

LPT4 Comparator Case Study - Bath (DRAFT)

1. Context

Background

Bath is the largest city in the county of Somerset. In 2011, the population was 88,859. At the 2011 Census Bath, together with North East Somerset, which includes areas around Bath as far as the Chew Valley, had a population of 176,015.

Bath is in the valley of the River Avon, 97 miles west of London and only 11 miles southeast of the major urban centre of Bristol.

It is best known for its Roman origins and its development as a spa town in the Georgian era. The Abbey, Roman baths and spa, and the Royal Crescent are perhaps the biggest visitor draws. The Georgian centre has many fine buildings. It is compact and widely pedestrianised. There are lots of parks and open spaces. The city became a World Heritage site in 1987.

Bath is divided by the River Avon and the adjacent canal, which place limits on traffic crossings.

Bath has two universities – the university of Bath (founded 1966 – now with over 18,000 students) lies on a campus to the south-east of the centre, while Bath Spa University (converted from a college in 1992) lies on a campus to the west of the city. There is also a large centrally located FE College.

There is a substantial visitor economy, including many from overseas (1 million staying; 3.8 million day visitors) . Services, software and publishing are now core areas of the economy, together with public sector jobs.

Bath is about 20 miles from Bristol Airport.

Governance

Bath and North East Somerset is a unitary authority – not part of Somerset County. The Liberal Democrats have control over most of the City's wards.

Bath and North East Somerset Council has established the Bath City Forum, comprising councillors representing wards in Bath and up to 13 co-opted members drawn from the communities of the city. The first meeting of the Forum was held in October 2015.

The West of England Combined Authority, which includes Bath and North East Somerset, publishes an Industrial Strategy and is responsible for the Joint Local Transport Plan (LTP4) described below. Its Transport Delivery Plan is a 5-year plan for transport investment.

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/>

Thumbnail of current transport provision

Bath is served by the Bath Spa railway station (Great Western) which has regular connections to London Bristol and points west. and south (The Wessex Main Line). There is also a suburban station on the main line, Oldfield Park, which has a limited commuter service to Bristol as well as other destinations.

National Express operates [coach](#) services from Bath Bus Station to a number of cities. Bath also has a network of bus routes run by First West of England, with services to surrounding towns and cities, Faresaver bus company also operates numerous services to surrounding towns. The Bath Bus Company runs open top double-decker bus tours around the city, as well as frequent services to Bristol Airport. Stagecoach West also provides services to Tetbury and the South Cotswolds.

In 2005 a detailed plan was presented to the Council to re-introduce trams to Bath, but the plan did not proceed, reportedly due to the focus by the Council on the government-supported busway planned to run from the Newbridge park and ride into the city centre. Part of the justification for the proposed tram reintroduction plan was the pollution from vehicles within the city, which was twice the legal levels, and the heavy traffic congestion due to high car usage. In 2015 another group, Bath Trams tried to generate interest in tram construction. In November 2016, the [West of England Local Enterprise Partnership](#) began a consultation process on their Transport Vision Summary Document, outlining potential [light rail/tram](#) routes in the region, one of which being a route from [Bristol city centre](#) along the [A4 road](#) to Bath to relieve pressure on bus and rail services between the two cities. Finally, in 2017, the Council announced a feasibility study, due to be published by March 2018, into implementing a light rail or tram system in the city.

Transport planning

Local transport plans

There have been a number of transport plans. Colin Buchanan and Partners carried out a rather car-oriented commission in the mid 60s. A Bristol/Bath to South Coast study was published in 2004 – carried out by WSP Global. Again, it seems to have been rather highways-focussed. There have been several other regional and sub-regional studies.

A Local transport Plan was prepared jointly for the West of England Partnership. Called JLTP3, this covered and the four West of England local authorities – Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council, and South Gloucestershire Council. The document is available here <https://travelwest.info/app/uploads/2020/05/JLTP4-joint-local-transport-plan-3.pdf>

There have been five annual monitoring reports, and supplementary documents. These are available to view online at the above link.

