

Response to Consultation on P&R East of Bath

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1.0 Executive Summary

The Council is anticipating growth within the City in coming years. The Getting Around Bath Transport Strategy recognises the advantages of a park & ride site to the East of the City in helping to balance increased traffic demand.

Previous work has been carried out on site options for an East park & ride. From this evaluation, three sites had been identified as most viable. Between 7 September 2015 and 18 October 2015, a consultation was held with the public to determine which site would be preferable.

- Over 4000 people took part in the consultation process. The primary method of participating was on-line. Three drop in events were also held in localities affected by the proposals.
- 1970 (49%) of respondents agreed with the Getting Around Bath Transport Strategy that there was a need for a park & ride site to the East of Bath. 2050 (51%) of respondents did not agree with the need for a park & ride site to the East of Bath.
- Based on responses from those who supplied an identifiable postcode, Bath and North East Somerset respondents were 51.5% in favour and 48.5% against the proposal to build a Park & Ride east of Bath.
- The majority of respondents from within the City of Bath (66.2%) were in favour of a new Park & Ride to the east.
- The majority of respondents from within the Bathavon North area were against the provision of a Park & Ride (74.8%).
- When including those from outside BANES and those where only partial postcodes or no postcodes were given, 49% supported a new park and ride in the east of the City and 51% opposed it
- Three sites were suggested for the Park & Ride. Of those who gave their views on a preferred location – 54% chose site B (west of Mill Lane), 31% identified site A (east of A4/A46 Junction) and 15% chose site F (east of Mill Lane).
- More than 4,000 respondents completed the survey.

Analysis of the responses indicates that many people had a range of issues with the three sites proposed, and also refused to acknowledge the need for a new park & ride site. Some provided extensive arguments against, in particular noting that they considered the evidence provided was not strong enough to support the proposals or that implementation of a park & ride would not deliver the stated objectives. However a number of respondents wished to see a park & ride promoted but on sites considered unsuitable by the Council, such as Charmy Down.

An alternative Park & Rail option, which was being promoted independently of the consultation, was supported by some as a less intrusive solution. A significant number of respondents, particularly from the Bathampton/Batheaston region, noted the need for an

A36/A46 link to reduce congestion, which they considered would negate the need for a park and ride site.

2.0 Background

The Council's 'Getting Around Bath' Transport Strategy identifies a number of proposals to accommodate the growth in travel expected within the City of Bath over the next 20 years. A number of development opportunities currently exist within Bath, including employment and housing growth within Bath Riverside and the Bath Enterprise Area. This desirable economic growth will increase demand on Bath's road network, particularly in the centre of the City.

Park and Ride provides motorists with an efficient public transport offer at the edge of the city which reduces traffic in the historic central area. Bath's three established Park and Ride facilities are very popular with the public and have recently been expanded to provide a total of 2,860 Park and Ride spaces. However, none of the existing sites are easily accessible to motorists entering Bath from the East. The Council's 'Getting Around Bath' Transport Strategy notes that "A park and ride site to the east would complete the picture, allowing people to choose not to drive into the centre and thus contribute to a better city environment."

A Park and Ride site to the east of the city has been established in Council policy for many years. Previous attempts to identify a suitable site for a Park & Ride to the East of Bath have been undertaken. A study carried out in 2013 evaluated eight sites for feasibility. From this list of sites, three were identified as being most viable for further consideration.

2.1 Principles

Park and Ride facilities need to be:

1. Well located for main roads to capture car drivers entering the City from the East.
2. Near to the city to reduce travel time from the P&R.
3. Near to the city to reduce running costs.
4. Large enough to support the expected demand.

For the proposed Park and Ride facility on the eastern side of the city, primarily aimed at motorists using the A4 corridor, demand forecasts from the recently updated Bath Transport Model indicate that daily demand would require a P&R of about 1,400 vehicles.

