

CPRE RESPONSE TO THE CORE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

General comment.

In order to comment more meaningfully on a number of the issues raised it would be necessary to have access to the studies not yet available or other background data. It is hard to see how the current consultation process can be effective without the access.

CPRE is committed to promoting and encouraging the improvement and protection of the English Countryside and its towns and villages and better development of its rural environment. We recognise however that there is an inextricable link between the Bath and the surrounding countryside in that without Bath as a successful and thriving city there would be a serious adverse impact on the surrounding area.

CPRE is naturally keen to work with the council in areas where it could have a valuable input.

B&NES

Q1 What policies or principles should be included in the Core strategy to meet the challenges of climate change?

Ensuring any new housing is linked with real demand and not based on hypothetical long range planning

Availability and promotion of affordable, reliable and accessible public transport

Developing disincentives for private car use, working with employers to provide incentives for walking, cycling and use of public transport (as done by Pfizer in Sandwich, Kent).

Consider practical steps that can be taken to encourage less dependence on vehicles with high carbon emissions e.g. introduction as in Richmond of resident parking permits according to size of car; bolster and heavily market car clubs and provide the street space for them

Ensure B&NES employees are seen to be leading by example

Set and monitor targets for walking and cycling e.g. Cycle Mileage should be the same as car mileage as in Bristol.

Ensuring that any new housing is built in places where car usage is not necessary, linking employment, education, retail, leisure facilities with housing. Also ensure that new building meets the highest possible standards for carbon emissions, water consumption etc.

Promote the production and selling of local foods to local customers by local suppliers

Working with local farmers to establish an effective food network which can better support local demand

Be very careful about encouraging growth of bio-fuels. Focus should be on decreasing demand for fuel and increasing supply of local food in preference to bio fuels.

Ensure that any schemes for renewable energy are fully thought through in terms of location, matching supply with local demand and impact on the countryside.

Facilitating the reduction of waste by discouraging packaging and plastic bags, taking on board the lessons from Modbury in Devon.

Developing a policy on renewable energy / district heating and ensure any developments are sited in a position to allow local use and the rationale is fully worked through in terms of matching supply with local demand profiles (including seasonality and in-day demands)

Continue the drive for waste reduction, building on the good work to date.

Discouraging growth at BIA

Re-think the decision on the Dyson project - with emphasis on showcasing what can be done

Work with the University of Bath - encourage more jobs in the area of climate change and renewables and develop B&NES as an exemplar council

Q2 How do we ensure that there is enough land for business to maintain a prosperous economy and that its in the right place?

First we need to ensure we understand what new business is likely to be encouraged into B&NES. Surely it is highly probable that the sort of employment which will be encouraged into Bath will be the sort of "knowledge workers" who will in many cases actually work from home or perhaps in part from high tech parks if such employment can be generated in conjunction with the University of Bath or James Dyson. If we are to have increased house building then these need to be linked to employment prospects rather than having further out-commuting.

There is no room for further extension of the boundaries of the University at the Claverton site and strong consideration should be given to further increase in building density on the current site or development in other parts of the B&NES area, with the provision of suitable infrastructure and student accommodation (Keynsham?)

Consideration needs to be given to what employment could be attracted into Keynsham and Norton Radstock to match the skills of the population, rather than allowing the proliferation of out-commuting with all its inherent disadvantages. Sensitive development, not adversely impacting on Greenbelt, AONB or local character could be encouraged in other towns and settlements where this would have a favourable impact on the level of out-commuting.

Q3 Of the existing land in business use, is it the right type in the right place: how much of it should be retained to ensure needs of businesses are met?

Look for opportunities to build satellite employment sites on brownfield sites in the enhanced public transport network (to be used in association with homeworking). Also consider the potential to move employment from offices in Bath City centre to provide increased affordable accommodation and help in the revival of the city as a living area, where public transport is a true alternative to private car usage.

Consider better utilization of current Ministry of Defence sites.

Consider how further business development can be made more attractive in Keynsham and Norton Radstock in order to reduce out-commuting in these areas.

Q4 Where and how should the growth in shopping expenditure be met?

