



# York Civic Trust

## Comparator Case Studies for York's Local Transport Strategy Bath May 2024

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### Introductory note

This is one of nine case studies originally produced in draft in May 2021 at the request of the City of York Council. At the time the Council intended to publish a new Local Transport Plan in December 2021, and had invited York Civic Trust, through its Transport Advisory Group, to offer advice on content. The nine case studies, of cities chosen in discussion with the Council, were developed sufficiently fully to allow the Council to decide which it wished to incorporate in its Local Transport Plan. That decision was never taken, and the 2021 Local Transport Plan was never completed. In February 2022 York Civic Trust collated its advice into *A Transport Strategy for York*, Section 6 of which summarises the key messages from the nine case studies. In February 2023 the Council produced a first draft of a Local Transport Strategy. In March 2023 the Council's Scrutiny Committee on Economy and Place reviewed the nine case studies and recommended that "the Executive Member for Transport work with York Civic Trust and relevant officers on taking the report forward with two or three case studies and focus on building public buy-in into medium and long term traffic strategies".

In March 2024 the Council's new administration agreed to publish a Local Transport Strategy for the city in June 2024, based on a consultation on key principles launched in November 2023. The Trust was invited to update the nine case studies, within the limited resources available to it, and to produce brief summaries of key messages for York's Local Transport Strategy. While these summaries and updated strategies are now being published on the Trust's website, it is important to stress that they have not been fully researched, and thus may not be wholly up to date.

### Summary

Bath is a similar size to York, with a large visitor economy and two universities. Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES) is within the West of England Combined Authority (CA). Bath is on the national rail and coach networks, and has a network of local and regional buses.

The CA's 4th Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) "aims to ensure that transport is carbon neutral by 2030. To encourage people to move away from cars, we will need to provide transformational alternatives such as a new mass transit network and promote and transform

cleaner and greener and sustainable forms of transport – cycling, walking and public transport”. JLTP considers connectivity at national, regional, local and neighbourhood level. The well established approach to transport planning is showing results across the CA.

Like York, B&NES has declared a climate emergency and committed to carbon neutrality by 2030, it has developed this commitment by setting specific targets for a reduction in car mileage and changes in the vehicle mix in the city.

The Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) accepts that additional interventions to reduce car use may be required including Workplace Parking Levy and road user charging. Public consultation reveals support for better public transport and active travel. Bath established a Clean Air Zone in the City centre in 2021, results to date show a 26% reduction in NO2 emissions.

In support of the JLTP B&NES has other plans and policies in place to develop active and sustainable travel with clear targets.

There is a lesson for York here: having detailed plans increases the chance of success in funding bids, and the clear targets provide a focus for communication and engagement.

## **1. Context**

### Background

Bath is the largest city in the county of Somerset. At the 2021 Census Bath, together with North East Somerset which includes areas around Bath as far as the Chew Valley, had a population of 193,499. The population the city is estimated at 110,000<sup>1</sup>.

Bath is in the valley of the River Avon, 97 miles west of London and only 11 miles southeast of the major urban centre of Bristol.

It is best known for its Roman origins and its development as a spa town in the Georgian era. The Abbey, Roman baths and spa, and the Royal Crescent are perhaps the biggest visitor draws. The Georgian centre has many fine buildings. It is compact and widely pedestrianised. There are lots of parks and open spaces. The city became a World Heritage site in 1987.

Bath is divided by the River Avon and the adjacent canal, which place limits on traffic crossings, and the city is surrounded by higher ground which limits scope for expansion. There is no ring road so traffic on two main axes - A4 and A36/46 is routed through the city centre.

Bath has two universities – the university of Bath (founded 1966 – now with over 18,000 students) lies on a campus to the south-east of the centre, while Bath Spa University (converted from a college in 1992) lies on a campus to the west of the city. There is also a large centrally located FE College. The Royal United Hospitals Bath serves the wider north Somerset area.

There is a substantial visitor economy, including many from overseas (1 million staying; 3.8 million day visitors). Services, software and publishing are now core areas of the economy, together with public sector jobs.

Bath is about 20 miles from Bristol Airport.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/bath-population>

## Governance

Bath and North East Somerset is a unitary authority – not part of Somerset County. The Liberal Democrats have control over most of the City's wards.

Bath and North East Somerset Council has established the Bath City Forum, comprising councillors representing wards in Bath and up to 13 co-opted members drawn from the communities of the city, to engage with the community.

