

Conservative Group formal response from Councillor Mark Weston to the  
“**IMPROVEMENTS TO THE NUMBER 2 BUS ROUTE (A37/A4018)**” Consultation on the  
proposed designs – **Have Your Say**

I write to convey my group’s considered observations on the latest scheme – one of eight routes - which seeks to develop and enhance bus services in Bristol.

We have some sympathy with the broad objectives of aiming to reduce bus journey times, increase reliability and encourage more people to switch to travel by bus. However, this choice needs to be a positive one, and not something that is simply forced upon them by making driving a private vehicle an increasingly difficult and a more miserable experience.

A balance must be struck between enabling the public to travel in efficient ways (which reflect personal choice depending upon individual circumstances) whilst tackling environmental concerns and supporting centrally based businesses.

It is our contention that there are some aspects of the proposed new A37/A4018 route which not only fail to strike the right balance between these competing aims, but they are also plainly wrong and far more likely to create more problems than purported to solve. We harbour doubts that the huge budget envelope of £30-35m is not going to be money well spent will make travel into and out of the city very much worse. A strategy of narrowing roads and reducing lanes (space for cars) will cause more delays – including for buses – and result in the no.2 bus service taking longer to traverse its route than it ever did before.

We have concerns over the ancillary impact of the current plans which will see motorists taking short cuts and rat running to avoid newly created bottlenecks. This in turn can only make residential neighbourhoods less liveable all the while not improving the travel experience of bus passengers on iota.

## **NORTH (1)**

### **Crow Lane to Henleaze Road**

Like the apocryphal ‘curate’s egg’ story which is used to refer to something which is good in parts, there is at least one aspect included in the design for this part of the major carriageway. The installation of a new mini roundabout at the Crow Lane and Henbury Road junction is a welcome step and represents an improvement which ward councillors and residents have argued for over a very long time.

Conversely, whereas targeted – continuous bus lanes can be beneficial – unfortunately, the planned short stretches at this location will do little to aid traffic flows. Therefore, the two suggested ‘fragmented’ bus lanes at the Crow Lane roundabout should **not** proceed.

I would like to add here specific observations concerning other proposed bus lanes. The suggested moving of the Station Road bus lane to over the railway bridge needs to be either reversed or restricted to operate at peak hours only. This may fall outside of this scheme but is nevertheless a key feature of the local bus routes.

## **Southmead Road**

Regarding possible changes to Southmead Road (between Henleaze Road and Wellington Hill West). Removing the second carriageway in each direction is not a good idea. At the moment this section of road flows well most of the time but reducing to single lanes each way will inevitably lead to queueing traffic and slow down cars and buses alike. Moreover, we question whether there is any demonstrable local demand for the suggested footway enhancements.

The idea of narrowing this road space just to increase build outs to cater for tree planting is quite frankly ludicrous. We fail to see any transport advantage, benefit, or utility from such a move. Other locations for tree planting are available and we are sure that the community could identify alternative sites at a greatly reduced cost and without the act of transport self-harm.

## **Lake Road**

Closing off Lake Road at its open end is also difficult to follow. All the traffic that currently uses that junction will be forced to travel further than it currently does along Southmead Road, adding to congestion on the bus route, not reducing it.

## **Henleaze Road**

The same comment can be made about the dual carriageway from Southmead Road to Eastfield Terrace. The design envisages removal of carriageway to add pavement. This seems an unusual way of improving traffic flow. This issue has never been raised with us by residents. The removal of the second carriageway in each direction can only result in the (seemingly deliberate) slowing down of all traffic including the buses.

There is no need for a pavement running beside Old Quarry Park. In bound, the cycle way could be provided on the other side of the wall between the pavement and the residential road. Outbound the proposal will add significantly to the journey time and with no priority space for buses will significantly increase journey. The queues here will inevitably lead to rat running along neighbouring residential roads - an unfortunate outcome from proposals designed to improve traffic flow.

The junction modification on Fallodon Way is problematic. The road is busy because of the high number of patients visiting the doctor's surgery and parents bringing children to playgroup in the day and youth groups in the evening at the scout hut. Most cars turn and leave the road from the Henleaze road junction. At its current width, the junction can accommodate 2 cars turning left and right out of the road, as well as one car turning into the road.