The focus should be on local production for local retail for local consumption, especially for food. We should continue to focus on and build on the distinctive shopping offer.

Agree with the E&Y Business Plan for Bath that warehouse style shopping is not appropriate for Bath. We believe that it should not be countenanced for the Greenbelt or for areas where it will increase private car and distribution traffic.

We would encourage the utilization of local shopping facilities as the most sustainable option, helping local communities to survive, encouraging a sense of place, helping to reduce carbon emissions and ensuring that independent shops are given the opportunity to compete with larger national retailers.

Q5 What types of shops and associated leisure uses should be provided and how should our city and town centres change?

The Bath retail offering needs to be a balance between satisfying the local resident demand and the niche visitor demand. The Keynsham and Norton Radstock town centre plans need equally to be based on the predictions of demand of both residents and likely visitors and, in particular, should consider whether retail is to be used as a factor in encouraging increased use of the respective town centres, as long as this can be done in a way that does not increase private motoring.

Consideration should be given to enhanced shopping + delivery options to encourage visitors to enjoy retail facilities without use of private cars.

The local shopping facilities (urban and rural) should be encouraged, particularly as they can strongly support the sustainability agenda. The trend away from local post offices needs to be strongly resisted. Encouragement should be given to local shops providing local food to local communities. In this way we can potentially reduce food miles, increase connection between communities and the countryside, encourage healthy eating and reduce private motoring.

Q6 How do we meet both affordable housing need and housing need for people with specific needs?

It is naive to think that we can build our way out of this problem. If we build affordable housing and affordable housing for people with special needs, then there needs to be some conditions put on their ongoing occupation to ensure that they continue to be available for the type of occupants for whom they are intended and designed. This is not easy and we will need to find some novel financing arrangements to meet peoples' valid expectations.

In particular, there is at present the risk that any new affordable housing would be subject to the same pressures as existing affordable housing and be bought up for student accommodation.

Further consideration should be given to utilizing some of the units above commercial property in the city centre for housing.

Q7 Is there a particular need to meet "key worker" housing needs?

IF B&NES is serious about building sustainable communities then there is a need to consider this factor, rather than relying on lower paid local employees having to travel from lower cost adjacent areas. However, similar to our statement in our response to Q6, meeting key worker housing demands is likely to demand intervention in market forces which will probably have an associated incremental cost.

Q8 Is there a role for live/work opportunities?

We believe that there is, particularly for the kind of knowledge workers that seem to be envisaged if we encourage links between the university and the city. We recognise that there are benefits and disadvantages associated with such a trend. As a benefit, less business accommodation needs to be built and there will be a lower number of journeys, however there may be an move towards a demand for larger houses to accommodate the need for space of home workers and also increase home energy consumption. The impacts of a sustainable community therefore need to be carefully considered. Also the impact on Council income in terms of Business rates will need to be factored in.

Q9 What is special about B&NES that should be protected and conserved through the core strategy.

We have left it to others to focus on special points of Bath and the urban space.

The wonderful countryside. Fundamentally we need to keep up pressure to preserve the area around Bath and not let it fall victim to external pressures for development. We may be accused of having a "NIMBY" attitude, but surely in some cases this is warranted and in fact desirable. We are not in a world where we should resort to the lowest common denominator when it comes to things that are precious in terms of the heritage we must pass to future generations.

The Greenbelt around Bath, around Keynsham and around Bristol has been effective in stopping the merger between settlements. This needs to continue.

We need to maintain the unique setting of Bath and avoid a sprawl into the surrounding countryside. We urgently need to progress with a Buffer Zone around Bath, the World Heritage Site.

We need to avoid the countryside in the Bath &NES area becoming a through route for either north / south or east / west traffic

We need to respect the unique nature of our AONBs

We must ensure that we also preserve the parks / green spaces within the urban boundaries.

Q10 What local facilities does your community lack?

It is critical that local communities are continued to allow to survive e.g. that local post offices are not sacrificed and local shops are not allowed to suffer further at the hands of supermarkets.

Q11 How do we ensure we cater for all sections of the existing and future population?

