

For the attention of Tim Warren, leader of B&NES Council:

Dear Mr Warren,

I raised an FOI on the East of Bath P&R discussions between B&NES and Highways England (HE) on March 1st 2017 with both B&NES and HE. Highways England has responded – B&NES has not.

The council's press release that was issued last night says that the email of "February 10th was an initial response and work and discussions are on-going". This may be the case. However, HE has verbally confirmed to me that there was no further correspondence documented after February 10th – which leads me to assume that any further conversations must have been off the record – which is convenient as B&NES was aware on March 1st of my FOI request.

The council also suggests that February 10th was the first that it knew of HE's concerns. However the FOI emails suggest otherwise:

On November 28th, B&NES was told by HE that the modelling performed by Mott MacDonald was 'not as robust as it could be'. On December 1st, B&NES was told by HE that 'general concerns are being articulated by our operational people'. On January 13th, B&NES was told by HE that 'there are still some issues on approach' and that 'there are more hazard/risks than those included'. These emails culminate in the email on Feb 10th which states: 'I am unable to support the proposed access' due to 'concerns in operational and safety terms'.

However, given these HE safety concerns (that the new junction on the bypass will have a much increased risk of accidents in particular side swipes and shunts during peak times), I am shocked to see a statement, in an email from Mott MacDonald on January 31st that requested a face-to-face meeting or telephone conference, that 'x suggested that HE may well accept broader economic benefits as a trade-off for the safety case'.

Can this be true? That having parking for a few more shoppers is worth the risk of people losing their lives on a poor junction?

It is at least positive that there is no pretence that the proposed P&R has any benefit of reduced pollution and congestion on London Road – it is about 'wider economic benefit'.

Cllr Clarke is quoted today on Twitter as saying that the February 10th email is from a junior member of HE staff and so is not final. It is true that the email is labelled as DRAFT. However, it appears to have come from B&NES' working contact that B&NES was chasing for a response. This also does not explain why, throughout the email exchanges since November 28th, HE has been telling you that they have concerns. It is also deeply shocking that Cllr Clarke appears to believe that HE can be leaned on until someone somewhere is willing to trade political gain for driver safety.

We have seen the lack of respect shown to residents over the library debacle, with the Council saying 'we have not said the library is moving' when there has been a huge sign in the library saying 'the library is moving'. Now B&NES is telling us that it is continuing to progress with Site B – when Highways England say that the junction is dangerous and they cannot support it.

This is why Bath Deserves Better organised a march on April Fools' Day – to say to the council that enough is enough – stop treating us like idiots – we do Deserve Better.

Regards

Sian James

