



BATH RESIDENTS
Federation of Bath Residents' Associations

FoBRA COMMENTS ON THE LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE (LPPU) AND STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

The Federation of Bath Residents' Associations (FoBRA) is an apolitical organisation that is the main representative voice for about 5,000 residents in Bath. It is made up of 32 resident associations and six affiliate organisations that include the University of Bath and both universities' student unions. The draft Statement of Community Involvement acknowledges the residents of Bath are neither represented by a Town nor City Council nor Parish Councils, and thus FoBRA, *inter alia*, reflects a significant part of the community.

FoBRA has sought its members' views on the areas that are proposed to be reviewed in the Commencement Document (CD), the Local Plan Partial update (LPPU) and Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) consultation scoping exercises and, while it has reflected many of their substantial comments, it has encouraged Resident Associations to submit their own individual comments, especially as they may have differing priorities that are specific to their neighbourhood.

FoBRA is, of course, conscious that by seeking to get too many additional policies reviewed in the partial update it might have the contrary effect of slowing it down. While there is a danger in this, it believes that it must highlight all those policies certainly where it believes there is an apparent urgency for review.

LPPU- policies that FoBRA considers should be updated, in addition to those listed in the LPPU Policy Review document:

DISTRICT WIDE:

CSCP5 - Flood Risk Management – in the light of the greater awareness of the Climate Change Emergency, flooding is becoming an increasing threat due to global warming and this policy clearly needs to be as up-to-date as possible to ensure decisions on new developments are adequately informed. For instance, guidance on new porous surfacing of car parks and domestic driveways may need to be stronger. The Local Authority should actively engage with the Environment Agency and other riparian authorities to devise a holistic catchment-wide solution to increasing flood risk.

PMPD2, 4, 5, 6 & 8 – This suite of policies designed to regulate the quality of design within the city is essential to maintaining good design and spatial standards within the city, but FoBRA believes these should be reviewed at this stage. For example:

- D2 should be updated to acknowledge the increasing threat to the built environment posed by changes to PD rights including allowing additional floors on top of existing buildings;
- D4. it is recognised that this policy needs to reflect the Healthy Streets approach. The importance of this has been highlighted by the need for social distancing. This should not await the new Local Plan;
- D8. The application of this policy has failed to prevent the introduction of new and intrusive light sources such as from new additional floors of existing buildings.

PMPNE6 - Trees and Woodland Conservation – Recent developments which are visibly prominent on the skyline of Bath have demonstrated the need for this policy and its application to be urgently reviewed. In recent years these woodlands have become depleted to the considerable disfigurement of the setting of the World Heritage Site. There is need to ensure any trees lost whether through storm damage, disease or illegal felling- or wilful vandalism are replaced and replenished.

PMPPCS1, 2 & 3 – Pollution and Nuisance, Noise and Vibration, Air Quality – These policies should be brought up-to-date to incorporate and reflect the principles of the CAZ which has been delayed, and the threat to public health of air pollution (NO2 and CO2).

- PCS1. Where there is significant risk to the environment, pollution controls need to take account of the need to prevent or at least to minimise harm, even where scientific knowledge is not conclusive.
- PCS2 should be expanded to include water courses and main rivers. Particular mention of the River Avon as a major wildlife and environmental asset to be protected.
- PCS3 should be expanded so that the parameters to be examined and should include an air quality assessment. The relationship between air quality and traffic is now much better understood and ideas such as road closures near schools at peak times to create a safer environment for children should be explored.

CSCP9 – Affordable Housing(AH) – The Council’s policy on AH, and importantly the provision of social homes for rent, is currently failing to secure sufficient supply. There has been a noticeable growth of housing (mostly PBSA and some sheltered housing) which is lucrative to the developer because it avoids the requirement for the inclusion of AH, resulting in a significant deficit in the city. A clear policy is also need to limit the growth of PBSA which creates ghettos of transient populations and to focus instead on the need for new homes for families and young professionals who will in turn support retail, leisure and other services. A review is therefore required.

PMPH5 - Retention of Existing Housing Stock – The city has been losing residential accommodation rapidly over recent years due to a proliferation of short-term lettings, AirBnB, HMO's and other uses. Therefore, there is an urgent need for this policy to be reviewed.

PMPRE7 – Visitor Accommodation (VA) – While it is noted that it is intended to clarify this policy through the new Local Plan, it is considered that this should be dealt with now as there has been a noticeable increase in the loss of family accommodation. The explosion of new hotel bed-spaces in recent years has well-exceeded demand and the growth in AirBnB has hollowed out the residential community which is an essential part of the city's unique character. The scope of this policy review should be broadened to address the quantitative need for new visitor accommodation given the rapid increase in the number of hotel beds in the past 10 years, and the number of residential properties now operating as short-term lettings or party houses. Greater control is needed on the growth of VA at the cost of genuine residential homes. A broader strategy for the city centre and range of policies should also be developed to guide and control the Bath tourism industry and the future shape of the retail and service areas.

PMPST6 – Park and Ride – The principle of P&R provision is acknowledged but a clear policy is urgently required to achieve the goal of the Transport Strategy which is to develop a new P&R facility to the east of the city. This a long-standing issue that must be addressed at the earliest opportunity. It must form part of the wider traffic and transport strategies to relieve congestion in the centre of Bath and air pollution and to pedestrianise more of the city.

BATH

CSB4 – World Heritage Site Setting - A review of this policy is needed to reflect the change in emphasis in the latest NPPF which states that,

*'There is a strong presumption against development that would result in harm to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site, its authenticity or integrity, **and where this harm is deemed to be substantial any development should be wholly exceptional.***

Moreover, FoBRA is uncomfortable with the reference to climate change in B4. Climate change is an overarching theme that should run through all of the plan and not be sprinkled into an individual policy; after all the public benefit test is enshrined in national guidance anyway so there is no merit in repeating it here. Therefore, the last sentence in CSB4 should be deleted.

PMPBD1 – Bath Design Policy – This policy is of vital importance in the guidance and control of developments within the city and this opportunity should be taken to review it to ensure that developers are fully appraised of the limitations and conditions that will be applied, notwithstanding general relaxation of permitted development rights such as changes of use and additions to the heights of buildings. It is assumed the Council will seek exemptions to these broader changes wherever appropriate and this policy should reflect this.

PMPB2 – Central Area Strategic Policy – Recognising that this policy is already scheduled for review, FoBRA believes it would be helpful not only if definitions of the central area and historic core could be made but also that the areas be delineated.

PMPB3 - Strategic Policy for Twerton and Newbridge Riversides – In the light of the many recent applications for redevelopment of sites in these locations, overwhelmingly for high density and PBSAs, which are already prevalent here, FoBRA believes a strategic review of the policy for these areas is urgently required to avoid its becoming a student ghetto.

PMPH2 - HMO – While it is acknowledged that this policy is also ticked for attention, FoBRA believes it should include an urgent review of the non-effectiveness of the HMO Supplementary Planning Document which has been demonstrated by FoBRA (and acknowledged by B&NES) to fall well-short in its stated intention of limiting HMOs to 10 per cent of households over much of the city.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

FoBRA has reviewed the draft SCI and recognises that it is a statutory requirement. It fully endorses Fig. 3 which acknowledges that the residents of Bath are not represented by a Town, or a City or by Parish Councils and that, as such, extra effort must be made to fully involve them in planning issues.

NJT/JS/CC (for FoBRA)

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