“A Joint Transport Study (JTS) was undertaken to recommend how to address both current transport challenges, including carbon reduction, and forecast growth. “

A new draft Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4 March 2020) has now been prepared by the West of England Combined Authority. This sets out the vision for transport investment in the West of England and the policy framework within which the West of England authorities will work. The new JLTP builds on the two previous plans, 2006 to 2011 and 2011 to 2026 and the Joint Transport Study, October 2017, and covers the period from 2020 to 2036.

Overall the draft JLTP4's vision for transport is: 'Connecting people and places for a vibrant, inclusive and carbon neutral West of England'

Joint Local Transport Plan

Connecting people and places for a vibrant, inclusive and carbon neutral West of England.



The full version of the JLTP4 can be accessed via the Travelwest website at www.travelwest.info/JLTP.

Figure 1.2 on page 16 shows how the LTP4 relates to other strategies, including Local Plans and the Industrial Strategy.

The Department for Transport has selected the Combined Authority area to become a Future Transport Zones. £24.4m has been allocated to deliver this programme of investment in the region. The programme runs from July 2020 to March 2024.

Priority objectives of the Plan

The JLTP aims to:

- Support sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- Enable equality and improve accessibility
- Take action against climate change and address poor air quality
- Contribute to better health, wellbeing, safety and security
- Create better places

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“By 2036 at the completion of the JLTP4 the West of England will be a carbon neutral community where walking and cycling are the preferred choice for shorter journeys, and the vast majority of vehicles on the road are decarbonised and no longer powered by fossil fuels. People will have the opportunity to move around the region using affordable, high quality and frequent public transport to access their jobs and leisure activities and for vehicles delivering goods. Public spaces will be greener, cleaner, people focused places that are no longer dominated by vehicles. “

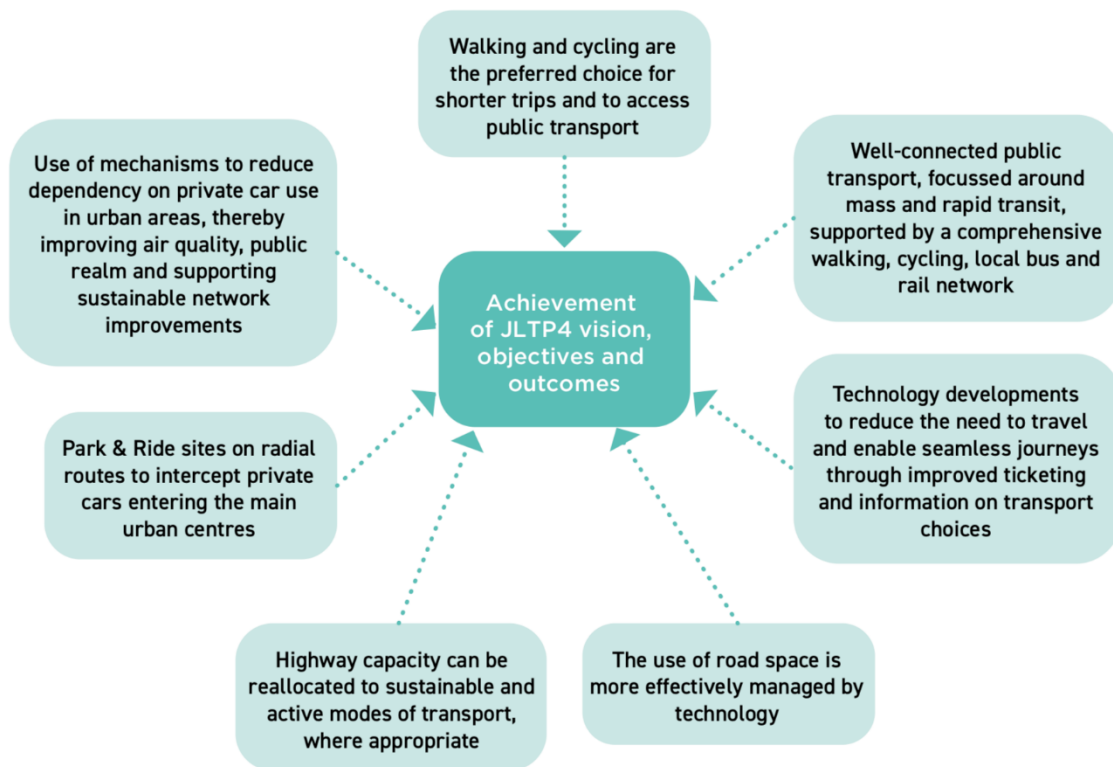
“Our Joint Local Transport Plan aims to ensure that transport is carbon neutral by 2030. To encourage people to move away from cars, we will need to provide transformational

alternatives such as a new mass transit network and promote and transform cleaner and greener and sustainable forms of transport – cycling, walking and public transport.”

