

This summary is being shared to assist those that wish to respond to the West of England regional planning consultation ([see summary](#)) by the 19 Dec deadline. BGCP CIC intends to submit this summary with a cover note as a consultation response.

Questions from Partnership members present and panellists' responses have been summarised and anonymised (no verbatim record is available due to technical issues). Views expressed are those of participants, and do not necessarily represent those of BGCP CIC. Not all panellists have approved these summaries.

1. BGCP CIC held an expert panel event on regional homes, jobs and transport plans as part of its [quarterly partnership gathering](#) on 1 December 2016. Following a [presentation](#) (PDF file) by Zoe Willcox from West of England consultation team on the overall process and outline of the joint spatial plan (JSP) and joint transport study (JTS) proposals, there were presentations giving perspectives from business and the 5 themes of energy, food, nature, resources and transport.
2. **Business:** James Durie ([Business West](#)) presented a business perspective. Highlighting his own organisation's [2050 vision](#), he supported the overall JSP and JTS approach. A more holistic approach was needed in the context of a growing Bristol and devolution of powers. While the process was a big step forward in understanding the region's needs, we should be more ambitious. Much of the proposed £7.5 billion transport package only addressed existing deficits. Contrasting with investments of £56bn for HS2 and £16bn a year in London, much more investment was needed in the West of England. He outlined 5 key points:
 - citing two independent studies, the projected number of homes needed through to 2036 seemed too low – a minimum of 130,000 was suggested, and rent affordability would be risked without this;
 - only half of the regional need for affordable homes was met by the proposals;
 - development locations were not the most strategic or sustainable with impacts on public transport, in part due to weighting of consideration factors in favour of the green belt, which despite sensitivities the councils should review;
 - employment land proposed was not sufficient to meet needs, and work should be commissioned examining employment types and locations; and
 - planned transport was not integrated with growth areas, with development 'beyond the green belt' less sustainable, leading to more traffic on key corridors and less sustainable modes – planned housing development should be better located for public transport and sustainability.
3. **Resources:** Jane Stephenson ([Resource Futures](#)) spoke of being struck by the lack of mention of material resources in the consultation. Materials, both in terms of inputs – building of roads and homes – or outputs – such as household and business waste – all have significant environmental impacts in terms of sourcing, processing, production and disposal. With each new home producing around a tonne of waste each year, adding up to a potential additional 100,000 tonnes of waste, this was a big omission. Infrastructure would be needed to address this, including ensuring that new houses can accommodate appropriate recycling facilities and how to encourage less waste generation by households occupying the new houses.
4. Shelly Dewhurst ([West of England Nature Partnership](#), one of 48 Local Nature Partnerships established by the Department of Environment and Rural Affairs to embed the value of nature in

decision-making. The Partnership has been looking at how 105,000 new homes might impact nature and natural systems such as flooding and tree planting. While evidence had been lacking, the Partnership has created a series of West of England scale maps that show ecological networks and ecosystem services that have been fed into the planning process. However, better evidence was needed in some areas (e.g. pollination, flood defence) to support decisions, to influence the size and scope of developments to ensure nature is safeguarded. Building 33,000 new homes in Bristol might have a major impact on nature, if not carefully planned. Strategic scale decisions were needed, but also drilling down into neighbourhood and site level, to ensure green infrastructure such as river corridor enhancements and green routes for walking were invested in.

5. **Transport:** Jon Usher ([Sustrans](#)) addressed transport issues. The JTS looks across all the [Good Transport Plan](#) themes, launched in the same room back in January 2016. It was important to look at mode share and the balance between active travel and driving, and not just corridors but a network of radial routes that ensured free movement. The next iteration of the plans would need more detail about what these transport corridors might look like and what constraints might be involved, noting a workplace levy and the Bristol City Council vote in favour of a Clean Air Zone. There were also opportunities for more restraint in suburban areas, not just urban areas, needed to lock in transport corridor benefits, along with more of a focus on active travel to reduce local journeys in towns, not just Bristol, Bath and Weston-Super-Mare. A high quality transport network was needed across the whole region, with stations as multi-modal hubs, with good services and improved public realm.

6. **Food:** Joy Carey ([Bristol Food Policy Council](#) and [sustainable food consultant](#)) reminded the audience that consideration of food in planning might seem leftfield, but it was crucial to consider food resilience and sustainability in new developments. It was not just about having a supermarket within driving distance, but access to fresh, affordable food for example through fresh food markets. It was also important to safeguard good agricultural land to ensure future resilience rather than building on high-quality soils. While increased housing offered new markets, farming required infrastructure, such as land for warehousing and transportation. In housing developments, space was needed to store and prepare food storage, such as good kitchens. It could be well-designed to support community- and household-level food resilience, e.g. allotments, composting and trees. Need also to consider circular economy use of food waste. The regional planning process was a great opportunity to achieve excellence.

7. **Energy:** Ann Cousins ([Arup](#)) highlighted that consideration of energy appeared to be missing from the current development plans. In the face of central government and planning system challenges, incentives were needed to encourage stakeholders. Bristol City Council has made commitments within their Climate Change and Energy Security Framework to do more. While some high-level analysis has been undertaken as part of the Sustainability Appraisal, further analysis of heat network connections, for example, is needed. Regional Spatial Strategies had attempted this, setting renewable energy generation targets: a 2009 review of Regional Spatial Strategies found some good results, but even then these were not anticipating enough low carbon generation to meet national targets. More evidence should be gathered, and there was scope to learn from elsewhere, e.g. Wales where local authorities are mandated to set renewable energy generation targets within their Local Development Plans.