2.2 Description of the Sites

The previous considerations suggest that the sites below are most viable for this facility:

Site East of A4/A46 Junction

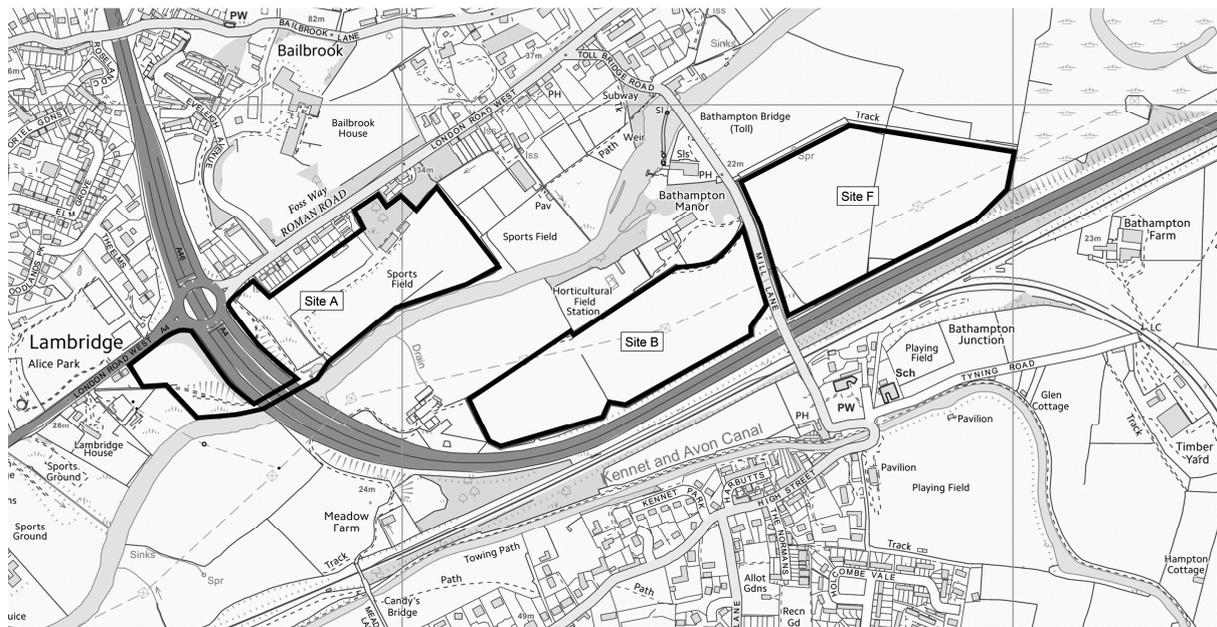
This site is closest to the city with access from London Road West, with the majority of the site being to the east of the London Road roundabout.

Site West of Mill Lane

The site is located adjacent to the A4 Bathaston Bypass to the west of Mill Lane. Access may need to be via a new junction onto the A4 dual carriageway.

Site East of Mill Lane

This site is located adjacent to the A4 Bathaston Bypass to the east of Mill Lane. Planning permission for this site was granted in May 2009 with access via a new junction on the A4 dual carriageway but was not progressed. The site is owned by Bath and North East Somerset Council.



3.0 The Consultation

The Consultation ran from September 7 to October 18. The Council had no preference on which location to pursue and sought feedback from the public to identify the most appropriate site for more detailed consideration.

The objectives of the consultation were:

- To give members of the public and stakeholders easily understood information about the options and allow them to respond.
- To understand the level of support or opposition for particular site options

3.1 Who we consulted

The consultation was open to all members of the public and stakeholders. Particular regard was given to holding events for residents living in areas close to the three proposed locations, primarily Bathampton and Batheaston. 439 people took part in these events.

3.2 Consultation Material and Distribution

The Consultation was launched in the Council's 'Connect' publication, which is delivered to every household in Bath and North East Somerset.

The primary mechanism for feedback was via the Council's on-line consultation system. The link was promoted via press releases, Council e-newsletter, web site and Twitter feed. (Due to a technical issue with this system at the start of the consultation, a separate Survey Monkey link was provided. The results from this survey have also been incorporated into the totals).

Three drop in sessions were held to enable people to find out more information and express their feedback via hard copy forms. Posters promoting the drop in sessions were put on display in Bathampton and Batheaston, including local stores, dentist and doctor's surgery.

Additionally, posters notifying of the on line consultation were placed in Avon Street, Charlotte Street car parks and Lansdown and Odd Down park and ride sites. Leafleting of cars in Charlotte Street and Lansdown car parks was undertaken.

Supporting material was included on the web site, including a copy of the 2013 Halcrow site evaluation report and copies of the exhibition display panels which outlined the issues and benefits of the proposals. Links were also included to the Getting Around Bath Transport Strategy. During the course of the consultation, additional material was added to the web page in response to requests for further background information (in particular evaluation of park & rail as an alternative).

The consultation asked the following questions:

Q1. The Getting Around Bath Transport Strategy identifies the need for a P&R East of Bath. Do you agree with this proposal?

Q2. Which of the three sites would you prefer for this proposal?

