

LPT4 Comparator Case Study - Freiburg im Breisgau (DRAFT)

1. Context

Background

Freiburg is in the state (Land) of Baden-Württemberg in the very south-west of Germany. It lies between the Black Forest and the Rhine, some 60km north of Basle and 80km south of Strasbourg, and only 20km from the French border. It has a population of 230,000 (2018) and is the fourth largest city in the state after Stuttgart, Karlsruhe and Mannheim. It lies at the centre of a metropolitan area with a population of some 650,000.

Historically, the city has acted as the hub of the Breisgau region. A famous old German university town, and archiepiscopal seat, Freiburg was founded as a free market town (hence its name) in 1120. It was occupied by many different countries from the start of the Thirty Years' War (1618) onwards, and became part of Baden in 1805. It was heavily bombed in the Second World War.

It lies at the intersection of major trade routes, grew rich in the fourteenth century as a result of the local silver mines, and developed into a major commercial, intellectual, and ecclesiastical centre of the upper Rhine region. The city is known for its medieval minster and Renaissance university (which has around 30,000 students), as well as for its high standard of living and advanced environmental practices. The city is situated in the heart of the major Baden wine-growing region and serves as the primary tourist entry point to the scenic beauty of the Black Forest (Wikipedia).

Freiburg is a compact city, with 90% of the population living within 5km of the Münsterplatz, and 95% within 10km. It is relatively flat, but the foothills of the Black Forest limit growth to the east.

[Check population growth]

Governance

The federal government has important planning responsibilities influencing urban development; these are the definition of the overall national spatial planning principles, the construction and maintenance of federal transport infrastructure and the urban development law. For spatial and transport planning a common framework for the federal and the state governments is defined. Besides the federal level the 16 states are the major political authorities. They all have their own transport planning processes and plans, which have to be coordinated with national policy. There is no financial support for the development of a SUMP from the federal or the state level. Since there is no requirement for SUMPs, there is no statutory guidance.

Freiburg's city council is responsible for urban and transport planning, and has chosen to develop its own land use and transport plans. The Green Party has had the largest share of the vote for many years, but even so they only have 13 out of 48 seats on the Council. The CDU and SPD are the next largest with six seats each. Government is thus by coalition. The Mayor is Martin Horn, an independent who was previously aligned to the SPD.

Thumbnail of current transport provision

[I need to obtain information on public transport operators. I suspect that it will have a Verkehrs Verbund, as in other German cities.]

2. Transport planning

Local transport plans

While the European Commission now encourages all cities to produce Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans, the German government has not yet made these mandatory. However, Freiburg has pursued a consistent land use and transport policy since the 1970s. A new Land Use Plan and Transportation Plan (“Verkehrsentwicklungsplan” (VEP)) were completed in 2020, but we have yet to gain access to them. The VEP is an update of one published in 2006, which was based on a set of “citizens’ visionary goals” which were specified in 2003. There are detailed plans covering transport noise, air pollution, cycling and public transport.

[Update this when we can gain access to the VEP]

The land use plan aims to achieve a compact city, with short travel distances and no urban sprawl. Development is focused on public transport arteries, with strong local centres. All new development is targeted on the “inner city” which appears to be defined as the area within 5km of the centre. In 1995, the city council determined that all new buildings must comply with low energy specifications.

Priority objectives of the Plan

Freiburg prides itself as being an environmental city. It was Germany’s environmental capital in 1992, Federal climate protection capital in 2010, and was also European city of the year in 2010. Environmental objectives therefore dominate the Plans. Accessibility is clearly also an important objective, with an emphasis on proximity. [Check what else is said.]

