional Connectivity	Regional Connectivity	Travel Demand Management	Working Better Together
	Blank	Blank	Regional Connectivity	Freight
	Blank	Blank	Blank	Regional Connectivity

Items in red were additional options suggested by groups

WORKSHOP ACTIVITY B - Spatial Planning

Attendees were randomly allocated to one of four workgroups. They were asked about their general concerns about future development and opportunities. Comments arising from the discussions are listed below and group responses combined to avoid duplication. The opportunities and concerns are in no particular order.

Opportunities	Concerns
Developers to be made to build the housing they propose, none of which should be on flood plains thereby protecting our environment	Developers need to build for what's required, not what makes them greatest profit i.e. we need more apartments for single people
Turn commercial properties into flats	Loss of greenbelt and ecosystems
Better public transport	Affordable Housing needs will not be met
More Affordable Housing - build low cost rented homes	Too high a % of new homes in small villages will destroy current community
To avoid killing the WoE golden goose – keep the WoE as a lovely place	Proposed strategic sites not based on needs assessment of our towns across the WoE
All new homes to be built with south facing slopes for solar	Funding for transport schemes will not be available
Rejuvenating unoccupied urban housing	Loss of land for food production
Iconic buildings not 20 th Century suburbia - opportunity for iconic high rise	That account is not taken of unoccupied urban houses
All new homes to be zero carbon or very low energy homes	Surrounding areas will suffer because of lack of potential sites in Bristol
Build homes in vicinity of heat producers to make use of waste heat	Low density development (< 50/ha gross) make local services and public transport difficult
To achieve the shift to public transport to avoid gridlock	Developers won't build out what is already approved
Organic growth where needed	Uncontrolled unsustainable development
Build community spirit and make small existing villages more viable	Grade 1 and 2 farmland should not be built on (may not be protected)
Protect our environment and ecosystems	Loss of community spirit
Decent allotments to be provided for all new developments	Building on green belt and fields is not sustainable
Regenerate the rural economy	Low number of completions of new homes
Central Government pressure for working together may result in more funding for better planned infrastructure	No or weak overall political control so few 'big' but necessary decisions leading to muddling through
Spread strategic growth more broadly	Planning inspector will insist on more development
Retention of graduates and creation of a dynamic area	Unlikely holistic approach to housing needs
Provide support for small schools, businesses and village shops	Increasing numbers arriving in South Gloucestershire creating greater demand
Get business rates	Inadequate support for social services
Empty properties	Empty properties
Increase in tele commuting	

Scenario 1: Protection of the Green Belt

Advantages

- The green belt, and easy access to it, provides numerous health benefits.
- Protects from urban sprawl, drives up urban density – look at towns and cities in America where there is no green belt – they grow and grow without constraint.
- It is one of the things that makes the West of England a great place to live and there was strong feeling that it should continue to be protected.
- Development of the towns outside the green belt was seen as an option, but if this is to be the case it should be well planned and based on an assessment of what our communities need, not what the developers want to build. i.e. it should be “needs led not developer led”
- Housing can be built close to workplaces
- Biodiversity, open spaces, agricultural land, fresh air
- Protecting the green belt shapes how the city will grow
- Every parish to decide on 10 sites (10 houses)

Disadvantages

- Blunt instrument that drives development elsewhere
- Forces development out into the countryside and out into areas that may not be accessible by public transport or have facilities and infrastructure needed
- Developers cannot cope with the numbers

Scenario 2: Concentration at Bristol Urban Area

Advantages

- The green belt is defined in a different way. It serves as an offset. Should be no net loss of green belt
- We should look to use the brownfield sites within the Bristol area in the first instance and conversion of derelict buildings into housing?
- We need higher density housing in our towns

Disadvantages

- Good idea but concerns about where this actually meant - Definition of Bristol is required. Is it Bristol City Council area or all Bristol urban area or Bristol City Centre?
- Concerns about routes in and out of Bristol and ability to cope with increased transport pressures
- As the urban area becomes more densely populated with people moving to a more vibrant area, outlying communities might suffer

Scenario 3: Transport-focused development

Advantages

- Triggers investment
- Creates more efficient transport system with reduced carbon emissions
- Retains the green belt and improves the quality of infrastructure
- Opportunity to open the railway between Thornbury and Yate

Disadvantages

- Seems like a good idea but may mean some of the green belt is lost
- Villages become outliers

- We cannot satisfy all demands and so there will be a need for compromise
- People do not use public transport even when it is available

Scenario 4: A more even spread of development – Bristol and other towns

Advantages

- Support for organic growth in villages and support for growth in some towns. Yate thought to be a good location because of train links
- Provides support for small schools, businesses and village shops
- Congestion charging for heavy goods vehicles

Disadvantages

- Bristol will be spoilt if expansion continues
- Commercial buildings are leap frogging out of Bristol
- Increasing numbers of people travelling out of Bristol to go to work

Scenario 5: Focus on a new settlement or a limited number of expanded settlements

Advantages

- A wheel and spoke type development scenario could work effectively
- Strengthens public transport corridors
- More development in hamlets is good for schools, facilities etc

Disadvantages

- Neighbourhood planning and control is key, very important

The Chair delivered some closing notices

Some good news from the council. Our contractors are putting the finishing touches to our two ground mounted solar projects next to our Badminton Road offices and at Moorend 30kW roof mounted system on Kingswood Leisure Centre Broad Lane.

When these schemes are completed, the total installed capacity of solar on the South Gloucestershire Council estate will be approx. 1.1MW. This will generate more electricity each year than used by the Badminton Road offices and save 500 tonnes of CO2 a year.

AOB

Pat Hockey advised that this would be Jane Thompson's last meeting as she will be leaving the South Gloucestershire Council in January and formally thanked her for managing the forum and for the work she has done. Jane in turn thanked everyone for their contribution over the years.

Attendance

	Name	Apologies	SGC Staff
1	Alan Pinder	Peter Moss	Emma Blackham
2	April Begley	Fen Marshall	Patrick Conroy
3	Bob Taylor	Erica MacGilp	Jane Thompson
4	Brenda Allen	Colin Hunt	Paul Knuckle
5	Brett Harrison	Ruth Coleman	Rob Webbon
6	Brett Harrison	Pat Cotterell	Nigel Barton
7	Bronwen Dyson		Moh Shafie
8	Cate Davidson		
9	Christine Harding		
10	Dave Hockey		
11	David Chubb		
12	David Matthews		
13	Felicity Harrison		
14	Hugh Soar		
15	Judy Adams		
16	Kim Scudamore		
17	Malcolm Watson		
18	Martin Farmer		
19	Paddy Smith		
20	Pat Hockey		
21	Rennie Dickins		
22	Robert C. Griffin		
23	Robert Moreton		
24	Roger Hutchison		
25	Ron Morton		
26	Sam Bromiley		
27	Stella Beecher		
28	Stephen Reade		
29	Tina Symons		
30	Veronica Soar		
32	Wendy Whittle		

Next Meeting

Thursday 4th February 7pm, Sodbury Baptist Church (Sodbury High Street)

10 years of the South Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan: celebrating local wildlife conservation and planning what comes next.....