8. Invited by the chair, Andrew Kelly ([Bristol Festival of Ideas](#)/Bristol Cultural Development Partnership), to share any reactions, Zoe Willcox recognised the importance of the themes raised, but suggested there remained a question about at which stage and level of detail – region-wide or local plans – at which they would best be addressed, i.e. what hooks there should be in the regional plan to policies developed elsewhere (also noting that Bristol's local plan will be reviewed alongside

the JSP process). She also acknowledged the level of affordable homes in the current proposals, highlighting national housing planning legislation issues, e.g. around starter homes, and raised the issue of the construction industry's capacity to deliver more homes than currently planned for.

9. Invited to respond, James Durie highlighting the 'flashing red light' in the local housing market, and the need for housing to be proportional to the area's need, and the need for sustainability to be central to proposals, including the themes raised, and for high-quality, low-carbon and sustainable transport modes by default.

10. Adam Crowther from the West of England consultation team (also Head of Strategic City Transport at Bristol City Council) joined the panel, and questions were invited from the floor:

11. **'Jumping the green belt'**: The first questioner highlighted that of the areas proposed for housing development, 7 were beyond and 3 within the green belt. This meant 'building in' a great deal of commuting across the green belt. By moving sites around it could be that no transport was needed at all. In responses, the priority from the initial 'issue and options' consultation was to protect the green belt so 'jumping' the green belt was a problem that posed transport challenges. As many homes as possible were being proposed for urban areas, with park and rides, Metrobus and rapid transit to intercept movements. It was noted that some proposed enterprise areas were in places with no transport infrastructure options. One option could be to move some employment zones to also 'jump' the green belt. It was noted that little employment land had been allocated in South Bristol; an employment zone has been suggested for the airport, but it was unclear where this might be sited. There were mixed views on the green belt, with proposals for a strategic allocation of land out of the green belt with safeguards and new, high-quality public transport, but others urging minimum damage to the green belt which would have to be mitigated and compensated for.

12. **Business as usual?**: The second questioner suggested the proposals looked much like business as usual, with each council area adding in their own plans to the regional proposals: e.g. focusing on the North Bristol fringe in South Gloucestershire and Weston-Super-Mare in North. There was a risk that sustainability might fall off the agenda later in process. To stop perpetuating the status quo an integrated planning and transport system was needed, with a more sustainable solution that builds a trans-regional community with housing, jobs and waste working together. While politics can't be avoided, there was a risk of some decisions contradicting the evidence. Food and resources should feature in an integrated regional plan and it needed to be clear how this would be achieved.

13. **Housing density & transport**: The third questioner noted some proposed development areas were distant from any public transport (e.g. the proposed M5/A38 development corridor), and called for more ambition on the density of housing on transport corridors. High quality transport policy and mechanisms were needed, involving procurement and partnership with delivery agencies to ensure the right type of development. More clarity was also needed on the sustainability assessment and this must be comprehensive: sustainability should not only be in a separate report that people will not read. It was highlighted that there were 5 rapid transit routes proposed, with more housing density around them. Town expansions were necessary for more viable transport links, which needed to be more convenient than using a car. Some corridors were very narrow and may require other solutions (such as underground). It was also possible to reduce the need for transport by locating homes near to jobs. Cities already had high density, but this was not consistently so. Quality places, were important, which may mean less dense but better use of space.

14. **Future-proofing**: Another questioner highlighted the need to consider now the impact of future technologies and changing behaviours. These were interesting questions but potentially difficult to

address them in development plans. For driverless cars, for example, even if form or ownership shifts the likelihood was that there would still be a lot of car journeys.

15. **Land quality & green belt:** the quality of land around some proposed developments (e.g. around Nailsea and Backwell) is good. It was highlighted that the green belt – a national policy – was a land use planning tool to ensure urban areas were kept separate. Regionally, this prevents Bristol from growing. It was not about land quality or protecting high-quality agriculture land or sustainable transport. Some suggested that a more sophisticated approach to the green belt was needed. A question was raised about how representative the previous consultation response has been. The [‘Who feeds Bristol’](#) report on the city-region’s food system was highlighted: it involved identifying the best land for food, but there was not enough data collated for a big picture view.

16. **Park & Rides:** It was suggested that a Park & Ride from Weston could remove much traffic from the A370. As with other transport nodes, Park & Rides should be – and were being – seen as multi-modal transport hubs, interacting with cycling and walking, as well as driving. The proposed ring of Park & Rides would allow orbital interchange, with the Brislington facility proposed to move to Hicks Gate to allow this. New contractual models might be needed to achieve this.

17. **Air quality:** There was an impassioned plea for serious consideration of public health throughout in the JSP and JTS plans, notably air quality given the ongoing UK health crisis of air pollution: this was a public health emergency and a [new NICE guidance](#) that had been published that day was highlighted. We needed to avoid building in more problems, with a stronger evidence base at local level, including in transport modelling. Scope for workplace levies and congestion charging was also noted.

18. **Carbon targets:** The question was posed as to how the proposals are to contribute to national policy to reduce carbon emissions under the Climate Change Act.

19. **Place-making:** The need to include high-level design policies and involve small and medium-sized builders was highlighted, which would allow for quality places to be created. This was a great chance to innovate and be creative, avoiding standard ‘square box’ new housing. It was important to ensure innovation is not ‘value-engineered out’, and it would be helpful for people to demonstrate that they want this more innovative approach.

20. **Comparing options:** It was also suggested that a cost-benefit analysis of the two options – sustainable transport and protecting green belt – might be useful, with alternative options outlined rather than the single option outlined, which tried to square circles and so made compromises. Those present were urged to submit their suggestions for better spatial plans.

21. **Call to action:** The event concluded with a call to action to engage with the [consultation process](#) ahead of the 19 December deadline.