If the junction is narrowed, cars may not be able to turn in to Fallodon Way, because of cars queuing top exit, and will therefore be blocking Henleaze Road. This already happens at busy times but will be made much worse if the junction is altered. The position could be improved by extending the yellow lines by one car length to give more space for passing vehicles, but the current junction works, so would better left as it is.

Other Henleaze Road proposals are equally difficult to fathom. The closure of Henleaze Gardens and Holmes Grove at their junctions with Henleaze Road, will only force traffic to find other circuitous ways to access Henleaze Road.

The proposal to narrow the junctions at Holmes Grove does not appear to have been fully considered. The narrowing will result in traffic turning into those roads having to queue on the main bus route when vehicles coming out of the junction are trying to get out. That will hold up cars and buses alike. Similarly, the build out at Holmes Grove of the new, upgraded bus stop will cause further delays on Henleaze Road. The current bus stop works well and should be left alone.

Therefore, the closure of Holmes Grove Junction to build out a bus stop makes no sense whatsoever.

For reasons unknown the No.2 bus often runs in pairs and the second bus overtakes the first while it is picking up passengers. Currently that passing can happen easily here, but with a build out there will be no opportunity to pass. So, the second bus will be delayed. In addition, the traffic that currently uses the Holmes Grove junction will be forced to travel the short distance to Henley Grove creating more pressure at that already busy junction.

The Henleaze Gardens closure is another proposal that seems to have no logic behind it at all. This will not stop residents using their cars, but it will force them to use the opposite end of the road to exit, forcing more traffic on to the No.1 bus route before it comes down residential roads to get back to Henleaze Road. It simply creates more traffic to delay buses.

The Henley Grove Junction modification could have the same issues, so consideration needs to be given to turning traffic, but the junction is dangerously wide, so the modification seems sensible.

### **North View and Parry's Lane**

North View would appear to be the biggest cause of delays on the Number 2 route through Westbury and Henleaze.

The changes made by the GBBN project are the cause of the current problems and especially the 'pinch point' at the roundabout /junction of North View with the A4018.

The route used to flow well until the Showcase "improvements" which reduced the inbound exit on to Westbury Road, and the outbound exit on too Northumbria Drive, resulting in much longer traffic queues which delay buses. The problem is compounded by the traffic flowing in from Westbury Park which causes further hold ups for buses.

The building out of the footpath will only cause more queuing which is likely to tail back to the roundabout and the A4018.

This is very much a missed opportunity, and it seems pointless spending £millions on this bus route if the North View route is not improved significantly. A community consultation would produce a wide variety of suggestions from local residents, that could help improve the traffic flow as well as helping the local retailers to flourish. Some of the possibilities suggested include: -

*Rush hour bus lanes would not threaten local traders. Rush hour restrictions on traffic using Westbury Park would help. Restricting right turns into and out of Etloe Road could also be an option.*

However, the proposed widened pavement appears to see the island in the middle of the road removed, leaving North View as the only side of the roundabout without a zebra crossing and with no easy place to cross.

Instead of widening the pavement, allowing two lanes to exit at the White Tree roundabout from Etloe Road would reduce bus delay significantly as would widening the exit to Northumbria drive. At present it is not quite wide enough for two vehicles to be parallel one turning left one right. A small increase in road width and removal of a parking space would significantly help traffic movement.

To repeat, the very last thing we need now is for more built out bus stops/pavements. Such a self-defeating policy will slow down ALL traffic (that means buses as well)! So, we object strongly to the ill-thought-out proposals for North View, which are sure to be counterproductive to the smoother running of buses.

As regards the suggestion for a new zebra crossing on Parry's Lane, this has never been supported by the former Neighbourhood Partnership or the current Neighbourhood Forum.

Consequently, ward Members robustly oppose the proposed zebra crossing, which could very possibly give rise to traffic accidents and even fatalities. The present arrangements on Parry's Lane with pedestrian island refuges work well. So, in the words of the old adage, "*If it ain't broke, Don't fix it.*"

Conversely, it is conceded that it may be beneficial to alter the current configuration of the Parry's Lane slip road and installing an additional new path on the Downs. There are conceivable advantages in closing Parry's Lane slip road, but only if the Downs parking regulations are tightened and enforced.