Strategic approach

LTP4 amounts to over 300 pages, which will take some absorbing! This document provides a comprehensive overview of the transport challenges facing the area, with multiple examples of good practice.

Figure 5.1: Strategy for improving connectivity



“Connectivity’ is the key driver, and LTP4 distinguishes between local connectivity, i.e. within Bath, and wider connectivity – linking it to major destinations throughout the region and nationally. At the really local level there is ‘neighbourhood connectivity’.

“Our Joint Local Transport Plan aims to ensure that transport is carbon neutral by 2030. To do this there has to be a substantial shift towards cleaner and greener and more sustainable forms of transport. We will need to maximise every opportunity and work in partnership with sustainable transport organisations, bus and rail operators, to encourage and help people switch from cars to cycling, walking and public transport.”

Section 7 of the JLTP takes a strategic view of freight.

Preparation of LTP4 has included the commissioning of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (November 2018). This looks to have some interesting approaches <https://travelwest.info/app/uploads/2020/05/JLTP4-Strategic-Environmental-Assessment-SEA.pdf> . This plots each SEA objective, the likely impacts and possible mitigation.

Principal policy measures

Tough measures that are to be considered are:

- Management of parking provision – on street, off street, residential and business parking
- Reallocation of road space to sustainable transport modes
- Road user charging e.g. as applied in London with revenue reinvested in alternatives
- Workplace parking levy e.g. as applied in Nottingham with revenue reinvested in alternatives
- City centre and town centre private vehicle bans.

These measures will raise revenue to reinvest in alternatives modes of transport.

In an attempt to reduce the level of car use, P&R opportunities have been introduced at three sites at Odd Down, Lansdown and Newbridge. In my opinion, Bath's P&R system is far less well developed than York's, but there are plans to augment them.

A very large increase in city centre parking was provided when the new SouthGate shopping centre was developed. This has had the effect of introducing more car traffic into the centre. A bus gate scheme in Northgate aims to reduce private car use in the city centre.

In March 2021 the city introduced the first charging zone for Clean Air outside London.
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/bath-clean-air-zone>

Bath is on National Cycle Route 4, and houses one of Britain's first official Bicycle Paths, following the railway line west towards Bristol, and the canal towpath east towards London. Bath has been trying to promote the use of bicycles, with some success. It has participated in the Cycling Ambition programme.

The West of England Bus Strategy (June 2020) proposes a shift in road space away from cars and towards buses on key corridors. The target is to double bus passengers by 2036.

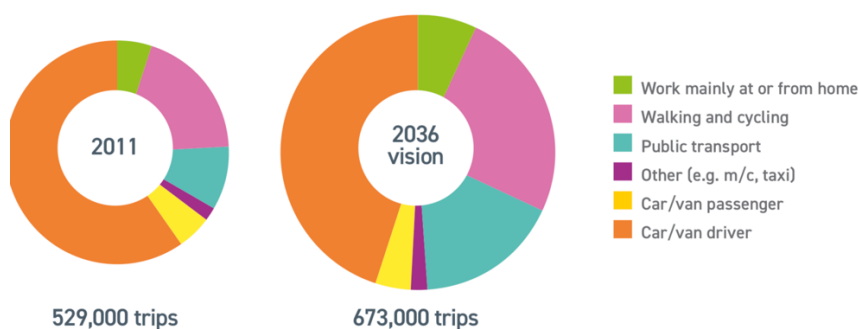
In 2018/19, the councils launched a 50 km network of three metrobus corridors, creating a new, bus-based rapid transit mode with a forecast passenger total of 4.5 million passenger trips per year. Metrobus is characterised by segregation, high visibility, rapid boarding, low emissions and high quality vehicles. Benefits are shared with walkers and cyclists.