Q3 A free text area for comments or suggestions.

Additional questions for demographic purposes covered age, gender, disability and location.

3.3 Overview of Consultation Responses

We received a total of 4185 consultation responses¹.

On-line mechanisms were the largest source of feedback, accounting for more than 80% of all responses. 307 responses were collated during the three drop in sessions, with a similar number by post. A smaller number of people did not use the consultation forms/process but wrote separate correspondence to the Council concerning the proposals these are summarised in Section 4 below.

Feedback from the drop-in sessions was notably negative to the proposals, these events were held in areas where residents would be most impacted by the three shortlisted locations. On-line respondents were more geographically dispersed than at the drop in events.

Where respondents did not agree with a park & ride, the greatest source of concern was that the proposals would not achieve stated objectives. In addition concern was raised regarding the impact on traffic levels on the London Road. Other notable reasons against park & ride included a recognised need for the construction of an A46/A36 link road, which [respondents considered] would remove through traffic and negate the need for P&R. Although not included as an option in the consultation, many people referenced a Park & Rail option in the comments field. Charmy Down was also frequently mentioned as a preferred site.

Particular areas of concern for residents close to the proposed sites related to the loss of meadow land as an apparent wildlife habitat, the visual intrusion of a Park & Ride site on the outskirts of a World Heritage Area and the potential increase in traffic in the immediate vicinity of a Park & Ride site.

A number of people participating in the consultation did not accept the shortlisting process carried out to reach this stage. They believed that the consultation should have been broader in scope and incorporated locations that the Council had already excluded.

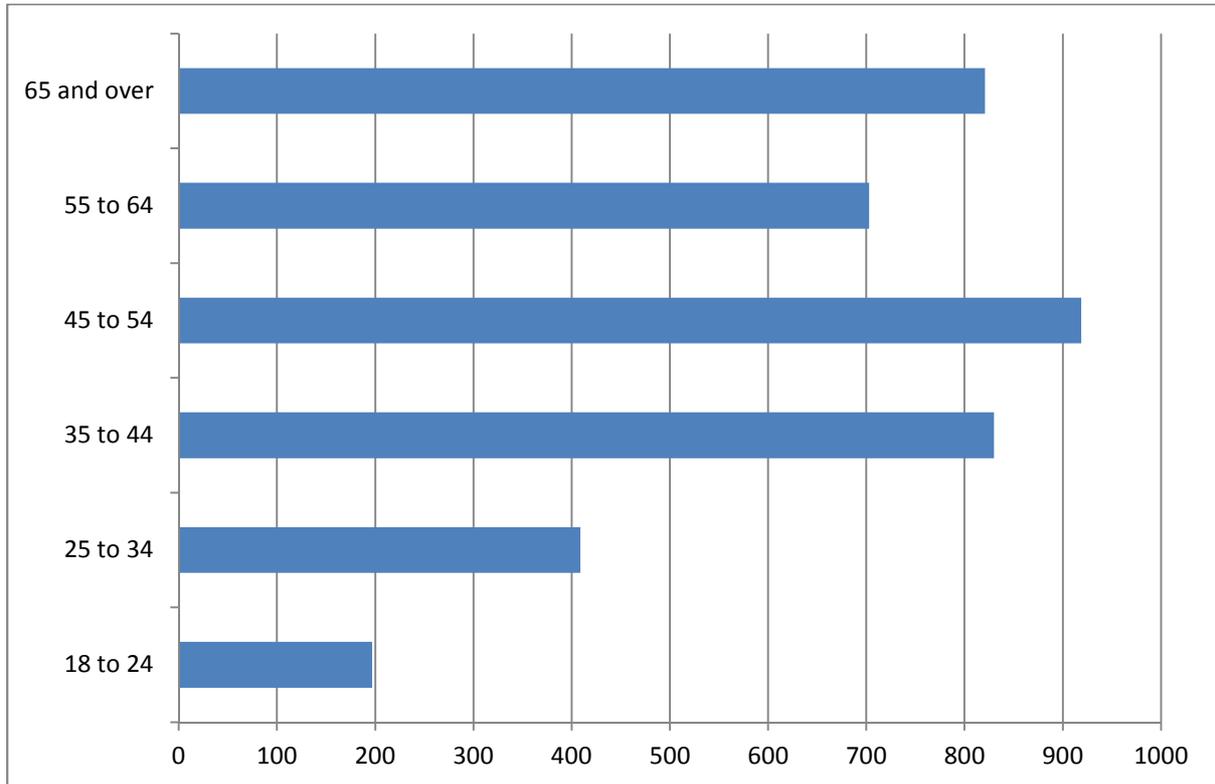
¹ not everyone responded to Question 1 so this number is more than the 4020 quotes earlier