### **Whiteladies Road/The Downs Junction**

This area was subject to extensive works carried out by the GBBN showcase or priority lanes. It seems bizarre that more changes are now proposed and the concomitant spending of public money. Public money is a scarce resource!

In particular, the 24-hour bus lane is a complete nonsense. Unlike motorcars and goods vehicles, buses don't run around the clock and there is little congestion challenging them apart from a couple of times a day during the week. The GBBN considered 24-hour bus lanes but recognised - quite rightly - that they were unnecessary, draconian, and potentially detrimental.

The conversion of Roman Road could be supported as this stretch is currently a major contributor to delays on the A4018 coming on to the junction.

A further cause of delay is the short distance between the junction and the crossing point on Redland Hill and hold ups further down Redland Hill which often tail back to block the roundabout.

However, the removal of the crossing that currently allows pedestrians to cross to the top of Blackboy Hill on the inbound side significantly reduces connectivity.

In bound the two lanes from the A4018 converge into one lane until the bus stops. This will result in significant congestion which will catch or block buses as well. We cannot see how that can be a benefit.

Outbound, the need to keep buses moving is understood but, again, a 24-hour bus lane is unnecessary as buses are not delayed outside the rush hour. An extension of the bus lane restrictions that currently exist on the rest of Whiteladies Road would be more than sufficient.

## **CENTRAL (2)**

### **Queens Road/Whiteladies junction**

There could be advantages to light-controlled crossings at the new 3-way signal junction of Queens Road and Whiteladies Road, but the map shows a cycle lane and no bus lane on Queens Road. This will result in two solid lanes of inbound traffic being reduced to one. This assumes the traffic will reduce in volume. Based on such a flawed premise it is difficult to see how these changes will not result in significantly increased congestion.

Whilst there may be some logic in closing off Park Place and Richmond Hill, arguably the same reasoning could be applied to outbound traffic on the main route. In both cases two lanes of traffic are being replaced by one and buses will be caught up in the traffic delays.

### **Queens Road**

The roads in this section worked reasonably well with good traffic flows until the introduction of the Authority's Covid measures which saw the removal of large sections of the highway from car use. This action inevitably resulted in self-inflicted congestion.

Remove or reverse these Covid-inspired road restrictions and the traffic will move freely again. The 'innovations' proffered are a prime example of excessive engineered solutions to a problem of the Council's own making. A monumental waste of taxpayers' money.

### **The Triangle**

The planned road narrowing and carrying capacity reductions for the Triangle by the former Habitat store needs to be scrapped. The same arguments or rational we have used above in respect of Southmead Road equally apply here. Reduced carriageway and improved public space will not facilitate travel into and out of the city.

## **Park Street – main proposal and stated alternative options**

Closing Park Street to cars with a bus gate **would be a disaster**, given this effectively closes one of the main routes from North Bristol into the city centre, including access to Bristol Cathedral, Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel and College Street car park.

As the consultation recognises, there are alternatives and option 3 seems a sensible compromise. The “Bus lane southbound from Park Street Avenue to Unity Street” variation raises some concerns around not materially improving air quality. However, such worries may be overstated as electric vehicles become more accessible and widespread.

Many elderly and disabled residents can't use public transport. They are, however, able to use their own cars and 'blue badges' allow them to park close to their chosen destinations. If they are unable to travel through Park Street into the city centre, we are effectively making the city centre off limits to the elderly and disabled. This makes a mockery of Bristol being a welcoming and inclusive city. This is essentially a policy which discriminates against the old and disabled as well as harming the commercial viability of centrally based businesses.

If Park Street can remain fully open to buses, coaches, taxis, motorcycles, e scooters, bicycles, delivery lorries, then surely it can remain open to cars with blue badge holders. At the time of writing, we have received no such guarantees.

In fact, there is no logical reason for preventing full car access to Park Street and the city centre apart from during peak commuting times. Any 24-hour bus gate is needlessly excessive.

## **SOUTH (3)**

Local Members are pleased to see proposals come forward to improve active travel. But there are concerns around promoting and enhancing the pedestrian/cycle ability to cross the highways.