The West of England Combined Authority, which includes Bath and North East Somerset, publishes an Industrial Strategy and is responsible for the Joint Local Transport Plan (LTP4) described below. Its Transport Delivery Plan is a 5-year plan for transport investment.

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/>

## Thumbnail of current transport provision

Bath is served by the Bath Spa railway station (Great Western) which has regular connections to London Bristol and points west and south (The Wessex Main Line). There is also a suburban station on the main line, Oldfield Park, which has a limited commuter service to Bristol as well as other destinations.

National Express operates [coach](#) services from Bath Bus Station to a number of cities. Bath also has a network of bus routes run by First West of England, with services to surrounding towns and cities, Faresaver bus company operates numerous services to surrounding towns. The Bath Bus Company runs open top double-decker bus tours around the city, as well as frequent services to Bristol Airport. Stagecoach West also provides services to Tetbury and the South Cotswolds.

In November 2016, the [West of England Local Enterprise Partnership](#) began a consultation process on their Transport Vision Summary Document, outlining potential [light rail/ tram](#) routes in the region, one of which being a route from [Bristol city centre](#) along the [A4 road](#) to Bath to relieve pressure on bus and rail services between the two cities. Bath Trams tried to generate interest in tram construction<sup>2</sup>. An evidence based study of Bath Mass Transit is underway<sup>3</sup>.

The West of England Combined Authority is developing a scheme for a mass transit system based on Bristol, one corridor of which is Bristol City Centre to Bath Spa Station. At a high level the scheme is “medium” value for money<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Transport planning**

The Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan was adopted in July, 2017. A Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) was adopted January, 2023. B&NES is currently consulting on a new Local Plan target November 2025 for adoption.

The LPPU appears to have weakened a number of commitments in the Local Plan, including:

- Deleting reference to the “Public Realm and Movement Strategy”;
- Deleting reference to Car parking Standards;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://bathtrams.uk/solving-baths-traffic/one-set-of-proposals-for-a-new-tram-layout/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/B&NES\\_JNZ\\_FINAL\\_-\\_ACCESSIBLE\\_WEB\\_VERSION.pdf](https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/B&NES_JNZ_FINAL_-_ACCESSIBLE_WEB_VERSION.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Future4WEST-SOC-Final-26-Sept-2023-1.pdf>

- Deleting reference to “Getting around Bath - A Transport Strategy”;
- Deleting reference to an East of Bath Park and Ride site and instead refers to “developing innovative solutions to increase existing levels of sustainable transport options into Bath from the East”.

B&NES declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. The LPPU acknowledges carbon neutrality cannot be achieved solely by the shift to ULEV, a big change is required in how people chose to travel. 2030 targets are:

- 25% reduction in car and van mileage per person;
- 76% electric vehicles, 14% hybrid, 10% petrol/diesel, private vehicle fleet;
- 76% electric, 24% hybrid bus fleet.
- Full electrification passenger rail.

### Local transport plans

There have been a number of transport plans. Colin Buchanan and Partners carried out a rather car-oriented commission in the mid 60s. A Bristol/Bath to South Coast study was published in 2004 – carried out by WSP Global. Again, it seems to have been rather highways-focused. There have been several other regional and sub-regional studies.

A Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4 March 2020) has now been prepared by the West of England Combined Authority. This sets out the vision for transport investment in the West of England and the policy framework within which the West of England authorities will work. The new JLTP builds on the two previous plans, 2006 to 2011 and 2011 to 2026 and the Joint Transport Study, October 2017, and covers the period from 2020 to 2036<sup>5</sup>. In the 10 years leading up to the preparation of JLTP4 cycling trips more than doubled and bus passenger trips increased by more than a third.

JLTP4’s vision for transport is: ‘Connecting people and places for a vibrant, inclusive and carbon neutral West of England’

### Joint Local Transport Plan

Connecting people and places for a vibrant, inclusive and carbon neutral West of England.



Figure 1.2 on page 16 shows how the LTP4 relates to other strategies, including Local Plans and the Industrial Strategy.

