

PRESS INFORMATION

For immediate release

Community Groups unite to step up challenge to proposed Park and Ride schemes in the beautiful landscape setting of the World Heritage City of Bath:

VERACITYBATH LIMITED LODGE JUDICIAL REVIEW CLAIM AGAINST SECRETARY OF STATE

It is announced today that VeraCityBath Limited (VCB), an umbrella company whose members comprise Parish Councillors and local community organisations, has launched judicial review proceedings with regard to the controversial Bath Transportation Package. It has filed an application for judicial review against the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with Bath & North East Somerset Council (the Council), the applicant and decision maker for the proposals, as an interested party.

VCB also submitted a formal pre-action protocol letter to the Council late last year in respect of a separate judicial review challenge of the package.

VCB believes the Secretary of State should have called for a public inquiry into the planning applications for a new park and ride on Bathampton Meadows and the joint application for Newbridge park and ride extension and bus rapid transit link. The Meadows application was referred to the Secretary of State by the Council because it did not satisfy the tests required to build a park and ride on green belt land, but the Secretary of State failed to take account of this issue in his determination not to call a public inquiry. The Secretary of State had called the Newbridge and BRT application in for his own consideration as the two applications were considered to be intrinsically linked including by the “very special circumstances” needed to be satisfied in relation to the use of green belt land for park and rides.

A judge has already awarded VCB an interim protected costs order to limit its liability against costs up until the case being considered by the judge, when it will seek for the order to be extended.

The Company is represented by leading public law experts Harrison Grant and Nathalie Lieven QC and David Blundell, of counsel.

Spokesperson for VeraCityBath, Mark Millar said:

"VeraCityBath Limited brings together a number of Parish Councils and Community Groups into a united body, seeking to protect the beautiful World Heritage City of Bath and its surroundings.

"These proposals have not been demonstrated by the Council to be effective in tackling the traffic problems of Bath, but the Council would not rethink the proposal due to the fear of the loss of around £50 million of Central Government funding, which is under threat anyway due to necessary Government spending cuts and the Department for Transport's decision to call a public inquiry into the compulsory purchase orders associated with the Bath Transport Package. It is paramount in these difficult times that such large expenditure on outdated schemes be justified when they will clearly have a significant impact on this World Heritage City, its surroundings and local residents.

The Council has repeatedly failed to take account or consider alternative proposals suggested by the public, including the use of rail, given the forthcoming electrification of relevant lines or alternative sites and instead forced proposals through in controversial manner to avoid the loss of funding. A public inquiry is needed to justify the expense and environmental damage of these proposals to the public.

We will be holding public meetings around Bath in the next few months, starting on 27 January at 7.30pm the Methodist Hall in Batheaston."

For more information please go to www.vcbath.blogspot.com

Background information

Photographs of the proposed sites at Bathampton Meadows and Newbridge are enclosed.

The directors and members of VeraCityBath Limited include representatives from Batheaston Parish Council, Bathampton Parish Council, Bathford Parish Council, Claverton Parish Council, the London Road Area Residents Association, the Bath Society, Save Bathampton Meadows and Newbridge Matters. VCB is open to new members.

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Extent of Park and Ride area looking North from the Bath Skyline (Bathampton)



Newbridge Park and Ride

Highlighted areas show Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt

