



BATH ALLIANCE FOR TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC REALM

Why a plan for transport and the public realm is vital

1. In 2012 the City Identity Project, under the auspices of B&NES Public Services Board¹, set out a 'narrative' for Bath in which:

"[Bath] offers a new model of a compact, connected, collaborative city. Bath will be internationally renowned as a beautifully inventive and entrepreneurial 21st century place with a strong social purpose and a spirit of wellbeing, where everyone is invited to think big – a city ready to create an extraordinary legacy for future generations."

2. Applying this narrative, the city should:

- Build on its international reputation as a beautiful place, much of which rests on the city's designation as a World Heritage Site² (WHS).
- Be an attractive location for enterprise and initiative.
- Create a sense of wellbeing. That includes having a healthy environment.
- Facilitate social interaction and public life.
- Have an effective transport system ('connected').
- Be prepared to take bold initiatives to secure the city's legacy.

3. The current reality is that Bath:

- Is clogged with traffic which is intrusive and smelly, obscures the views of the historic buildings, prevents free movement of pedestrians, deters cyclists, imposes economic costs and spoils the city experience for residents, workers and visitors.
- Has levels of air pollution which harm the health of people who live and work in the city and damage the historic buildings.
- Has a dysfunctional transport system, with over-reliance on private cars, public transport which offers a poor alternative, and a free-for-all for commercial vehicles including Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs)³.

4. Bath is falling far short of its potential and is arguably not worthy of its WHS designation. Other cities across Europe and the rest of the world celebrate the urban experience and arrange things much better. For example, Bristol has shown the way with the redevelopment of its Queen Square. Formerly bisected diagonally by a four-lane highway, Queen Square Bristol has now been restored to a beautiful social space. By contrast Queen Square in Bath, John Wood the Elder's masterpiece and the point of origin of Georgian Bath, functions mainly as a traffic roundabout.

5. B&NES already has several policies that address this state of affairs. B&NES's top-level policy, the Core Strategy⁴, and the emerging Placemaking Plan⁵ call for a predominantly car free city centre⁶. The Bath Transport Strategy⁷, which was adopted with all party support in 2014 contains the Vision that:

"Bath will enhance its unique status by adopting measures that promote sustainable transport and reduce the intrusion of vehicles, particularly in the historic core. This will enable more economic activity and growth, while enhancing its special character and environment and improving the quality of life for local people".

6. The Bath Transport Strategy sets out a range of measures required to achieve this, including:

- A walking/cycling strategy to make Bath the UK's most walkable city.
- Improved accessibility for people with mobility impairments.
- A parking strategy to support economic growth but at the same time reducing the amount of off-street spaces within the city centre.
- A traffic management plan for the city.
- More use of public transport to reduce the number of cars entering the city.
- Better management of Heavy Goods Vehicles within the city.

7. B&NES also has the Public Realm and Movement Strategy (PRMS)⁸, an excellent plan to transform streets and spaces across the centre and to create the canvas for a more animated and inclusive public life. The PRMS aims to:

- Rebalance the movement hierarchy giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.
- Refashion the public realm, creating a lattice of connected streets and spaces.

8. The essential next step is a transport *plan* to implement the PRMS and the Bath Transport Strategy. The transport plan will contain detailed and specific measures including timescales and budgets for their implementation.

9. The key to creating a comprehensive transport plan is to create an agreed vision for the city. By this we mean a vision for Bath that is specific and concrete in terms of such things as transport, pollution and the public realm – how the city should actually look, feel and function in five or ten years' time. This should start with a view of the city centre, looking at how the city works every day once people have arrived. The centre contains most of the city's economic and social activity as well as the cultural and historic places that most visitors come for, including nine of the twelve Key Elements⁹ of the WHS. The centre should be designed to facilitate these core functions and to create a world class urban environment for people who live, work and play there. This is in contrast to the traditional approach of thinking first about how to get people to, from, through and around the city centre and then trying to problem-solve the difficulties which this causes in the centre by adapting it to accommodate current modes of access. The PRMS is an excellent design for the centre¹⁰; the transport plan now needs to support it by providing mobility whilst restoring the integrity of the centre.

