

Good evening. My name is Fiona Powell and I am very pleased to be here this evening as a representative of the Bathampton Meadows Alliance to speak to you about why our campaign fits under the umbrella of Bath Deserves Better.

For those of you who haven't come across us, the Bathampton Meadows Alliance is a local community affiliation of individuals and representatives of other bodies and groups including Parish Councils. We are not for profit and non-political group and came together after 80 people spoke out against plans for a 1400-space park and ride car park on Bathampton Meadows at the B&NES full council meeting of November 2015. We have worked as a voluntary group ever since.

I myself am a Bathampton resident and got involved because I came across the 2015 public consultation that promised that decisions around a potential 4th park and ride were being based on 'robust evidence'. I found no such evidence at the time and still see no such evidence today. This is one of the key reasons I remain involved in the campaign.

While many of us are unhappy that it has taken over a week of speculation to confirm details, it is clearly a good day for us as a community that the council has announced that it will no longer pursue two Bathampton Meadows sites for a 4th park and ride. For those in the room who don't know the fields in question, they lie to the left and right hand side of Mill Lane, the road that runs between Batheaston and Bathampton if you are crossing the 70p Toll Bridge.

Whatever combination of factors – political, emotional and/or rational – that have come together to bring about today's announcement, it is to be commended that the council has taken this brave step and drawn a line in the sand.

I would especially like to say how delighted I am for Steve Horler who runs the family self-catering business from one of the potential sites and has had to endure an exceptionally tough couple of years with a lack of clarity hanging over him. Steve has been a visible face of the campaign and I am genuinely impressed with his resilience. I hope that he can now focus on extending and growing the business.

Our objective is now to put the Meadows beyond threat of future development as we have been here too many times. The land is Green belt of the highest designation, additionally protected by being an integral part of the Setting of the World Heritage Site, which has its own planning protections. And yet it has been fair game, despite the lack of any case whatsoever that benefit outweighed harm. We call upon you here today Tim to take that extra step and say that you will work with us, and other local and national bodies, to give long-lasting protection to this area.

Today's statement however leaves many of us wondering whether any lessons have really been learned about putting evidence at the heart of decision taking around transport in and around Bath. A gaping hole in the announcement was any kind of commitment to an overarching city-wide understanding as to why people are in their cars and what might prevent those journeys being made by car. I refer you to a report of the Bath Preservation Trust Transport Working Group from 2005, 'Traffic in Bath' that states

'before attempting to analyse the various areas which might warrant change, it is essential to determine the causes of the traffic problem... ..there needs to be more understanding of who is accessing Bath, at what time of day and for what purpose.'

Surely in 2017, 12 years on, Bath should be more in line with this and Oxfordshire CC's approach who tell us on their website:

The Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA) imposed ...duties on local authorities to tackle congestion. Understanding congestion is therefore a key requirement in being able to tackle it.

It is heartening to see that tackling congestion and pollution were stated four times in this morning's announcement as key as these were the same issues to be addressed as set out in the 2015 P&R public consultation. However we remain puzzled as to why a commitment to

investment in out of town P&R remains on the table when the evidence that the council has published would suggest that it will not meet these issues to be addressed. On top of that there is now a commitment to 'more short term parking' in the city. Really?

Emma in her opening remarks read to you the 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life, one of which is objectivity - acting and taking decisions impartially using the best evidence available, without discrimination or bias. Where is the evidence base for this work that creating more parking will ease congestion and pollution? Please don't forget that openness is another of the 7 Nolan principles.

We haven't seen objectivity or openness at all in the council's rationale as to whether a 4th park and ride is needed to the east to ease congestion and pollution. In fact the council cannot even produce the 'options appraisal' that it should have conducted (when using its Webtag modelling process) at the very start of this process that would have considered all the different solutions, for example buses, cycling, rail etc. and spat out 'park and ride' as the answer. In addition council statements about who the scheme is for have shifted over time, precisely because there is no evidence base behind it as to who would use one.

(Looking at slide) We have moved from a written statement that there would be an immediate benefit to congestion and pollution in the November 2015 council report to there being no noticeable benefit in terms of air quality in January 2017. The project is now part of some wider plan for the future, with no evidence about how this will meet drivers' needs in the future (they don't often use one now unless shopping at the Christmas market) or indeed in the context of how we will be using our cars differently in the future.

Then here is an equally worrying second puzzle for us. Given the lack of evidence, how can it possibly be the case that it has taken two years' worth of campaigning to get us to this point today? And yet it has. We have published papers on all of what I am about to say and more, so please visit the Meadows table in the break to browse it for yourselves. It is all available on our website Bathamptonmeadowsalliance.org too.

