



www.radstockactiongroup.org.uk

Response to the West of England Partnership
Draft Joint Local Transport Plan 3

Radstock Action Group welcomes the opportunity to respond to the draft JLTP3.

Our response is as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Radstock: an overview of the town and its current transport
3. Key Issues for Radstock
4. Major Priorities:
 - a. Regeneration
 - b. Protection and enhancement of the built and natural environment
 - c. Development of practical links beyond Radstock, the removal of barriers
 - d. Renewable energy hub
5. Key recommendations
6. Appendices:
 1. [Radstock Action Group Response to the Consultation on the RUS](#)
 2. [Radstock Action Group Response to the consultation on Bus Route 768](#)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Whilst we acknowledge that a general statement, by its very nature, is going to be limited, we are very disappointed that Radstock hardly appears in this consultation document, except in relation to cycle routes.
- 1.2 We also acknowledge that in the current economic climate, it is difficult to be either ambitious or very specific in plans and projections. However, the regeneration of areas such as Radstock must be central to plans as the economic crisis can only worsen if areas long needing regeneration are ignored.
- 1.3 Radstock is in a very particular geographical location in relation to the area covered by JLTP3 – it lies at the extreme edge of the region. Future transport needs must not be seen only within the framework of the JLTP for this region however, since the regeneration and development of Radstock will depend on removing transport and travel barriers to the South West, the South Coast and to London and its SE surroundings.
- 1.4 We regard the proposals as far too road transport orientated with little regard for the potential of renewing and improving rail links.
- 1.5 The Strategic Environmental Assessment focuses on a very limited number of sites; it pays no attention to the biodiversity of less well-known areas.

- 1.6 JLTP3 is very much focused on cities and major urban/metropolitan areas. It has been suggested that this is because this is where the majority of the population live. However, given the environmental priorities and the need to cut down on car and van commuting for example, it is essential that rural and semi-rural communities are regarded as key focal points for the JLTP3 debate encouraging more sustainable arrangements, and congruent with the declared aims of 'flagging up environmental issues and identifying mitigating measures'.
- 1.7 This concentration on urban issues is reflected in the SEA with little acknowledgment of the biodiversity and the risks posed by poor transport solutions. A specific example can be found in the omission of Mells Valley SAC from the list of international sites in paragraph 4.4.1.

2. Radstock: an overview of the town and its current transport situation

- 2.1 Radstock is a former mining town with a long history going back before the industrial era; it has suffered from lack of investment and regeneration since the pits closed in 1973 but is keen to move on.
- 2.2 The town and its surrounding area have much to offer in terms of tourism which has not been prioritised and which requires development which can only happen if the area is easily accessible.
- 2.3 Radstock is beset by congestion (and accompanying air and noise pollution and general degradation of the built and natural environment caused by excessive car usage, especially by commuters to Bath)
- 2.4 The scheme outlined is severely circumscribed by the need to look only to the geographical boundaries of the area covered by this particular draft plan. Radstock should be opening out to South, South West and London, as well as providing a transport hub for the local area including Midsomer Norton, Paulton, Chilcompton, and neighbouring settlements.
- 2.5 Radstock is on the receiving end of a lack of joined up thinking by transport and other road planners. One of the most recent examples of this is the bus lane built recently adjoining the Park and Ride at Odd Down. No sooner had the bus lane been completed than the bus services to and from Radstock were cut by 25%.
- 2.6 Radstock experiences very high levels of air pollution owing to a mixture of excessive car use and being set in a dip surrounded at close quarters by hills.
- 2.7 Repeated road surveys have revealed increasing amounts of traffic – so far no solutions have been suggested, neither have any detailed analyses of these traffic surveys been made public.
- 2.8 Public transport in the form of bus services is poor; expensive; unreliable; slow. In the past 12 months services have been reduced and ticket prices have escalated. Most recently the cost of a Park and Ride ticket has risen from £2.50 to £3, an increase of 20%.
- 2.9 Regular buses to Bath are marred by long gaps in the timetable at key commuter periods, for example, there is no bus from Radstock for Bath between 08.50 and 09.26. The 178 which runs between Bristol and Bath via Radstock is very often up to 20 minutes late owing to the unrealistically tight schedule; when it's 20 minutes late this results in it running together with the following bus.

