

Dear all

Yesterday (23rd February), eight members of the Bathampton Meadows Alliance spoke at the call-in of the Cabinet decision to select a site for the Park & Ride on Bathampton Meadows. Sadly, but predictably, the call-in was refused, with the Tories who hold the majority on the CTEP Scrutiny panel all voting against the proposal, while every other councillor on the panel supported it.

The process was essentially a re-run of the Cabinet decision of the 25th January, with highly eloquent and well-evidenced speeches from our own members, supported by statements from the National Trust and Bath Preservation Trust and from Transition Bath, all of which were given no credence whatsoever from the Conservatives on the panel.

We now know, if there was ever any doubt, that the decision to have a Park & Ride on Bathampton Meadows was predetermined a long time ago by officers of the Council and by the controlling Tory group. It is highly unlikely that any council decision will change the direction of travel unless political control shifts away from the Conservatives.

Our efforts will therefore become re-focused on individuals and organisations outside the Council with the influence and power to stop this appalling act of vandalism. Expect to see more effort in fundraising (for campaigning and Judicial Review), more lobbying, more challenges to the Placemaking Plan, and more naming and shaming of those who have misled the public over the benefits of Park & Ride. There are still several times when the council's approach can come unstuck, such as at Planning and we can all contribute to keeping our opposition high on peoples' agendas.

We want to close by reflecting on the positive aspects of today. All of our councillors served us well. Alison Miller, who organised this call-in, was outstanding, Martin Veal was extremely brave to once again challenge his Cabinet colleagues and stand up for what is right, and Geoff Ward was as solid as ever in his opposition to the destruction of the Meadows.

Eight fantastic speeches were given from members of the BMA. We will submit them to accompany the minutes on the Council website. Julia Williams who stood in for husband Tim, had the most amazing impact (on us if not the Tories!) and Andrew Lea returned with a vengeance. And it was wonderful to have Gill and Ped from Transition Bath speaking with such force by our side.

And we found two new supporters, Alex from Batheaston whom we had never met before but who made a brilliant and impassioned statement, and Miranda who watched the proceedings with horror and then asked 'What can I do to help?' Welcome to our world, Miranda, one where facts are ignored and spin reigns supreme.

It's a pity that the council refused to show this travesty of justice on webcam, but we did have our own cameraman there. Every word was taken down in evidence and may one day be used against them. We'll share it with you as soon as we can.

Keep the faith everyone. Today was inevitable - not a defeat, but just another step on the road to victory. We wouldn't put all this effort in if we didn't think we could win.

Christine, Annie, Sian, Louise, Andrew, Fiona, Alison S. and Julia (for Tim)