Local transport will focus on these policies, which are designed to prioritise active travel:

- Enable walking and cycling, 'active modes of travel', to be the preferred choice for shorter journeys
- Reduce the number and severity of casualties for all road users
- Encourage residents and employees to make more sustainable and healthier travel choices
- Support opportunities for all sectors of the population to access the services they require, wherever they live
- Support the identification and implementation of measures that will improve air quality

This still needs quite a bit more text.

Modal shares



Section 12 of the JLTP sets out the details of how it will be monitored and progress measured.

In general terms, the area is highly car-dependent. Buses are underdeveloped compared with York. The P&R system is still being developed, as is a “metro bus” (rapid transit) service connecting major destinations.

Walking and cycling are seen as the main modes for short-distance travel.

Key performance measures

Table 12.1: Indicators against JLTP4 Objectives

= direct impact = indirect impact

Indicators	Climate change & air quality	Sustainable & inclusive economic growth	Equality & accessibility	Health, wellbeing, safety & security	Better places
Road congestion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bus satisfaction			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Air quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Carbon emissions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Electric Vehicles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Road Safety			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Modal share	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Provision for disabled travellers

There are general aspirations to enable improvements in accessibility, but not much detail. Fully accessible buses are the main focus.

2. Relevance to York

Useful lessons and pointers

Bath shares some key characteristic with York, in particular the historic core and large number of visitors, with its well-developed hospitality sector. Bath also suffers from severe

congestion, exacerbated by the fact that there is no real ring road and pinch-points where the road network meets the river.

The JLTP objectives and policies for transport and new development are very similar to those that emerged from the YCT's recent workshop on Sustainable Communities.

The implementation of JLTP\$ raises some interesting financial challenges. "Raising additional local income will involve some difficult decisions." Potential local funding options that could be considered are:

- Community Infrastructure Levy – a planning charge for new development to pay for local infrastructure
- Highways England Shadow Toll – funding from Highways England for schemes that reduce pressure on the Strategic Road Network
- Council Tax Precept – increasing council tax for residents of the West of England
- Business Rate Supplement – increasing rates for businesses in the West of England
- Workplace Parking Levy – employers are charged for having private parking spaces. This charge can be passed on to employees who use the spaces
- Road Pricing, for example congestion charging to drive into specific areas
- Revenue raised from Mass Transit services
Clean Air Fund and CAZ Implementation Fund I
- Public Health funding

JLTP4 contains a useful risk assessment, which might be adapted for York.

We could say more here on other policy measures.

Any aspects which make it less relevant to York

While Bath itself is relatively small, it is closely tied into the wider economic region. The largely hilly terrain of much of the city makes cycling challenging.

Although B&NES is a unitary authority, it has chosen to prepare its LTP as part of a wider, and much larger, Combined Authority. However, this does not mean that there nothing to be learned about the preparation of an LTP.

Demonstrator new neighbourhoods

There is a new development near the city centre called Bath Riverside which has received plaudits for its approach to transport. This is a development of apartments and town houses, built to high environmental standards by Crest Nicholson. It is a short walk from the city centre, and has underground car parking. Approval was granted in 2010, based on a Master Plan. Phase 1 comprises 299 homes, built on a former industrial site.



Best practice in engagement and consultation

The LTP4 consultation approach and results are described here <https://travelwest.info/app/uploads/2020/05/JLTP4-consultation-report.pdf>. The approach to consultation and the tools used may be of relevance to York.

In my opinion, the LTP document is of a high standard, written in accessible English, and makes helpful use of diagrams and symbols to explain things.

The use of brief case studies helps to illustrate the type of improvements that are being sought and their benefits. This works well where the LTP covers a wide area that not everyone will be familiar with. But it also aids understanding by drilling down from the strategic to the recognisable and practical. Because LTP4 covers several local authority areas, it is able to draw on a pool of successful local examples that could be applied more generally.

Possible contacts

Bath contacts to be researched. The right person at the Combined Authority can be found via comms@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

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