3. Key Issues for Radstock

- 3.1 The undue emphasis in this document on road transport will not enable the best outcomes for the regeneration of Radstock. Reinstatement of the rail link to Frome

would kickstart the local economy and regeneration more than any other single transport initiative.

- 3.2 With its thriving set of niche shops; its world renowned museum; valuable natural environment, boasting very special biodiversity; a town centre described as 'the best preserved mining town centre in the country' and walking options to a wide range of destinations, Radstock is ideally placed to be a tourist centre to complement the tourist interest not just of Bath but of the the whole area.
- 3.3 The introduction of reliable and practical public transport links to the town would encourage businesses to locate/relocate to the town. A renewed rail link with easy access not just to London but to the South West and West would be a valuable selling point and would enable those wishing to get to Bath to do so, by train in 50 minutes – no longer, and at peak congestion times quicker than the road.
- 3.4 The rail link provides a practical solution to the need to encourage those who work other than in Radstock, to avoid going by car. Unfortunately, however well intentioned the sentiments behind the ideas of encouraging walking and cycling, these are not practical solutions for many people given the hills, lack of pavements and pedestrian routes.
- 3.5 With its centre being a conservation area, we must avoid the introduction of new roads into the area. We do not understand why the HCA which is nominated as a partner in the consultation appears to be pursuing a policy at odds with the key goals. The HCA appears to be supporting, with funding, the construction of a new road in the town centre. This road will, contrary to all best planning practice, bring all through traffic into the town centre, rather than leaving it to skirt the area as it does at present. Whilst we acknowledge that the current configuration and organisation is not ideal, we refute the idea that a new road through the middle would improve the situation.
- 3.6 Satellite Park and Ride solutions should be considered to contribute to the aim of keeping through traffic out of the town centre. In particular we suggest that, in conjunction with the rail link reinstatement to Frome, and even before this can be finalised, feasibility studies should be conducted on the possibility of having a satellite to the south of the town and another towards Farrington Gurney, enabling commuters to leave their cars and link to the major Park and Ride facilities nearer to major towns, via dedicated bus services.

4. Joint Major Priorities

- 4.1 Railway reinstatement provides an essential complementary and alternative to road focused projects¹
- 4.2 Protection and enhancement of the built and natural environment and promotion of sustainable transport solutions to complement sustainable regeneration and economic development
- 4.3 Development of practical links beyond Radstock, the removal of barriers to travel for residents, for people working in Radstock and for leisure visitors
- 4.4 Promotion of the town as a renewable energy hub which obviously requires a serious increase in sustainable transport options
- 4.5 Radstock and Midsomer Norton are two discrete and complementary towns and should not be regarded as one unit. In order for each one to retain its

¹ Radstock Action Group's submission to the Route Utilisation Strategy is reprinted in Appendix 1 of the present document

distinctiveness, there must be careful detail enshrined in the final Plan, acknowledging that the solutions for the two communities may not be the same but should contribute to the overall goal of improving connectivity for rural and semi-rural communities.

5. **Key Recommendations**

- 5.1 Bath-centric approach for Radstock should be replaced by more flexible and imaginative services and initiatives.
- 5.2 The rail link between Radstock and Frome should be reinstated². This is widely supported by the local community, as illustrated by the very large number of signatories to the on-line and hard copy petition on this matter.
- 5.3 The withdrawal of all proposals to build a major new road link through the centre of the town.
- 5.4 The local authority should publish the most recent Radstock traffic surveys together with comprehensive analysis of the findings.
- 5.5 The heightening of the Flood Risk in the most recent assessment for Radstock Town Centre should be taken into consideration at all points.

² To view 'Next Stop Radstock?' Radstock Action Group's film on the Radstock – Frome railway, go to: http://www.radstockactiongroup.org.uk/film_next_stop_radstock.php
Radstock Action Group: Response to WEPJLTP3