10. Our vision for the *city centre* is:

- A city centre free of all but essential traffic*.
- Good mobility through walking, cycling and public transport.
- A high quality environment with good air quality: reduced pollution and vibration from traffic, good for the people who live and work in Bath and for the historic fabric of the city.
- The Public Realm and Movement Strategy implemented and extended.
- Vibrant public spaces; a setting in which the historic and architectural icons of the World Heritage Site can be seen and appreciated properly.

* eg Deliveries, cleansing, buses, taxis, key business needs, disabled, and access for residents to their homes and nearby on-street parking

11. This vision is consistent with that of the Bath Transport Strategy (to reduce the intrusion of vehicles in the historic core), although it is rather more specific in terms of the end state to be achieved. It is also fully consistent with the aims of the PRMS.

12. There are many places throughout Europe that have adopted this approach to their city centres. In the UK, York has twice Bath's length of pedestrian streets. Examples among comparable historic cities in the rest of Europe include La Rochelle and Beaune, Bruges, Baden Baden, Copenhagen, Burgos and Santiago de Compostella, Perugia and Syracuse. All have created a delightful environment which is attractive to visitors, and their businesses are thriving. More pedestrian movement will increase footfall for retail businesses¹¹. The PRMS Pattern Book¹² gives many examples of good practice elsewhere and illustrates what could be achieved in Bath. But this cannot happen without a plan to remove traffic.

13. This carries a number of implications for traffic in the city centre:

- Parking generates traffic. City centre parking creates traffic in the city centre. Visitor parking in the city centre should be reduced as sites are redeveloped in the Enterprise Area, as envisaged in the Bath Transport Strategy. Visitors and commuters will use the park-and-ride, and parking will continue to be available at Southgate, Charlotte Street, North Quays and The Podium.
- Traffic which passes through the city centre provides no benefit to businesses or residents in the city centre and should be prevented or at least reduced.
- More efficient arrangements for deliveries are required eg delivery windows and freight consolidation.

14. The transport plan cannot of course be just about the city centre. It must address transport needs and access throughout Bath, and indeed the surrounding area. Wider issues that need to be addressed include:

- Reduced traffic volumes throughout the city.
- Mobility and access to the centre for communities in outer areas of Bath, visitors, and people who work in the city.
- Attractive public transport as a realistic alternative to the private car.
- Modal shift from cars to public transport, cycling and walking.
- Alternative routes for through traffic.

Due regard must be paid to the protection of the Setting¹³ of the WHS.

15. Our overall Vision for the Transport Plan is of Bath as:

'A beautiful city in a green setting, with vibrant public spaces, a historic centre free of all but essential traffic, clean air and excellent transport infrastructure'.

16. Some compromises will inevitably be required. But the starting point should be a willingness to consider a new (for Bath at least) model for how the city should function. Bath, as the only whole city designated as a World Heritage Site, ought to be a leading example of a beautiful urban space and a leading small city.

Notes

1. The Public Services Board is a B&NES-led group which brings together senior officials from the key local public sector agencies to provide leadership and set the strategic direction for Bath & North East Somerset. It is a non-statutory board and a voluntary partnership arrangement

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/working-partnership/bath-and-north-east-somerset-public>

Bath Bridge was developed from the work on the City Identity Project and has taken on its vision. The Public Services Board has adopted the City Identity Project narrative, suitably adapted, as its Vision for Bath and North East Somerset.

The City Identity Project followed earlier work on the 'Future Vision for Bath' (2006)

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/major-projects/treasure-and-transform/introduction-future-0>

2. World Heritage Sites are 'places of outstanding universal value to the whole of humanity'. 'Outstanding universal value' means cultural and/or natural significance. Famous World Heritage Sites include The Taj Mahal, Pyramids of Giza, the Great Wall of China and the Grand Canyon. UNESCO added The City of Bath as a 'cultural site' to its World Heritage List in 1987. Bath is included because of its Roman Remains, 18th Century Architecture, 18th Century Town Planning, Social Setting, Hot Springs and Landscape Setting. The World Heritage Site Management Plan sets out the approach to management of the site. The new City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan (2016-2022) was presented to Bath and North East Somerset Council's Full Council meeting in September 2016. The Council endorsed the plan for submission to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and in turn to UNESCO.