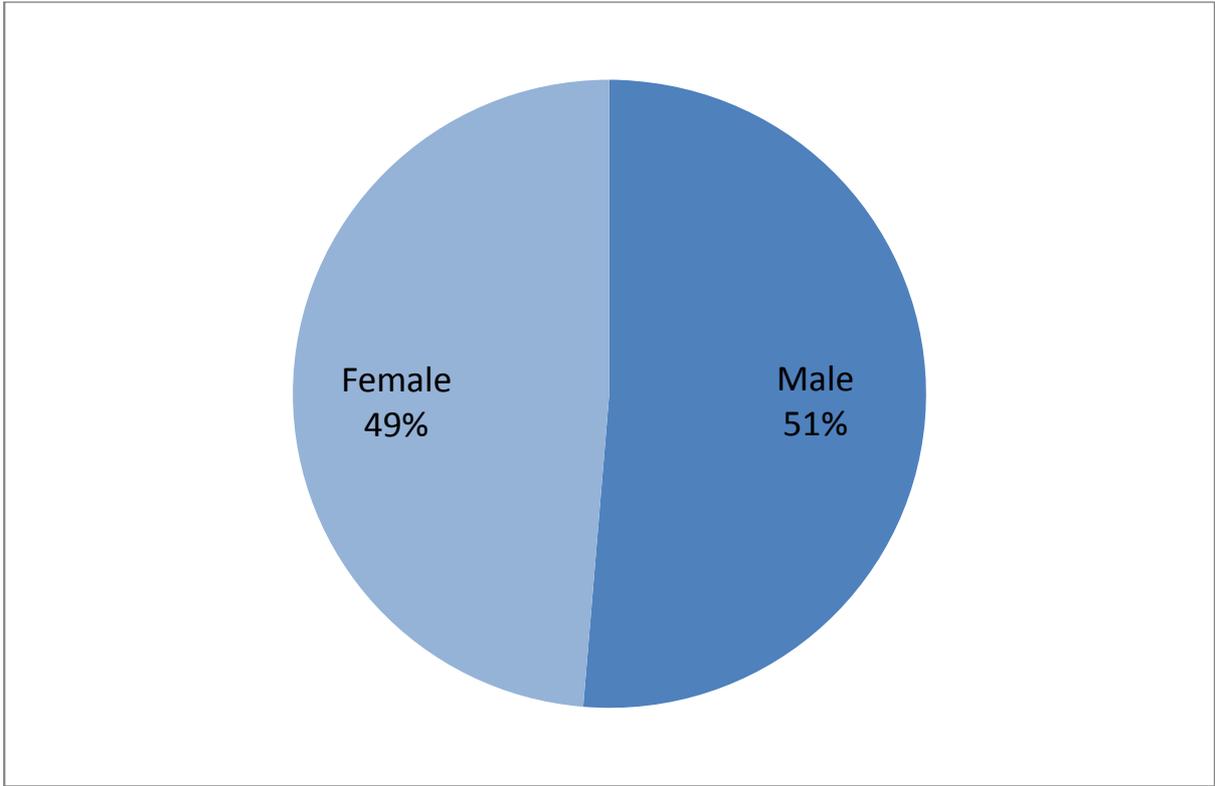
Overall, respondents were likely to be older, with 63% aged 45 or above. Gender was more evenly divided.

3.4 Responses from members of the public

Analysis of respondents.