The Department for Transport selected the Combined Authority area to become a Future Transport Zone. The £24.4 m programme ran from July 2020 to March 2024 and trialed innovative solutions including mobility hubs, demand responsive transport, sustainable urban

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/JLTP4-Adopted-Joint-Local-Transport-Plan-4.pdf>


freight and more - <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/future-transport-zone/>

## Priority objectives of the JLTP

The JLTP aims to:

- Support sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- Enable equality and improve accessibility
- Take action against climate change and address poor air quality
- Contribute to better health, wellbeing, safety and security
- Create better places

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-  Take action against climate change and address poor air quality
-  Support sustainable and inclusive economic growth
-  Enable equality and improve accessibility
-  Contribute to better health, wellbeing, safety and security
-  Create better places

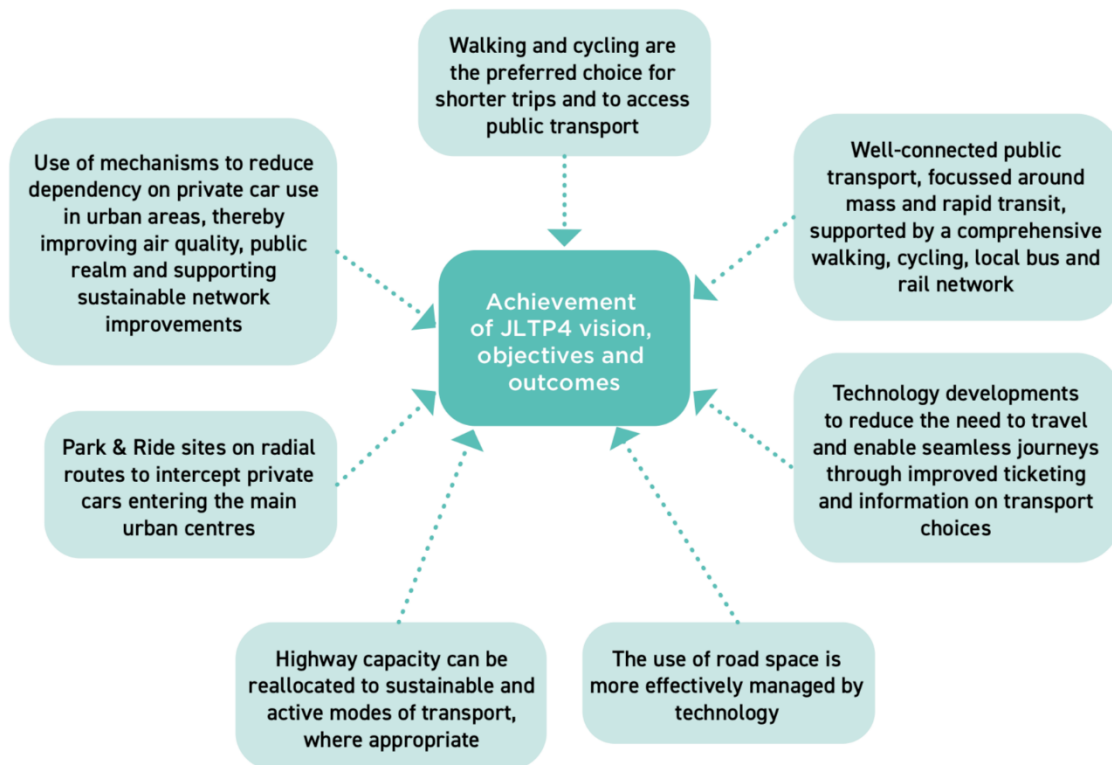
“By 2036 at the completion of the JLTP4 the West of England will be a carbon neutral community where walking and cycling are the preferred choice for shorter journeys, and the vast majority of vehicles on the road are decarbonised and no longer powered by fossil fuels. People will have the opportunity to move around the region using affordable, high quality and frequent public transport to access their jobs and leisure activities and for vehicles delivering goods. Public spaces will be greener, cleaner, people focused places that are no longer dominated by vehicles. “

“Our Joint Local Transport Plan aims to ensure that transport is carbon neutral by 2030. To encourage people to move away from cars, we will need to provide transformational alternatives such as a new mass transit network and promote and transform cleaner and greener and sustainable forms of transport – cycling, walking and public transport.”

## Strategic approach

LTP4 amounts to over 300 pages, which will take some absorbing! This document provides a comprehensive overview of the transport challenges facing the area, with multiple examples of good practice.

Figure 5.1: Strategy for improving connectivity



“Connectivity’ is the key driver, and LTP4 distinguishes between local connectivity, i.e. within Bath, and wider connectivity – linking it to major destinations throughout the region and nationally. At the really local level there is ‘neighbourhood connectivity’. JLTP gives a view on the desired mix of modes at each level of connectivity (Fig 5.2)

“Our Joint Local Transport Plan aims to ensure that transport is carbon neutral by 2030. To do this there has to be a substantial shift towards cleaner and greener and more sustainable forms of transport. We will need to maximise every opportunity and work in partnership with sustainable transport organisations, bus and rail operators, to encourage and help people switch from cars to cycling, walking and public transport.”