There are real issues around the increase age of population. This provides another key reasons why there needs to be a focus on public transport. Once people cannot drive cars this increases the need for .shared taxis, demand responsive bus services, school buses that take children in the peak that are used for OAPs off peak. We need coordinated transport. At the moment there appear to be separate transport arrangements for those with disabilities, and requirements of those dealing with social services, health services, schools etc. There are individual silos for transport although consolidation and some kind of logistics management could go a long way to saving taxpayers' money and better providing for the different needs.

Our response for Q10 is also relevant here, i.e. It is critical that local communities are continued to allow to survive e.g. that local post offices are not sacrificed and local shops are not allowed to suffer further at the hands of supermarkets

Q12 What type of local facilities are needed to ensure cohesive communities and to sustain and improve our quality of life?

One general answer to this question is that we should be encouraging our more urban communities, particularly but not exclusively those of school age, to increase their connection with the countryside and farming in order to improve their sense of identity with the locality and their sense of urgency in caring for their environment. This needs to be part of a well thought-through process in order to avoid counterproductive effects of a meaningless exercise for the people involved as well as a negative impact on rural dwellers and more traditional visitors.

CPRE would be keen to work with the Council in this regard.

Q13 What major elements of transport infrastructure are needed up to 2026

Focus on public transport and pedestrian and cycling networks to support journeys between home and schools, work and leisure. Particular attention should be paid to links which help facilitate pedestrian and cycling journeys in areas where these are made more problematic by the hilly nature of much of our area e.g. bikes on public transport especially up hills.

There is a need to establish better public transport axes in Keynsham and Somer valley to link employment and residential areas

If we establish some purpose built employment sites, potentially in the Bath transport axis, or indeed in Keynsham near the station or in the Somer Valley then transport axes be fully thought through in terms of home to work journeys using public or sustainable private transport.

Effective public transport links to BIA and Heathrow should be available for business travel from key employment areas.

We are however not in favour of the proposed expansion of Bristol International Airport or a Park and Ride at Lambridge.

Encouragement for car clubs (see also response to Q1)

As we said to the answer to Q5, consideration should be given to enhanced "shopping + delivery" options to encourage visitors to enjoy retail facilities without use of private cars.

We believe that the development plans at Bristol airport to be treated as a major issue in the B&NES Core Strategy and that Council policy ensures that curtailments are placed on BIA's future growth in terms of aircraft movements and passenger numbers

We believe that B&NES should

- Avoid presuming that BIA's expansion will take place, as the planning process is not yet complete
- Keep the green belt status to the south side at BIA, preventing any car parking in any green belt areas
- Make sure a proper policy assessing the long term costs of emissions from BIA's flights is in situ before any further expansion takes place
- Keep the current night noise quota system unchanged and restrict the movements that are currently included, moving to a complete ban on night-time flying.

As in our response to Q11. There are real issues around the increase age of population. This provides another key reasons why there needs to be a focus on public transport. Once people cannot drive cars this increases the need for .shared taxis, demand responsive bus services, school buses that take children in the peak that are used for OAPs off peak. We need coordinated transport. At the moment there appear to be separate transport arrangements for those with disabilities, and requirements of those dealing with social services, health services, schools etc. There are individual silos for transport although consolidation and some kind of logistics management could go a long way to saving taxpayers money and better providing for the different needs.

Q14 How can reliance on the private car be reduced?

Fundamentally we should not be making it easier to park or drive for work, leisure or retail in our area and we must make the alternatives more attractive socially, in terms of convenience and reliability and economically. This includes a halt to provision of P&Rs which in themselves encourage use of private cars. But really depends on Questions 13 and 15. We should stop the streets and parks of Bath being used as shoppers' or commuters' car parks. Victoria Park should be accessible to those wanting to use it as a park and not have its roads overrun by commuters into Bath.

We believe that an analysis should be carried out on which journeys by car are really necessary. There will be those who can travel at other time and those who don't really need to make the journey if they were made to think harder i.e. pay the cost of parking.

In terms of tourism we need further analysis of the desirability of different tourism segments and the relative benefits of day trippers who in some instances spend little money vs. those who come in and stay three nights and spend more money. It is not quantity but quality and so often it is not clear whom we are targeting.

