



MALAGO VALLEY CONSERVATION GROUP

The Amenity and Environmental Improvement Society for South West Bristol

14 Queens Road
Bishopsworth
Bristol
BS13 8LB

20 August 2013

Planning application number 13/03108/F - South Bristol Link

Malago Valley Conservation Group opposes the planning application for the South Bristol Link and asks that it be refused.

The reason for our opposition can be summed up as a simple cost-benefit argument: its costs - financial and environmental - are self-evidently high and its claimed benefits are unclear or implausible.

The proposed SBL is in contravention of two major planning policies:

1) It would pass through and destroy Green Belt, adversely affecting landscape, wildlife and amenity for recreational walking. The only reason for allowing it would be if there was a major countervailing benefit. Since the claimed saving in journey times are minuscule at best, and since - as has been demonstrated by other objectors - the claimed economic benefits for South Bristol are illusory, building the SBL on the Green Belt must be refused.

2) It would pass through the Bishopsworth & Malago Conservation Area, whose character would be adversely affected in several major ways with no possibility of meaningful mitigation.

- The SBL would cut across Highridge Common, a valuable area of unimproved neutral grassland with a wide range of wild flowers, including orchids, and an outstanding view of the city in the distance. It has always been an asset in the area and it is used by a lot of people. Provision of alternative open space on agriculturally improved fields is not an adequate substitute for the wildlife loss, nor would the alternative open space be as accessible to local people, especially children and the elderly, compared with the existing Common which the SBL would sever from the people living nearby.
- The SBL would pass down King Georges Road, a peaceful, established area of traditional housing, destroying the visual amenity and increasing noise and pollution for those living there. It has been asserted that the line of the SBL has been reserved on the map since at least the 1950s and therefore anyone affected by their proximity to the road should have known about it when they moved to their house. This is factually incorrect. A Bristol Ring Road was an aspiration for many decades but the line within the City of Bristol boundary was formally abandoned by the City Council Planning Committee on 23 December 1998. That abandonment was recognised in the subsequent Avon Structure Plan, and it should have then been reflected

in the revised Bristol Local Plan but the line was left in - and Malago Valley Conservation Group formally objected to the Local Plan for this reason. The Local Plan was then left in limbo by the new Development Framework system, and we recognise that the line has come back in a new form as a result of the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study and subsequent developments. But it should be noted that it is not true that the ring road has always been proposed along this route continuously since the 1950s.

It should also be noted that the reserved line from Queens Road in the west to the Gatehouse Centre in the east has become a de facto park. The City Council started a consultation process in summer 2000 on how to improve the abandoned line of the ring road. The space was also originally included in the Area Green Space Plan consultations and later removed - we can only speculate about the reason. Nevertheless, it is valuable now as a pedestrian route away from the main roads, and it could be easily and inexpensively enhanced to make it a valuable open space. Existing 'green fingers' in the area run north-south, and building the SBL would remove this east-west green corridor.

The lack of an business case for the SBL may not be strictly relevant in pure planning terms, but the incoherence of the economic arguments strongly suggests that this application is premature. The business case for the SBL, even in its own terms, rests on the existence of BRT2 - Ashton Vale to Temple Meads. The fact that the report of the Inspector into the Public Inquiry into BRT2 has not been published is suspicious and may become scandalous. Elected representatives who support SBL have said publicly that it must go ahead because central government money has been made available. The stupidity of this view beggars belief but it demonstrates the political pressure which has driven officers to present a planning application for the wrong road, in the wrong place, built for the wrong reasons.

The SBL must be rejected now, and a new, untainted, cadre of elected representatives and officers should consider the real transport needs for Greater Bristol.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.P. Coutanche". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

A.P. Coutanche
Hon. Secretary