http://www.bathworldheritage.org.uk/sites/world_heritage_site/files/heritage/WorldHerManPlan%20Endorse%20Draft%20v2.pdf

3. A Heavy Goods Vehicle is a lorry with a gross weight of 3.5 tonnes or more.

4. B&NES Core Strategy, 2014, page 51 paragraph 2.17b

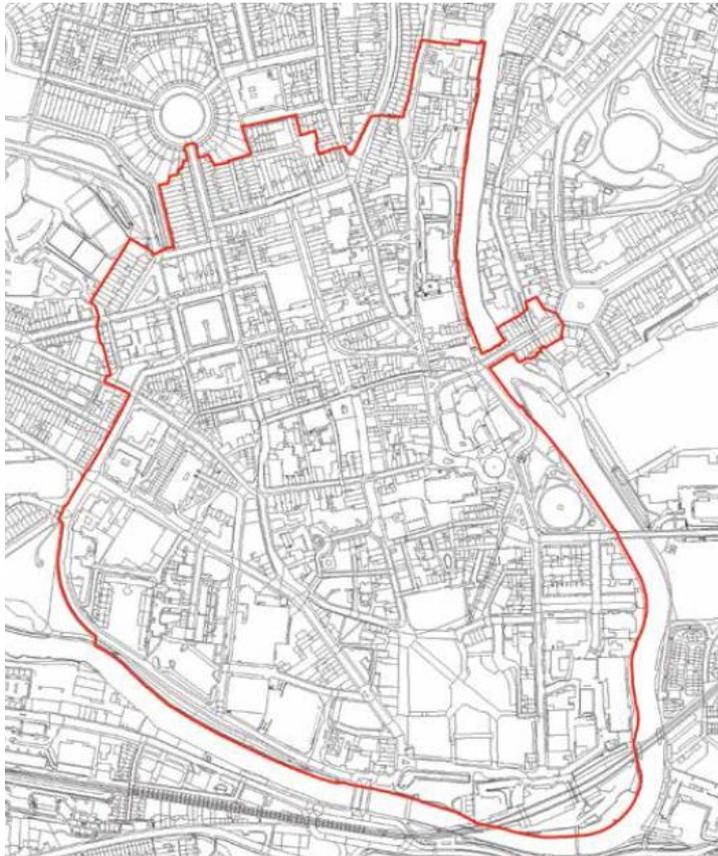
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Core-Strategy/core_strategy_-_adopted_interactive_version.pdf

The intention is that the centre should be predominantly traffic-free by the end of the period covered by the Core Strategy, 2029.

5. http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Placemaking-Plan/draft_pmp_vol_2_bath.pdf

The aspiration for a city centre free of all but essential traffic features in the Placemaking Plan at paragraph 99, page 28.

6. Bath City Centre Boundary, Policies Map, Core Strategy Appendix 3, page 188. The city centre includes Queen Square and George Street.



7. The Bath Transport Strategy was formally adopted by Bath and North East Somerset Council in 2014

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/getting_around_bath_transport_strategy_-_final_issue_web_version.pdf

8. 'Creating the Canvas for Public Life in Bath – A Public Realm and Movement Strategy for Bath City Centre' was adopted as Council policy in March 2010 following an extensive consultation process and high levels of cross-party public and political support. The strategy forms a key component of the Council's Future for Bath Vision which seeks to revitalise Bath's economic, social and cultural wellbeing up to 2026 and beyond. Inspired by Bath's outstanding heritage and 'DNA' as a place, the Vision seeks to unlock the city's remarkable human and economic potential and to reposition Bath as an exciting, distinctive and culturally relevant 21st century city.