Further work should be done on tying in tourism with access through public transport.

Q15 How can we encourage more people to use public transport?

Make it affordable, regular, reliable (with real time information displays as standard), attractive, integrated and the fashionable thing to do. Get opinion formers signed up to promote. As stated under Q5, we should ensure that we make it easy for those shopping, working and visiting our towns have an acceptable solution to transporting to and from home the items they need for their time in the towns and the items they need to transport home.

We need to initiate a major integrated change programme to make this work. Education / persuasion needs to be at its heart and the Council needs to show real vision and

commitment. The public transport option must be the visibly attractive and cost-effective option and this must be the case for all ages and parts of society, particularly to remove any perception of public transport as the “poor man’s” option. Individualized travel marketing has been tried in the Sustainable Demonstration Towns with good results. Each household is approached about their travel needs and information that is relevant to them provided. Marketing of public transport is very poor – the vast majority don’t know which buses run, where to catch them, the deals available etc.

All businesses should have a travel plan and B&NES should take the lead with their own travel plan, backed with resources to incentivize leaving your car at home

Q16 What can be done to ensure that the development is brought forward in the right place at the right time?

We are not convinced that the demand envisaged will materialize. In this regard it is critical that brownfield land is developed first and that any consideration of development on the greenbelt is only countenanced once all other sites have been used. Even then, we are not convinced that greenbelt development should be given the go ahead in the B&NES area.

It is critical that the Council engages with key players to understand better the likely inward and outward migration over the plan period. We must consider not only the economic growth potential of the area, but also the potential impact on quality of life of local inhabitants. We consider it probable that an adverse impact on the environment in the area would lead to a net outward migration of some residents, or non-attraction of visitors key to economic prosperity or knowledge based inward migration which would be associated with an enhanced relationship with University linked development. This would hence irreparably damage the key to the future prosperity of the area.

The council should urgently engage with the Universities to ensure that development plans are coordinated and that ways of housing students outside the more affordable areas of Bath are developed in order to bring that affordable housing back into the general marketplace.

A serious study needs to be undertaken as to how the Somer valley and Keynsham areas can be encouraged to support sustainable development and be perceived as attractive to inward migration, i.e. employment led with proper infrastructure support, and emphasis on the attractive surrounding landscapes. Improved public transport networks will also be key to achieving this.

Sensible and sustainable development of some of the smaller communities should also be carefully considered, where this can be done without adversely impacting on the greenbelt, AONB or other important landscape feature.

Q17 What scope is there for the Core Strategy (to) phase the delivery of development?

Development must be phased, and it must be ensured that demand really exists before development is undertaken and infrastructure is established before housing or business development is undertaken. As stated above, brownfield sites should be utilized before any use of green belt land is contemplated.

BATH

Q18 How can anticipated growth and development be accommodated in a way that complements the City's environmental quality?

See response to Q16.

Any growth must be focussed on brownfield development, while maintaining the green spaces in Bath. We must avoid extending into the green belt. Development must be high quality of appropriate density and with suitable infrastructure provided in advance. CPRE would commend to B&NES its document "Compact Sustainable Communities" second edition November 2006 as a useful document for reference.

Q19 How can the Core Strategy help improve the public realm?

We must tackle litter and the dreadful state of our streets, including the mass of discarded gum.

Stop installing and remove street clutter in towns and countryside e.g. advertising signs on roundabouts.

B&NES has produced some good information on street furniture and signage. It must however turn the theory into practice.

Address rubbish dumped in the countryside – and tackle people who just empty the rubbish in their cars while passing through the countryside

We need to restore a pride in our environment and sense of place. Parents need to be encouraged to role model appropriate behaviours, and we should look for opportunities for opinion formers to do likewise in a public way. There is an obvious potential link with education.

Ensure that refuse disposal approaches do not increase the likelihood of fly tipping

Avoid / discourage areas of the City being used as commuter car parks

A key priority should be for people to walk or cycle yet it is incredibly unpleasant to walk because the crossings are so dangerous e.g. the bottom of Gay Street, Lansdown Road above Hedgmead Park.

