

Session/Issue 11:

- i) Is the overall transport strategy and policy consistent with the NPPF and the Local Transport Plan and, if not, what needs to be changed and why?
- ii) Is the policy suitable and appropriate to deliver the necessary transport infrastructure improvements with new developments, including in terms of rail and bus services, park and ride, cycling and walking and, if not, what else needs to be done and why?
- iii) Is the policy JCS suitable and appropriate to encourage increased use of public transport, cycling and walking and, if not, what needs to be changed?

Question i)

We have seen little sign in the last year that the City Council and the County Council as Highways Authority have come any closer to taking real action to address the transport and related pollution problems in Winchester. As we have discussed under Issue 1 Qii-iv, there is no connect between vague assertions of the need to reduce car use and to reduce pollution, and actual defined action.

What is more the City Council has its own development ambitions in the centre that will clearly lead to worsening of traffic problems there. The JCS in relation to the Barton Farm allocation has no plan to mitigate the significant traffic effects of the development either on peripheral and radial routes on the north of the city, or in relation to the major congestion of the junction with the central circulatory system and the significant traffic increase projected for the circulatory system itself. These general failures will ensure that air quality not only remains a problem, but that exceedances of permitted levels will actually increase.

The City Council makes no commitment either within the JCS, or within WTAP, or anywhere else, to solve this air quality failure (a specific failure in respect of NPPF). It makes no commitment to reduce traffic in the centre, it makes no commitment to reduce the need to travel, it makes no commitment to improve public transport alternatives.

Talking about encouraging healthy alternatives of walking and cycling is meaningless posturing if the Council is not prepared to provide an environment in which those modes of travel can flourish, is not prepared to make the air less poisonous that walkers and cyclists have to breathe; is not prepared to reduce car traffic in the centre; is not prepared to curb speeds on dangerous central roads like North Walls, City Bridge and Romsey Road; is not prepared to alter the priority of street users, even by a simple statement of intent, so that pedestrians and cyclists come first and cars last; is not prepared to reduce the subsidy associated with car parking and move it in the direction of better public transport provision.

Questions ii) and iii)

The problem with getting towards more environmental transport for Winchester has not much to do with infrastructure.

There is plenty of Park and Ride facility already. In our view P&R is not a particularly effect approach to sustainable transport – there is much research that suggests it can have almost as many bad effects as good. But having been built the City Council ought to ensure that it is used. It has not done so. There has been hardly any increase in the use of P&R since the provision of 856 new places 2½ years ago and average peak occupancy of the car parks is under 50%. This is largely because the Council has reneged on commitments it made to the Highways Agency to remove equivalent numbers of car park places from the centre. Nor has pricing policy in the centre been sufficiently robust to encourage cars to use car parks outside the central circulatory system.

There are, of course, infrastructure things that could be done to improve public transport. Perhaps most notably would be real-time information systems giving reliable indications of where buses are and when they might arrive. We think there also might be things that could be done to get more of the commuting that is done from the south off roads and onto trains from Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh and Southampton's suburban stations. These are clearly matters that would require a deal of discussion with the train-operating companies who have complicated scheduling problems, but might be facilitated with some capital investment in stations and small judicious

capacity/passing enhancements at or near the smaller stations. A 'metro' service has been suggested as a useful contribution to modal shift, from the western suburbs (Totton/Redbridge) of Southampton through the City and northern suburbs (St Denys, Swaythling) and on through Shawford south of Winchester.

Cycle infrastructure has gradually appeared in Winchester and indeed a major new national route scheme is being constructed on the South and East of the town. But the urban streets have limited capability for being altered to provide cycle lanes, if they are to carry on having the functionality of major car traffic arteries as well. The same problem occurs with many walking routes (e.g. in Romsey Road, Bridge Street, North Walls and Chesil Street there is a great deal of pedestrian intimidation - and sometimes actual harm) arising from very narrow pavements on busy roads.

The key to encouraging walkers and cyclists is not to provide special facilities for them but to make all the ordinary street space less intimidating so that it is all available to all of them, and not just to the limited number of those intrepid enough to defy the hegemony of the car. It is essential to assert a new priority for urban use of space, i.e. for street-sharing: pedestrians first, then cyclists, buses, taxis and cars last. Lorries are an essential part of the economic equation of a town centre (though size could be controlled within an historic city, by requiring transshipment at the city boundary); cars are not.

An essential pre-requisite of street-sharing, however, is that traffic levels should generally be reduced. In fact it probably needs a greater reduction than is necessary to achieve compliance with the air quality requirements, but an early move towards the latter would represent a good start at civilising the roadscape in Winchester.

We would prefer the removal of one-way systems in Winchester (they are primarily there to maximise capacity and this ought not to be a priority). If they cannot all be made two-way then it is important that cyclists should not be bound to use the one-way system. It is simply unfair that something that is imposed on the street system because of the large footprint of cars should be forced on cyclists who impose a much smaller footprint. One-way streets should generally be provided with counter-direction cycle lanes.

Question iii)

We clearly believe that there is no likelihood of substantial progress toward increased use of public transport, cycling and walking as a result of any action that is foreseen either in JCS or any other communication of the Council. Simply for the purpose of meeting air quality targets car-borne access to central Winchester must be discouraged financially (parking charges) or by simple removal of both the unused central car parking (average 423 places) and a percentage of the used car parking spaces (about 170 at minimum). For the purpose of making the streets of Winchester capable of street-sharing, the level of parking removal would have to be significantly greater than this.

The likelihood of increased public support for bus services seems fairly small at the moment (all the signs are of continuing reduction of support). However, the simple action of reducing central car parking is likely to have some effect of encouraging modal shift. It is possible indeed to imagine that if one gets into a virtuous circle with bus provision (the opposite of the present situation where bus fares are high, bus use declines in consequence and bus fares go up or services are reduced....) the services will improve in patronage with a likely consequence of increased frequency and coverage (i.e. extent of day covered by timetable) and lower fares. Public subsidy may not need to be a permanent commitment for large parts of the Winchester catchment.

Getting from here to there in terms of transport habits may need some stimulus over a few years. Since money will be increasingly hard to come by for this purpose, we suggest that the local authority simply starts to transfer the subsidy from car parking to the support of bus services. The parking subsidy is very substantial – consider the land value of 16 ha of car park in the centre of a town like Winchester, and what revenue could be had on that capital value and is forgone.