Strategic approach

The transport strategy is defined as having five pillars:

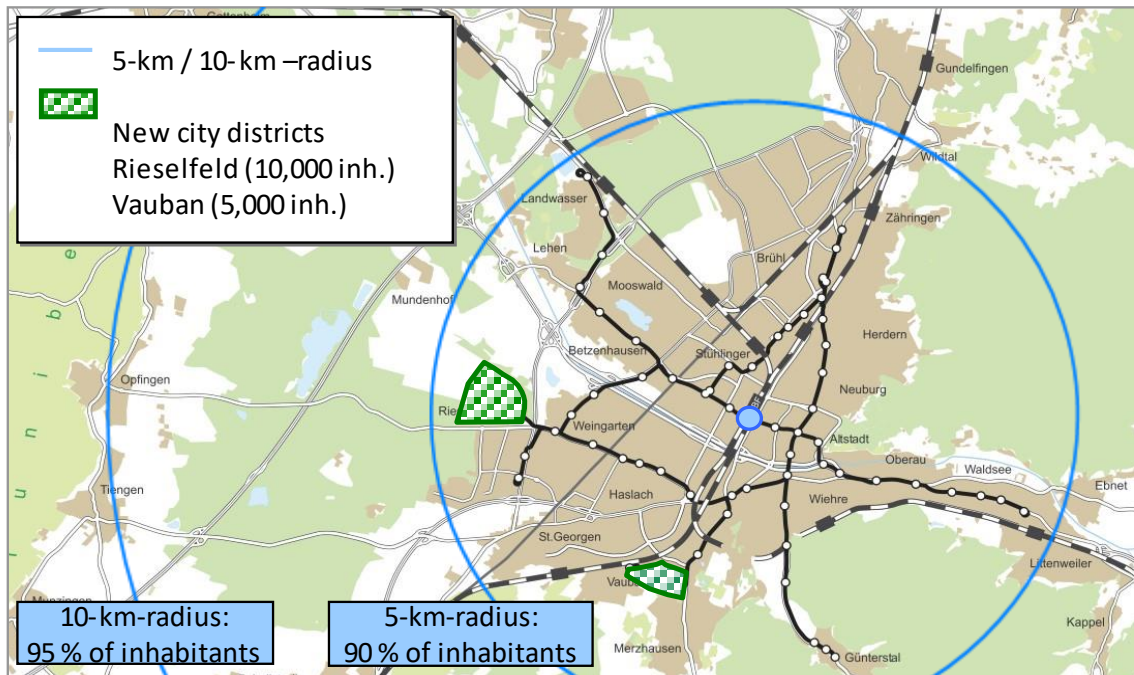
- extension of the public transport network
- promotion of cycling
- promotion of walking
- liveable streets
- limitation of individual motorised vehicle traffic.

Principal policy measures

Public transport is based on buses and trams. There are three main tram lines and several spurs (see map). Trams run through the city centre pedestrian area and are not separated or signal controlled, though they are limited to 25km/h. Trams and pedestrians have equal

rights in such areas.

Integrated urban and transport planning



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There is an extensive network of cycle routes with a range of designs to provide priority and directness.

Traffic speeds are limited throughout the city to 50km/h on main roads, 30km/h on all residential roads, and 10km/h on the extensive network of play streets. In these play streets no parking or stopping is permitted outside marked areas, and children are actively encouraged to play.

All new developments are designed around existing or new bus and tram lines, with parking only permitted on the periphery. The two major new developments (see map and Section 12 below) are Vauban (5,000 population) and Rieselfeld (10,000).

Modal shares

The latest figures are for 2016. These give a sustainable mode share of 79% (cycling 34%, walking 29%, public transport 16%) and 21% by car.

Key performance measures

[To be researched.]

Provision for disabled travellers

Parking for disabled people is permitted at ten locations in the pedestrian zone [though the arrangements for access are not clear]. There are also 15 separate locations where publicly available disabled toilets are provided. Some of these are secured with a “Euro-key”.

3. Relevance to York

Useful lessons and pointers

Freiburg is of a similar size to York, and probably of a similar density, and is similarly free-standing (though it appears to have a more heavily populated hinterland).