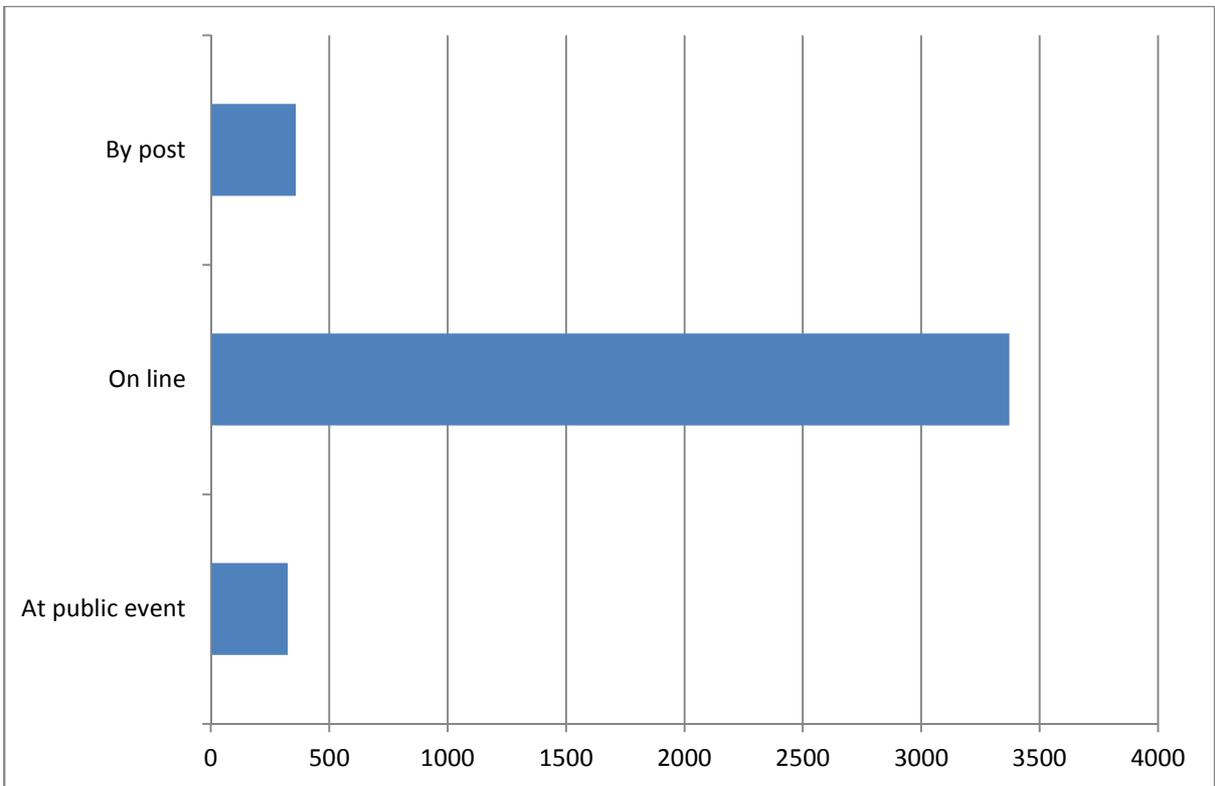
We asked respondents for their age and gender:





Method of response.

The following chart shows how people chose to respond to the consultation.



Issues raised by topic

Comment	No	Comment	No	Comment	No	Comment	No
None of sites proposed suitable	243	Site B can accommodate future rail link	68	A36 link road required	401	Proposal unsuitable for World Heritage Site	102
Negative visual impact of Site A	9	Negative visual impact of Site F	50	Further evaluation of other P&R sites needed	172	Proposal unsuitable for Green Belt/AONB	112
Traffic/access to Site A unsuitable	45	Traffic/access to Site F unsuitable	21	Alternative measures to reduce congestion should be taken	421	Proposal will negatively impact on wildlife/ecology	681
Site A can accommodate future growth	0	Site F can accommodate future growth	6	Does not agree an East Park & Ride is necessary	98	Proposal will increase traffic and congestion in local community	250
Negative visual impact of Site B	30	Site F can accommodate future rail link	9	East Park & Ride will not reduce congestion	646	Proposal will negatively impact on river/flooding	206
Traffic/access to Site B unsuitable	27	Supportive of Park & Rail alternatives	398	Council has ulterior motives/hidden objectives	40	Consultation has not been carried out in an appropriate way	199
Site B can accommodate future growth	4	Further evaluation of Charmy Down needed	117	Negative visual impact of all sites proposed	200	Cost of proposal not justified	32

3.5 Summary of Responses from Stakeholder Groups

Highways England supports in principle the need for a park and ride. They note that any site taken forward that uses the Highways England network for access should be compliant with appropriate design guidance and subject to necessary road safety auditing processes. Considering these factors, they consider Site F (East of Mill Lane) to be the most appropriate option.

Wiltshire Council did not object to the proposals for an East Park & Ride, but would not nominate a preferred site until further assessment had been made of potential traffic impacts on roads within their responsibility.

Bathford Parish Council notes that it would not support any of the three proposed sites. Lack of evidence and the environmental, ecological and visual impact were referenced, however if the Council were to proceed they consider Site A would be least damaging.