Q20 How can we improve the visual and physical access to the river?

Presumably there was potential to use the river as a transport link between the various weirs. It is not clear whether this could be dovetailed with the Bath Transport plan.

The proposals in the Future for Bath document are a very interesting and certainly deserve further investigation.

Q21 What are the most important assets and characteristics of the City that must be protected and conserved?

We would concur with the views of the Bath Preservation Trust emphasizing in particular the criticality of the relationship between city and its surrounding landscape and undeveloped skyline which must be protected.

Q22 Where and how should the City's economic growth be accommodated?

The first consideration must be to decide what type of economic growth is desired and to establish how realistic it is that this can be attracted. As already stated under Q2, we would envisage the most likely source to be knowledge workers, potentially linked to the University. Any growth in Bath should be targeted to brownfield sites, potentially releasing some business property in central locations for further residential use. Further expansion of

the University of Bath into the Greenbelt should not be allowed, but a sustainable satellite solution encouraged.

Presumably further growth will be associated with the projected retail and hotel expansion. In this case location will be dictated to a greater degree by where the potential customers will wish to visit, but in all cases sustainable solutions should be sought which avoid the need for further private vehicle journeys.

Q23 What new employment locations should be developed and what key existing employment sites should be protected?

Brownfield development sites only should be used and must be linked to effective public transport/ pedestrian / cycling solutions.

Consideration should be given to more effective utilization of existing Ministry of Defence sites with some sensitive sustainable development.

Q24 Should diversification of the economy be promoted and how can this be facilitated by the Core Strategy?

It appears sensible that there should be some diversification in view of the limited variation at present. However we must guard against inappropriate development which would exacerbate existing problems such as the traffic issues. As already stated, links with the universities should be better exploited in this regard.

Q25 What new business space should be provided to help diversify the economy and meet future business needs?

Research on demand needs to be available before this can be answered.

Q26 How can the urban extension best be integrated with the existing communities in this part of Bath?

Our view is that the need for an urban extension to Bath has yet to be proven and we are firmly against a slip back into a “predict and provide” approach. Our view is that new homes, to meet proven local needs, must be built in sustainable locations, primarily where the development will help to improve the quality of existing towns and cities. We therefore see no opportunities for an urban extension for Bath.

As stated in our response to Q9:

- The Greenbelt around Bath, around Keynsham and around Bristol has been effective in stopping the merger between settlements. This needs to continue.
- We need to maintain the unique setting of Bath and avoid a sprawl into the surrounding countryside. We urgently need to progress with a Buffer Zone around Bath, the World Heritage Site.

Q27 How can the setting of the City be best protected and the need for an urban extension met?

See response to Q26.

However, if common sense does not prevail, then we should ensure that any new settlement(s)

- allow use of public transport / walking, cycling from home to school/ retail / employment with penalties for car usage and low provision of car parking.
- include a high provision of affordable housing with fiscal measures in place to ensure they remain affordable
- are carbon neutral
- are relatively high density

Q28 What form should an urban extension take – one big one or a few smaller ones – and where in the “area of search” should it/they be located?

See response to Q26. There may however be some scope for higher density redevelopment of some fringe areas of the city which could better meet the various sustainability criteria.

Q29 How can the supply of affordable housing be increased and what proportion of housing should be affordable?

There is some relatively affordable family housing in Bath e.g. Oldfield Park. The fact is that a significant proportion has been taken out of the normal market by its use as student accommodation. This fundamental issue needs to be addressed rather than just building additional affordable family housing which will again be taken by students, particularly if there is further growth at the universities.

See also our response to Q6.

Q30 What types of new homes are needed in Bath and how should these be distributed?

This question can surely not be answered without access to research on demand. The very fact that it is asked in this document surely reveals that B&NES is far from ready to commit land for development. The demand must be proven before these questions can be answered.

In general we must ensure that homes are situated in locations suitable for sustainable travel to employment and education. This dictates that economic and residential development must be planned in tandem.

Q31 Should the City Centre be expanded to accommodate new shops and if so how and in what direction?