It has adopted many of the policies to which York aspires, including greater priority for pedestrians and cyclists and development focused on public transport. It has an extensive pedestrian area in the centre, but appears to have resolved the need for access more effectively.

Its approach to the management of car traffic appears to be worth investigating further, including its use of a clear policy over speed limits, residential streets and play streets.

Its logical and consistent approach to the design of new developments is of particular relevance given the number of new developments envisaged in York’s Local Plan. In particular, Vauban offers a useful model for the more detailed design of York Central, which will have a similar population.

Any aspects which make it less relevant to York

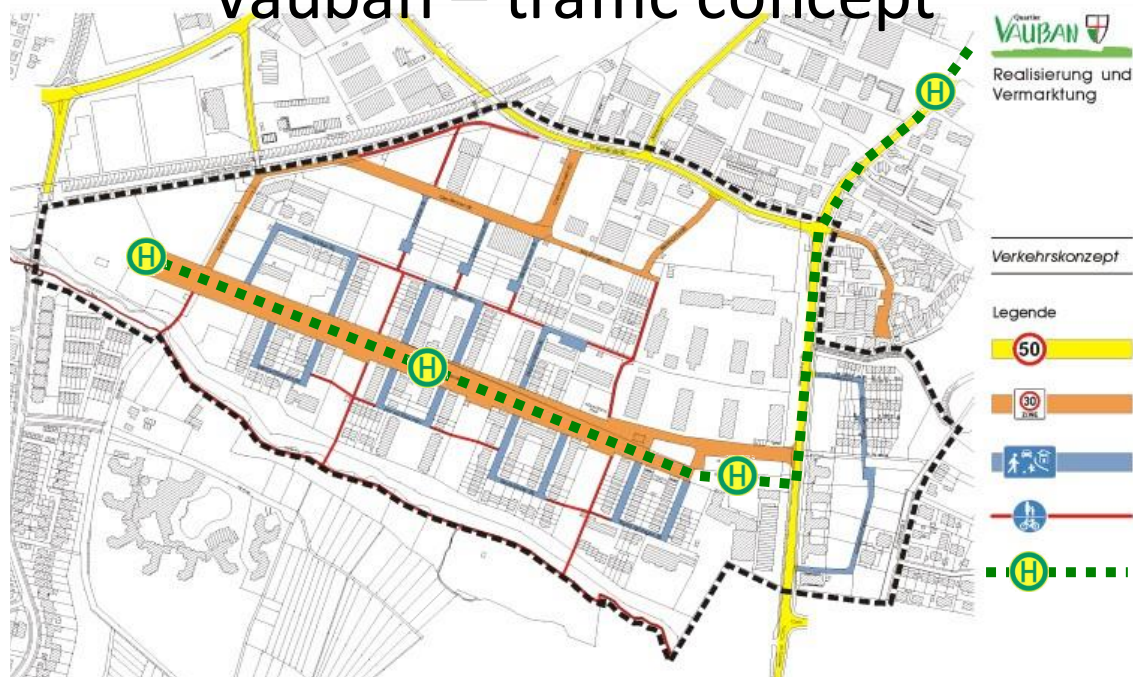
Its use of trams which, as in many European cities, appear easier to finance, may potentially make it less relevant, though in most cases the tram routes could be replaced by high quality bus corridors.

Demonstrator new neighbourhoods

Vauban and Reiselfeld are both key examples of new neighbourhoods designed to be liveable and to rely on sustainable short distance travel. The concept for Vauban is shown in the diagram. H are tram stops, blue are play streets and all parking is on the periphery.

The tram extension from the existing line (see map above) was 2.5km long and cost €18m. Of this, 85% was paid for from federal and state grants, and 15% from land value capture.

Vauban – traffic concept



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Best practice in engagement and consultation

[I need to obtain information on this. However, the Citizens' Visionary Goals of 2003 look to be a useful parallel to York's current engagement plan.]

Possible contacts

[I need to check my records from 2016 to identify the most appropriate people to contact.]

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