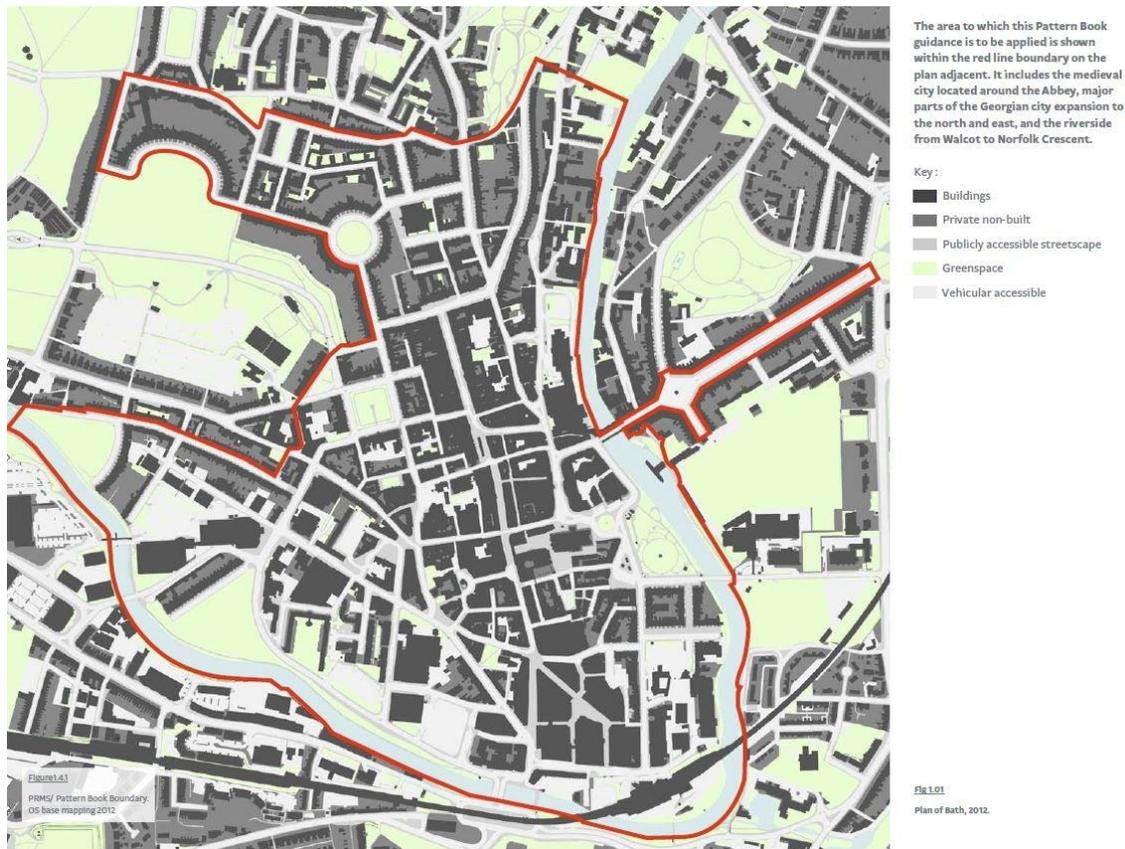
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/MajorProjects/BathPRandMS_Hi-Res.pdf

9. The 12 Key Elements of the WHS are identified in the WHS Management Plan. They comprise the most important individual sites within the city. They are:

The Roman Baths and Pump Room
The Abbey Church
Chapel Court (St John's Hospital)
Queen Square
The Circus
Royal Crescent
The Assembly Rooms
Pulteney Bridge
North Parade and South Parade

Sydney Gardens
Lansdown Crescent
Prior Park

10. The area covered by the PRMS is rather wider than the centre as defined by the Core Strategy. PRMS Boundary, PRMS Pattern Book, Volume 1, Public Realm Framework, page 11



11. See the reports by Living Streets and UWE:

http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/PedestrianPound_fullreport_web.pdf

http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/15502/1/Making_the_Case_Full_Report.pdf

12. B&NES Pattern Book: Volume 1 Public Realm Framework, 2015:

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Planning-and-Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Evidence-Base/Urban-Design-Landscape-and-Heritage/Bath_Pattern_Book_Part_1.pdf

13. See Bath WHS Setting SPD:

http://www.bathworldheritage.org.uk/sites/world_heritage_site/files/heritage/World%20Heritage%20Site%20Setting%20Supplementary%20Planning%20Document.pdf