



# SALTFORD PARISH COUNCIL

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**West of England Combined Authority  
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## **Saltford Parish Council response to the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 consultation**

Saltford Parish Council welcomes that a new railway station at Saltford is featured in a map of transport improvements in the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (2019-2036) ensuring a re-opened Saltford railway station remains part of the transport and economic vision for this sub-region. Saltford Parish Council believes that re-opening a railway station at Saltford on the existing site as part of Metro West is deliverable, affordable, and accords with the overarching aims and policies of the West of England Combined Authority. A station at Saltford on the existing site would provide a transport hub connecting rail, road, bus, river, cycling and walking routes. It is a mission of Saltford Parish Council, supported by residents, to re-open Saltford Station as soon as possible.

Saltford Parish Council believes that the outline proposal for a mass transport scheme linking Bristol and Bath outlined in the consultation document is fundamentally flawed. The consultation document section 7: Connectivity in the West of England P48 Case study: Metrobus states “A bypass for the town<sup>1</sup> has been considered to reduce congestion through the town and enable road space reallocation to public transport. We will undertake further work to assess options to provide bus priority on the approaches to Saltford before a decision on a Saltford Bypass is made. Consideration will be given to the potential conversion of bus priority measures in future to accommodate other forms of mass transit, such as light rail”.

Recent studies by consultants Atkins contracted by the West of England Partnership concluded that “the bypass would cross difficult terrain, with steep slopes south east of the village.... These issues would collectively result in landscape impacts, major earthworks and relatively high scheme costs”. This is not surprising as the same

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<sup>1</sup> The consultation document, e.g. ‘Section 7: Connectivity in the West of England P48 case study’ refers to Saltford as a ‘town’ instead of a village. Please can this be corrected on all future references to Saltford.

consultants came to the conclusion in the 2006 Greater Bristol Transport Study that this road would have no strategic benefit and be very costly.

In the past 50 years, no feasible route for a by-pass has ever been identified and Saltford Parish Council is of the view any proposal for the A4 corridor that involves a local by-pass or orbital road at Saltford is therefore fanciful and fundamentally flawed. Moreover such a by-pass at Saltford would lead to the loss of green belt and agricultural land, have a negative environmental effect on the countryside, lead to housing in-fill, affect the viability of Saltford shops and businesses, raise noise and overall pollution levels, risk the community forest, increase overall traffic volumes, provide no strategic benefits (greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study 2006), and give poor value for money. Inclusion of such a suggestion of a bypass in the Joint Transport Plan would therefore not only be at odds with the two previous reports from consultants referred to above, but would cause a local housing market blight in Saltford; it should therefore have no mention in the plan other than to say it has been investigated by transport consultants and found to be un-economic and would provide no strategic benefits.

It is difficult also to see how a tram-way could ever fit along the A4 road which is narrow in sections through Saltford or run adjacent to the main railway line with its embankments and tunnel at Saltford. However, Saltford Parish Council believes the existing Midland Railway path could be widened to accommodate a tram or light railway linking Bristol East and Bath whilst retaining a parallel path for cyclists and walkers. The original Midland Railway line was double-tracked and this pathway has great potential as a strategic transport link and should be included as a priority in the final version of JLTP4.

The traffic capacity of the A4 as it comes through Saltford (from and towards Keynsham and Corston) is breached many times during the day. Saltford has a section of road that is an Air Quality Management Area. The Parish Council would be opposed to any increase in road traffic numbers through Saltford without appropriate mitigating schemes to manage air/noise pollution and additional road safety. Again, congestion on the A4 is a growing problem which is shown by the reduction in traffic speed on the A4 between 2017 and 2018. The plan must include full assessments of any additional road traffic numbers through Saltford that could be caused by changes in the road systems or traffic management. For example:

1. An emissions charge for vehicles going through Bath enroute to the M4 and this in conjunction with the opening of a new Junction 18a on the M4 could cause many vehicles (including heavy goods vehicles) to follow a route through Saltford to access the M4 at the new Junction at no additional cost.
2. A scheme that would have an effect for additional extra traffic route through Saltford would be the planned the road from Hicks Gate through to Stockwood/Whitchurch to join up with the South Bristol ring road.
3. Additional traffic caused by the Joint Spatial Plan for an extensive strategic housing development on the North of the A4 between Saltford and the Broadmead roundabout.

Although a sustainable road maintenance programme is proposed in the plan, given the poor condition of the road surfaces, the Parish Council considers it essential to have the exact level of funding for these maintenance programmes shown by Authority in the plan.

As a method of bridging the financial gap between the schemes proposed by the Transport Plan and funding, the Transport Plan makes a suggestion on the possibility of road pricing. Salford Parish Council would be opposed to any road pricing scheme to be introduced as we would consider this as an additional local tax and a charge which would significantly impact and disadvantage those people, including the elderly, on a low or fixed income.

Salford Parish Council supports the overall aims of the West of England Combined Authority Joint Local Transport Plan 4. A weakness is the absence of a clear sequencing of proposed schemes together with realistic time-lines. The totality of schemes referred to in the JLTP4 has a cost way beyond the projected devolved funding from central government. This emphasises the need for clarity over priorities. JLT4 should be a plan not a wish-list.

At the local level, the inclusion of objectives for walking and cycling are welcome. Emphasis needs to be placed on reducing the congestion caused by the school run. However, it is hard to reconcile the strategic goals of improving local connectivity with pressures on local authority expenditure, e.g. on pavements and footpaths. Similarly, bus connectivity between settlements, villages, and towns will be hard to achieve without subsidy to private operators and, again, local authorities are currently reducing these subsidies. Continued support for community bus services such as Dial-a-Ride especially in rural areas away from the main cities is essential and should remain a priority.

What does Salford want? The answer is a re-opened station as part of Metro West, development of the Midland Railway Path as a mass transit route, the withdrawal of references to bypass options, investment in walking, cycling, and buses. Heavy goods vehicles on journeys which often originate from sea ports need to be directed to national routes well away from the A4.