See answer to Q32. It is hard to understand / predict the answer to this question until it is clear what the impact of the new Southgate development will be. As already stated for residential development under Q26, the Council should be wary of a large scale “predict and provide” philosophy with the inherent risks this brings.

Q32 What type of shopping expansion should be encouraged in the City centre and how can this complement existing shops?

Q33 Should shop uses continue to be protected or should a greater diversity of uses be allowed?

The Council should ensure that we have a suitable mix of shops that

- attracts the kind of visitors which it seeks to encourage into the city (and will thereby build on the niche market and unique nature of the city)

- satisfies the need of the local community (especially important if the Council can succeed in increasing the proportion of buildings in the centre that are used for residential rather than office accommodation)
- emphasizes local foods and products (to fit with the principle of sustainability)
- either sell products that purchasers can easily transport by public transport or provide access to an effective delivery mechanism (which the Council needs to consider in conjunction with retailers)

Q34 How should the Core Strategy help protect and improve neighbourhood shopping centres?

The core Strategy needs to do more than just pay lip service to the importance of neighbourhood shopping centres. The council must act strongly to preserve local post offices and must constrain development of further large retail outlets which threaten the existence of the true local shop. Local shops selling local products should be especially encouraged in view of the positive impact on the Council's sustainability objectives.

It is important that the Council fully understands the retail patterns of Bath and its residents in terms of where they shop and for which products. Only then can the retail strategy be soundly based. It would be interesting to understand the current position before commenting further.

Q35 Should the need for large stores (retail sheds) in Bath be addressed and if so where?

Any further large retail outlets should be resisted unless they can be shown to meet a definite need. In particular, as stated in the E&Y report, out of town warehouse style stores appear to run counter to the retail ethos of the City.

Q36 Should the need for large (food) stores in Bath be addressed and if so where should they be located?

As stated under Q34 we should be encouraging local stores with local foods rather than more mass retailers with all their consequent adverse impacts on small traders and sustainability.

It would be helpful to understand the data which points to a need for large food stores in Bath as implied by the question.

Q37 What additional visitor accommodation is likely to be required in the future and how should this be provided?

A related comment is that public transport links between visitor accommodation and main transport terminals should be increased to encourage use of public transport rather than private vehicles. Increased cooperation with FGW may be helpful in this respect, potentially to agree some financial arrangements to the benefit of all parties.

It would be helpful to understand (p23) the split of visitor transport modes for the 4 million pa and also the length of stay of the current visitors vs what the Council believes to be the desired profile.

Q38 Should existing visitor accommodation be protected from changes of use?

No comment

Q39 What new visitor facilities should be provided and where should they be located?

Opportunities should be sought to attract visitors into the countryside around Bath as well as the city itself. This could be an opportunity to spread the economic benefits of inward tourism and increase the connection between urban and rural aspects of our area. Particular consideration should be given to how this can be achieved using public transport and sustainable transport means e.g. encouraging breaks involving the city, spa and walking/ cycling excursions.

Q40 How and where should the increasing numbers of students be accommodated?

Q41 Can the Core Strategy facilitate a reduction on the pressure on Bath's stock of family housing?

See responses to Q2 and 29. We need to reverse the trend for more affordable accommodation being taken up by students and to provide more purpose built student accommodation, increasing the density of accommodation on existing campuses, providing accommodation away from Bath, (or potentially additional brownfield sites in Bath) but with excellent transport links to the universities.

Consideration should be given to close co-location of satellite campuses with business development where this could be used to provide more local employment for areas of significant out-commuting i.e. Norton Radstock and Keynsham.

Q42 How far can the Core Strategy assist in meeting the needs of further education facilities over the next 20 years

The Council should aim to work increasingly closely with the Universities in order to exploit jointly the many opportunities for mutual benefits whilst ensuring that there are no adverse impacts on the rural (and urban) landscapes. University developments should be encouraged to contribute to regeneration of areas in B&NES and to promote economic growth from effective exploitation of intellectual / research activity. Adverse impacts on the residential housing stock must be reduced and then avoided on an ongoing basis.

Q43 How should the Core strategy facilitate the necessary improvements in health, educational and recreational facilities?