Batheaston Parish Council and Bathampton Parish Council issued a joint response. They considered the current consultation to be invalid due to lack of supporting information and rejected all 3 sites proposed. They requested that further consultation be undertaken with greater levels of detail and re-consideration of alternative sites that the Council had previously excluded as unsuitable.

The Valley Parishes Alliance, representing ten parish councils, was unable to support any of the three sites proposed. They queried the level of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of a park & ride and the need for same. They did note that of the three sites proposed, they consider site A would be least damaging from an environmental and visual perspective.

An East Park & Ride is strongly supported by the City Centre Action Group. They consider the site with the greatest potential for addressing current and future demand is Site F. They also ask that any P&R should operate 7 days per week and offer secure overnight parking capabilities.

The Federation of Bath Residents Associations strongly supports an east park & ride. Their view would be that site F represents the best option in terms of capacity, followed by site B. They also note expectations that more capacity would be needed in future and that further consideration of additional park & rail facilities would be desirable. They also ask that any P&R should operate 7 days per week and offer secure overnight parking capabilities.

Bathwick Estates Residents Association consider the three sites proposed unsuitable on landscape grounds and note that comparative costings are not given. They request that the consultation be re-run with site H also included with costings.

Lansdown Crescent Association note a preference for site B, operating 7 days per week and offer secure overnight parking capabilities. Shuttle buses should be low emission vehicles, with low fares and high frequency.

The Bath Preservation Trust did not agree with a Park & Ride if the options were limited to those proposed. They consider that the issue of a Park & Ride is not fully considered within the context of the overall transport strategy for Bath and does not have sufficient evidence to support any of the options given. They also noted the potential harm on the meadows and landscape setting.

Bath Heritage Watchdog consider that the projections for employment development within Bath and the subsequent need for a Park & Ride are not reflective of the current situation. They also dispute that one site would be appropriate for capturing all traffic routes into Bath from the East, and that alternative sites further afield should be looked at. They note the impact of any of the proposed sites on views of the valley and consider this incompatible with the heritage values of Bath. The Watchdog also consider that impacts on SSSI, SNCI and AONB have been insufficiently recognised. Consequently they do not support any of the sites proposed.

Measures to reduce car use and emissions are supported by the Avon Wildlife Trust. They note that Site F is adjacent to the nature reserve and is a valuable natural habitat. They also note the impact of development on bats which use the area. Of the three sites identified, Site B has less negative impacts. However they also note that they objected to the previous planning application in 2009 and that any development should have adequate ecological mitigation.

Railfuture reviewed the proposals for viability with links to the train network. They note a number of options with the sites proposed to facilitate additional stations/platforms and request that any site proposed should consider improved access to a range of rail routes which anticipate future development.

The River Regeneration Trust notes that site A would provide an opportunity to link with the river via an integrated marina, including potential for a river ferry service. They ask that the Strategic River Group consider this option.

Reducing the impact of vehicles in the city centre is supported by The National Trust, but they are not in favour of any park & ride facility that would negatively impact the green setting of the city. They note that the three sites proposed would be visible from Solsbury Hill and the Bath Skyline Walk and would have adverse impact. They advocate further in-depth consultation over park & ride options and also evaluation of sustainable transport solutions.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (Avonside) noted that they were ‘strongly opposed’ to an East of Bath Park & Ride, due to damage to green belt and visual intrusion on the AONB and World Heritage City. They advocate further development of public and active transport systems as a long term measure, which would be damaged by another park & ride site. They cite evidence that park & ride sites reduce the number of journeys taken purely via public transport.

Bath Ramblers did not comment on the specific sites proposed, but noted that they would be against any site which restricts rights of way or damages the walking environment.

The Cotswold Conservation Board noted that the proposed locations are outside and not immediately adjacent to the Cotswolds AONB boundary. They advised their guidance on Setting with which to inform the process and noted that “The site which can best be accommodated into the wider landscape and with the very best levels of mitigation should be the preferred option.”

Historic England recognised the role of an East Park & Ride in the context of a wider transport strategy for the World Heritage Site, but noted that the case for any individual location needed to be robust. They requested that a Setting Assessment for each of the three potential P&R sites be undertaken to inform the impact on affected heritage assets.

4.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

From the three sites specified, Site B received the most favourable number of submissions.

Many respondents put forward alternatives, which they considered would render a park & ride unnecessary. This included significant emphasis on development of a link road (to take through traffic and reduce pressure on London Road) or an alternative Park & Rail option.

The issue will be considered by the full Council at its meeting on 12th November 2015.