We have experienced a closed culture from the council. The offer made to us in February 2016 in a public meeting to work with them never materialised. Instead, other than a request to pass across our data, public money was spent commissioning private consultants to 'analyse' our work¹. The insult to injury in this instance was that our findings were then broadly used by the same consultants when submitting papers to the national planning inspector later the same year².

We took part in a scrutiny day about transport solutions to the East of Bath that we feel paid lip service to any alternatives³. We heard no discussion about needing to provide a bus to the RUH or a link road at any round table discussion on this day (and believe me we had spread ourselves out one per table) and yet these became two of the key recommendations from the meeting. Equally every round table group favoured smaller scale car parks alongside existing bus routes so as not to put existing buses at risk and yet this was ignored in favour of a large scale site. One paper given to Councillors later stated that such a scheme would fail because there would be no room for buses to turn, but this wasn't the point. They would stop at existing bus stops.

We have also submitted complaints about highly misleading papers prepared for cabinet and council meetings⁴. These papers claimed in the early days that an 'East P&R is established policy' when in fact the objective was to identify the need for one. That a parking review had been completed when it is only being completed now. More recently for example that Heritage Assessments have been completed when we have in writing that they haven't been⁵.

¹ Park and Ride to East of Bath, Response to Alliance Community Report, March 2016, Mott McDonald

² http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Evidence-Base/Transport/cdpmpb27_transport_evidence_explanatory_note_bath_pr.pdf

Section 2

³ <http://bathamptonmeadowsalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/March-2016-3-BMA-response-to-council-LDF-and-Scrutiny-reports-April-2016.pdf>

⁴ <http://bathamptonmeadowsalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Complaint-concerning-Council-and-Cabinet-reports-January-2017.pdf>

⁵ Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel Minutes 23/11/16 vs. Cabinet report 25/01/17

We have read misrepresentation of strategic partners in these reports; RUH had not requested a bus from P&R⁶, Historic England were not 'happy' with impact assessments because there had been none⁷, Highways England were never likely to agree to direct access to site B⁸.

I must pause on this last point about site B and take you back even further to 2013 when a company named Halcrow conducted a review of potential sites. This report states:

'Accommodating an access junction with the bypass to the west of Mill Lane is thus likely to require a 'Departure' from standard with respect to TD22/06; which would need to be agreed with the Highways Agency as the bypass form part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN)'

So for years, council officers on this project were clear that accessing their preferred site B from the A4 bypass would mean they needed to deviate from set road safety standards. We see this clearly in 2015 public consultation documents where they change access to being from the other site, site F, causing public outcry – these plans were then shelved in favour of direct access again.

So, if all this is known, how can it possibly be that senior council officials and the then cabinet member for transport have allowed so much money to be spent on this scheme before this issued was bottomed out? The fact that Highways England was still saying 'no' in the run up to a public scrutiny day in February this year and that was withheld from this scrutiny day is inexcusable. Only an FOI request in March uncovered this set of events or we may still be none the wiser. Is it any wonder that residents doubt the honesty of this administration?

And we still have questions unanswered. Of 242 questions asked in November 2015 only 8% have been answered. The question about P&R spend released recently took more than 6 months and an FOI request. A financial question about how budget set for one thing, namely the budget should be spent on alternatives to a park and ride on Bathampton Meadows, yet has been spent on this very project remains unanswered. The Nolan principles refer to accountability and integrity, as well as openness. The lack of them in this case has motivated us to continue to campaign in the way that we have.

While I could move on to further examples of where valid complaints have been dismissed without investigation or to where we genuinely believe that purdah rules were broken on more than one occasion but go uninvestigated, I will leave you to read about these in our reports and press statements.

My final call, as part of Bath Deserves Better is therefore for our council to look long and hard at the Nolan principles in their ways of working. There will be many employees and councillors who live and breathe them, but where this breaks down, as it has spectacularly with this project, there need to be lessons learned. I would ask you this evening Tim to commit to focusing on restoring trust in your administration on behalf of your residents and genuinely putting them first from now on.

Here is a recap of my 3 calls to Council Leader Tim Warren:

1. Bathampton Meadows: Put Bathampton Meadows beyond reach of future development
2. Bath Transport: Commit to providing;
 1. Evidence behind any new transport proposals of a far higher analytical standard, including a focus on habits and behaviours
 2. An overarching assessment of why people are in their cars and what it would take to get them out of them conducted by a neutral body, such as a university, rather than the Council's private consultants
3. Nolan Principles: Commit to focus with cabinet and senior officers on the Nolan principles in everything that they do at all times

⁶ They were first informed about the possibility at the time of the March 2016 Scrutiny Day to review transport options to the East of Bath

⁷ Letter from Simon Ramsden, Historic England to Louise Fradd, Strategic Director Place 24th January 2017 <http://www.bath-preservation-trust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Historic-England-P-R-Letter.pdf>

⁸ FOI request by BMA campaign, March 2017