The Core Strategy should consider ways in which the connection to the countryside in the area could contribute more effectively to the wellbeing of inhabitants of the area, whether this connection be through local foods, provision of safe and attractive pedestrian and cycling routes to improve fitness and wellbeing or education schemes involving agriculture and wildlife. We already have the benefit of a number of Sustrans routes and footpaths and bridleways and ways could be sought of increasing their use.

Q44 Does anything else need to be done to encourage people in living and working in Bath to use sustainable methods of transport?

We need to completely change the priorities of transport utilization and provision towards walking and cycling first, then public transport then the private car. It is about making people feel that the council is serious about changing its priorities by showing that the Council itself is enforcing behaviour change amongst its own workers, which should spread out to other employers. There should be a clear message that there is a huge cost of congestion in Bath, making it less attractive to live here, work here and visit.

Since public transport is not door to door, there are issues around disabled or elderly getting to the bus stop and so perhaps the type of public transport being suggested is not necessarily fit for purpose for all users. We also need to consider options such as shared taxis, demand responsive transport, using new technology to match people up, car sharing etc.

We need to consider whether the “bendy busses” now being used are indeed the way forward in view of the fact that they make cycling and walking difficult in narrow winding streets.

We need also to manage our existing resources better. It is clear that in many cases people’s cars just sitting idle all day, pointing to the potential for better use of car clubs and car sharing if times of use can be staggered during the day. Employees could be bussed in and companies rent out their space to shoppers and visitors. P&R is only a short term solution – we must recognise that once their capacity has been reached there will be a demand for more to be built until we are surrounded. They are expensive infrastructure and need to be recognised as such.

See also Q 14 and 15

Keynsham Q45-62

Most of the same generic points above apply.

Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Environs Q63-81

Most of the same generic point above apply.

Q63 Are tourism opportunities being overlooked?

Q 72 How much new housing should be accommodated to assist the economic growth in the south of the district?

Q73 If more houses are needed, where should they go? Should one of two of the towns and villages be expanded or should the houses be dispersed – perhaps along a circular transport corridor?

Q74 Should the gaps between villages such as Paulton, Hallatrow and High Littleton be protected?

We have concern at the threat to the valuable countryside left in our area. We believe that B&NES should examine closely any potential further rural development in the context of retaining existing viable farms and optimizing the tourist interest in landscapes, archeological and industrial heritage. The latter should be done in tandem with fully exploiting the potential of the fascinating mining history of the area.

Where we do have existing sustainable communities we should be ensuring that their ongoing sustainability is encouraged by supporting local attempts to preserve local post offices.

Rural Areas Q82-98

Most of the same generic point above apply.

Q83 Should any settlements be removed from the Green Belt to facilitate a greater level of development?

We do not believe that this is appropriate. In all instances in our area the Green Belt has fulfilled a useful purpose and needs to continue to do so.

In particular we are concerned at the proposal for development around Whitchurch. The argument we have made in earlier parts of our response are equally relevant here i.e.

- The Greenbelt around Bath, around Keynsham and around Bristol has been effective in stopping the merger between settlements. This needs to continue.
- We are not convinced that the demand envisaged will materialize. In this regard it is critical that brownfield land is developed first and that any consideration of development on the greenbelt is only countenanced once all other sites have been used. Even then, we are not convinced that greenbelt development should be given the go ahead in the B&NES area.
- Development must be phased, and it must be ensured that demand really exists before development is undertaken and infrastructure is established before housing or business development is undertaken. As stated above, brownfield sites should be utilized before any use of green belt land is contemplated.
- We are firmly against a slip back into a “predict and provide” approach. Our view is that new homes, to meet proven local needs, must be built in sustainable locations, primarily where the development will help to improve the quality of existing towns and cities.

Q89 What facilities are needed to ensure cohesive and balanced communities? In which villages should these facilities be accommodated.

We believe that the Council needs urgently to ensure that there is no further demise of our post office network in rural communities unless it can be proven that the demand does not exist for the facility, nor that it would become appropriate in the foreseeable future in line with other drives to improve sustainability.