Section 7 of the JLTP takes a strategic view of freight.

Preparation of LTP4 has included the commissioning of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (November 2018). This looks to have some interesting approaches <https://travelwest.info/app/uploads/2020/05/JLTP4-Strategic-Environmental-Assessment-SEA.pdf> . This plots each SEA objective, the likely impacts and possible mitigation.

### Principal policy measures

Tough measures that are to be considered are:

- Management of parking provision – on street, off street, residential and business parking
- Reallocation of road space to sustainable transport modes
- Road user charging e.g. as applied in London with revenue reinvested in alternatives
- Workplace parking levy e.g. as applied in Nottingham with revenue reinvested in alternatives
- City centre and town centre private vehicle bans.

These measures will raise revenue to reinvest in alternatives modes of transport.

B&NES has published a “Journey to Net Zero - Reducing the Environmental Impact of Transport in Bath”<sup>6</sup>. This contains a road use hierarchy similar to York’s. The plan quotes consultation responses that favoured:

- Better public transport options;
- Providing for travel by bike and on foot.

It quotes an ambition to make Bath the “most walkable city in the UK”; currently 23% of Bath residents walk to work, whilst partly due to the hilly terrain only 4% cycle.

P&R services into Bath have been introduced from Odd Down, Lansdown and Newbridge to the west of the city, there is currently no provision from the East of the city. B & NES is committed to “developing innovative solutions to increase existing levels of sustainable transport options into Bath from the East”.

A very large increase in city centre parking was provided when the new SouthGate shopping centre was developed. This has had the effect of introducing more car traffic into the centre. A bus gate scheme in Northgate aims to reduce private car use in the city centre.

In March 2021 the city introduced the first charging zone for Clean Air outside London. <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/bath-clean-air-zone> which applies to lorries and commercial vehicles, but not private cars. The 2022 Annual Report claimed a 26% reduction in annual mean NO2 concentrations within the zone.

Bath is on National Cycle Route 4, and houses one of Britain's first official Bicycle Paths, following the railway line west towards Bristol, and the canal towpath east towards London. Bath has been trying to promote the use of bicycles, with some success. It has participated in the Cycling Ambition programme.

The West of England Bus Strategy (June 2020) proposes a shift in road space away from cars and towards buses on key corridors. The target is to double bus passengers by 2036. Bath has a Bus Service Improvement Plan and an Enhanced Partnership.

In 2018/19, the councils launched a 50 km network of three Metrobus corridors based on Bristol city centre, creating a new, bus-based rapid transit mode with a forecast passenger total of 4.5 million passenger trips per year. Metrobus is characterised by segregation, high visibility, rapid boarding, low emissions and high quality vehicles. Benefits are shared with walkers and cyclists. Proposed extensions to the Metrobus network include “Bristol to Bath (A4) corridor”.

B&NES has worked with open top tour bus operators to reduce the impact on the historic city centre - including obtaining a regulatory order and working towards low emission vehicles. (Note - CitySightseeing also operates in York).

JLTP4 includes development of a coach strategy for Bath.

B&NES secured funding from the Energy Saving Trust for 10 eCargo bikes for loan to local businesses. Other freight initiatives include:

- Subsidised eCargo bike delivery in the city;
- Micro-consolidation hubs outside the Clean Air Zone.

Bath has a City Centre Security zone to combat vehicle as a weapon attacks - although not as extensive as York. Access through the security perimeter is possible for emergency vehicles and blue badge holders.

Local transport will focus on these policies, which are designed to prioritise active travel:

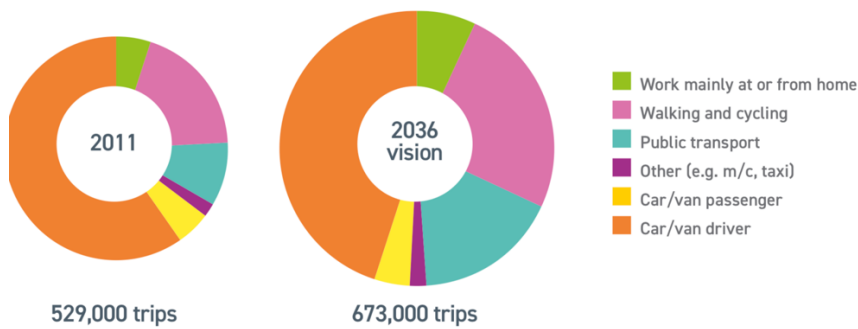
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<sup>6</sup> [https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/B&NES\\_JNZ\\_FINAL - ACCESSIBLE WEB VERSION.pdf](https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/B&NES_JNZ_FINAL_-_ACCESSIBLE_WEB_VERSION.pdf)

