

21 July 2010

Dear Secretary of State,

## **ASHTON VALE TO TEMPLE MEADS AND BRISTOL CITY CENTRE RAPID TRANSIT ORDER**

### ***Introduction***

1. I am writing on behalf of the Ramblers' Association to object to the proposals in the application for an order under the Transport and Works Act 1992, a copy of which was sent to us on 10 June. We also wish to make representations about the nature of the scheme if it goes ahead.
2. The Ramblers is a national organisation with over 2000 members in its Avon Area, about 900 of whom belong to the Bristol Group. We aim to protect, improve and increase places where people can walk and to promote walking generally.

### ***Summary***

3. Our main objection to the proposals is that - unless accompanied by fierce traffic management measures - they would significantly increase traffic coming into Bristol, making walking less pleasant all along the route. We are particularly concerned about the impact along the 'chocolate path' and by the Harbourside/ 'Museum Avenue' where very popular walking routes risk being blighted. This has implications for the health and quality of life of Bristol residents and for Bristol's attractiveness to tourists. The expansion of the Long Ashton 'park-and-ride' could also lead to a loss of attractive open countryside.
4. If a scheme does go ahead, we would like the following modifications:
  - **Route.** To follow the Cumberland Road in both directions at all times and to enter the City Centre via Redcliffe Hill rather than Prince Street Bridge, which we would like closed to all traffic.
  - **Separation of cyclists and walkers.** Clear segregation along the maintenance track needed, preferably a physical barrier.
  - **Separation of walkers and buses.** Screening by trees and hedges and close attention paid to safety.
  - **Type of transport.** Trams not buses, to produce less noise and fumes.
  - **Impact on footpaths.** Must be mitigated, in particular on the 'chocolate path' (and near the Harbourside if not re-routed).
5. These points are considered in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### ***Detail***

***Main objection: increased traffic***

6. Walking in Bristol is made unenjoyable and unsafe in many places by excessive traffic and congestion. We would welcome a rapid transit system that was part of a scheme to reduce traffic. In itself the system will instead serve to increase it, with buses planned to go along the route at least

every 3 minutes. Research shows that cars rapidly fill any additional road space unless actively prevented from doing so. As we understand it, the scheme does not involve closing any routes to cars apart from Prince Street bridge. **We object to the proposals unless accompanied by traffic management measures to improve the walking environment at least as much as the rapid transit scheme harms it.**

#### *Impact on the 'chocolate path' and the Harbourside*

7. The 'chocolate path' along the New Cut is a route much appreciated by local residents and visitors alike, while the Harbourside provides one of the best tranquil and interesting walks in the City, popular for both commuting and recreation. The rapid transit buses would be both visually and aurally intrusive. No one wants to stroll alongside a long line of belching high-speed diesels.

**Unless the Harbourside can be avoided (see comments on the route below) and compensating improvements made to the walking environment by traffic management, we object to the scheme because of the impact on these two routes.**

#### *Expansion of Long Ashton 'park-and-ride'.*

8. A successful scheme will require more parking in attractive countryside, while the same number of cars as now proceed into the city. **Unless there is an equal reduction in the number of cars entering the city, we object to the scheme on these grounds.**

#### *Route*

9. If the Cumberland Road can be used for rapid transit buses in both directions when the Harbour Railway is running, we see no reason why – with appropriate traffic management - it cannot be used all the time. If Prince Street Bridge can be cleared of traffic for the rapid transit buses, then this could be done anyway, improving the walking environment, while the buses could use Redcliffe Hill. **We would like the tranquillity of the Harbourside maintained and improved, by clearing the area of all traffic and routing the rapid transit buses along Cumberland Road and Redcliffe Hill.**

#### *Separation of cyclists and walkers*

10. The maintenance track could provide an important new walking route, especially for commuters. Sharing space with cyclists can reduce enjoyment and safety. **Walkers and cyclists should be separated as much as possible, preferably with a physical barrier such as a kerb but otherwise with white lines.**

#### *Separation of walkers and buses*

11. The sight and sound of frequent buses would be intrusive. In the Netherlands, public transport routes are routinely screened by trees and hedges from walkers and cyclists. In this scheme such screening appears proposed only for houses. Frequent buses pose obvious safety risks at junctions and in the city centre. **We would like screening by trees and hedges and close attention paid to safety.**

#### *Type of transport.*

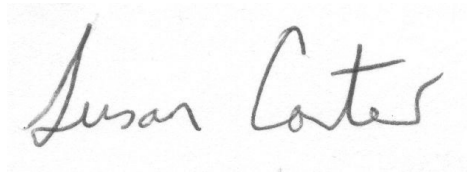
12. Although it would not overcome our fundamental objections to the scheme, we are disappointed that a light tram system has been ruled out. ***We would prefer trams to buses, to produce less noise and fumes and to provide a more predictable guided route for vehicles***

*Impact on footpaths*

13. Even with re-routing to avoid the Harbourside and the measures proposed above, we are concerned about the impact on footpaths, especially the 'chocolate path'. A maintenance track is not an attractive alternative to a quiet and interesting path. The effect of this scheme could be to blight a popular promenade. We would like more thought given to how this may be avoided, perhaps by reducing other traffic.

14. We are grateful for the time those working on the scheme took to explain it to us. We recognise that considerable steps have been taken to accommodate walking. With a clearer commitment to complementary traffic management and some re-routing, this would be an acceptable scheme.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Susan Carter**  
**Environment and Planning Officer**