## **Wootton Park/Wells Road and West Town Lane/A37 junctions**

We do not support the proposed closure of the left-hand turn from West Town Lane into Wells Road nor the ban on the right-hand turn into West Town Lane from the Wells Road. We understand the objective of providing a pedestrian crossing across Wells Road and is supported. However, this objective could be achieved by enabling full access but allowing for a 30 second pedestrian crossing when indicated. The Broadwalk crossing has this process whereby all traffic movement is banned for pedestrian access.

The negative implications of banning turns will put a lot more traffic onto the neighbouring roads (such as Imperial Road, Beryl Grove, Mowbray Road, Hazelbury Road, Kinsale Road, David's Road and Woodleigh Gardens). We were disappointed this was not recognised by the proposals as the roads around Petherton Road appear to have been treated with more consideration, but it is these areas which are likely to be negatively impacted greatly.

## THE NEW PROPOSED BUS LANES ON THE WELLS ROAD.

Currently the only buses using the Wells Road (up to Hengrove Lane/West Town Lane) are the no. 376 and no. 515. We do not consider this to be sufficient usage to justify the displacement of many vehicles (and road parking spaces) into the surrounding roads. This proposal will make drop-off and pick up at the local schools significantly more difficult.

### **West Town Lane**

On Stockwood's main roads there are no pedestrian crossings. Not one on Sturminster Road, Craydon Road and Stockwood Lane. The effect of this is to encourage driving as the only practical mode of transport for many to navigate the busy roadways which are also plagued by rat running.

Turning to the proposed changes for the southern section, we would like to see more zebra or pedestrian crossings installed **parallel** to Sturminster Road. Suggestions could include one on Stockwood Road by the bus stops near Linden Close; another across Ladman Road by Ladman Grove and an installation by the pedestrian square on Hollway Road to the Haberfield House accommodation.

At the southern end of Sturminster Road, turning into Craydon Road, there is a real need for a crossing by the new bus stop by Pensford Court, a second by Cowling Road and a third by Longreach Grove.

All the proposed additional crossings for this part of the consultation are positive but doubts remain on the utility of the planned segregated cycle lane for Sturminster Road.

For West Town Lane, local Members do not support the removal of the bus stop by Hither Bath Bridge. This is the nearest bus stop to the Imperial Sports Ground. The Imperial Sports Ground has the highest footfall in the area with up to 2,000 visits per week. There are many visitors who do not drive and for whom a good public transport link is essential. In fact, on many evenings and weekends cars spill onto the local roads due to demand.

### **CONCLUDING GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

I would like to end by providing some overall points which have been made about this major development.

- (i) It is a massively over-engineered and expensive project.
- (ii) Many residents have stated to ward councillors along this route that they feel it to be more anti-motorist than positively promoting travel by bus. This is hardly conducive to achieving behaviour change. In our view, you are much more likely to attract people to use public transport alternatives '*with honey rather than vinegar*'.
- (iii) The current iteration of this scheme contains/retains some huge deficiencies which will severely hamper, undermine, or negate its strategic objectives.

- (iv) There are concerns that planners have not modelled for travel patterns and demands in a post pandemic world. This is especially important as working and shopping behaviours are unlikely to return to pre-COVID norms. If this is the case, is there not a case to pause and re-evaluate the assumptions which have fed into this schematic?
- (v) Linked to the last point above, it seems possible that bus patronage could remain low for a very long time as people opt for individual forms of transport rather than choosing to sit in proximity with others.
- (vi) There appears to be a fixation that penalising motorists is the only way of improving bus services. Indeed, justifying this approach by referencing the need to improve air quality also is somewhat specious if, as is expected, more and more make the switch to driving electric vehicles.
- (vii) Why are you proposing 24-hour bus lanes and restrictions when these don't run round the clock (and never will) to deal with short periods of congestion at traditional peak commuter travel times in the early morning and late afternoon? Is this not using a metaphorical sledgehammer to crack a nut?

We hope that this extensive public consultation will result in some much need revisions of the scheme. After all, it is in all our interests that any finalised version succeeds in delivering all its stated objectives and represents the very best of human ingenuity. This requires transport planners to make sure that there is no repetition of the mistakes of the past.

**COUNCILLOR MARK WESTON**  
**CONSERVATIVE LEADER**