- Enable walking and cycling, 'active modes of travel', to be the preferred choice for shorter journeys
- Reduce the number and severity of casualties for all road users
- Encourage residents and employees to make more sustainable and healthier travel choices
- Support opportunities for all sectors of the population to access the services they require, wherever they live
- Support the identification and implementation of measures that will improve air quality

West of England's Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was adopted in 2020.

Modal shares



Section 12 of the JLTP sets out the details of how it will be monitored and progress measured.

In general terms, the area is highly car-dependent. Buses are underdeveloped compared with York. The P&R system is still being developed, as is a "metro bus" (rapid transit) service connecting major destinations.

Walking and cycling are seen as the main modes for short-distance travel.

Key performance measures



Table 12.1: Indicators against JLTP4 Objectives

✓ = direct impact    ✓ = indirect impact

Indicators	Climate change & air quality	Sustainable & inclusive economic growth	Equality & accessibility	Health, wellbeing, safety & security	Better places
Road congestion	✓	✓	✓		✓
Bus satisfaction			✓	✓	✓
Air quality	✓	✓		✓	✓
Carbon emissions	✓	✓		✓	✓
Electric Vehicles	✓	✓		✓	✓
Road Safety			✓	✓	✓
Modal share	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Provision for disabled travellers

There are general aspirations to enable improvements in accessibility, but not much detail. Fully accessible buses are the main focus. Blue badge holders are permitted to enter the City Centre Security zone.

## 3. Relevance to York

### Useful lessons and pointers

Bath shares some key characteristics with York, in particular the historic core and large number of visitors, with its well-developed hospitality sector. Bath also suffers from severe congestion, exacerbated by the fact that there is no real ring road and pinch-points where the road network crosses the river.

The JLTP objectives and policies for transport and new development are similar to those being considered for York.

The implementation of JLTP4 raises some interesting financial challenges. “Raising additional local income will involve some difficult decisions.” Potential local funding options that could be considered are:

- Community Infrastructure Levy – a planning charge for new development to pay for local infrastructure;
- Highways England Shadow Toll – funding from Highways England for schemes that reduce pressure on the Strategic Road Network;
- Council Tax Precept – increasing council tax for residents of the West of England;
- Business Rate Supplement – increasing rates for businesses in the West of England;
- Workplace Parking Levy – employers are charged for having private parking spaces. This charge can be passed on to employees who use the spaces;
- Road Pricing, for example congestion charging to drive into specific areas;
- Revenue raised from Mass Transit services;
- Clean Air Fund and CAZ Implementation Fund;
- Public Health funding.

JLTP4 contains a useful risk assessment, which might be adapted for York.

### Any aspects which make it less relevant to York

While Bath itself is relatively small, it is closely tied into the wider economic region. The largely hilly terrain of much of the city makes cycling challenging.

Although B&NES is a unitary authority, it has chosen to prepare its LTP as part of a wider, and much larger, Combined Authority. However, this does not mean that there is nothing to be learned about the preparation of an LTP.

### Demonstrator new neighbourhoods

There is a new development near the city centre called Bath Riverside which has received plaudits for its approach to transport. This is a development of apartments and town houses, built to high environmental standards by Crest Nicholson. It is a short walk from the city centre, and has underground car parking. Approval was granted in 2010, based on a Master Plan. Phase 1 comprises 299 homes, built on a former industrial site.



### Best practice in engagement and consultation

The JLTP4 consultation approach and results are described here <https://travelwest.info/app/uploads/2020/05/JLTP4-consultation-report.pdf>. The approach to consultation and the tools used may be of relevance to York.

The JLTP document is of a high standard, written in accessible English, and makes helpful use of diagrams and symbols to explain things.

The use of brief case studies helps to illustrate the type of improvements that are being sought and their benefits. This works well where the JLTP covers a wide area that not everyone will be familiar with. But it also aids understanding by drilling down from the strategic to the recognisable and practical. Because JLTP4 covers several local authority areas, it is able to draw on a pool of successful local examples that could be applied more generally.

#### Possible contacts

The right person at the Combined Authority can be found via [comms@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:comms@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

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Updates Chris Polack v2.2 3rd May, 2024