



**Transport for
Greater Bristol
Alliance**

Campaigning for
Integrated Transport

tfgb.org

A PARKING PLAN FOR BRISTOL

The crucial role parking policy plays in transport planning is much misunderstood.

If you can't park, you won't drive. This simple truth seems to have eluded transport planners, who like the rest of us regard easy parking as a fundamental right. 'Us', that is, apart from non-car-owners. As a result, Bristol has never even attempted a coherent parking policy, while many campaigners have their attention elsewhere.

Bristol's parking policy will need to have several strands if it is to bite:

- **Park&Ride** expansion (see TfGB's *Rapid Transit Plan*) to tap-off ex-urban car commuters and out-of-town city centre shoppers.
- **Residents (& Businesses) Only Parking Zones** – completion of this inner city programme, which at the moment fails to reach much of East Bristol. Less political floppiness is required to get this done. Can be improved by allowance for short-term disabled and servicing parking bays. Can continue to be self-funded by permit fees and enforcement fines, and explained to residents by describing it as '£1 per week' (or thereabouts). Non-car-owners don't have to pay (because they are not being the nuisance).
- **Workplace Parking Levy.** A legal option often mentioned; never actually planned or implemented. Nottingham has done it (in tandem with building its tram system), and partly independently funds its public transport as a result. Needs to avoid upsetting small businesses, and can achieve that by allowing reasonable operational

parking. The only question is whether the Levy should be city-wide (as in Nottingham) or city centre only. And whether South Gloucestershire Council will play ball too (it hasn't so far).

- **On-street parking.** A householder has no legal right to occupy a 'car-parking place' outside their home, nor do shops' customers. If it were anything other than a car, it would be regarded as an obstruction of the public highway (which it is). One's only right – shared with all other citizens – is to 'pass and repass' along a public right of way; and even then, only in an appropriate sort of vehicle, depending upon the road in question. Loading is usually allowed, but only loading – not parking. Legally then, the way theoretically is open for the wholesale banning of on-street parking, certainly on main roads.

In London, **main bus routes** were thus treated, as no-parking Red Routes. This would increase road capacity, notably for sustainable users: the bus-passengers, pedestrians and cyclists who are greatly inconvenienced and put at risk by narrow footways, on-footway parking, blocked sightlines and narrowed carriageways. **Widened footways** are a better option, plus **segregated cycleways**. In suburban **shopping centres**, retailers' lobbies habitually say that they are dependent upon car-borne customers (which usually is inaccurate and unmeasured), and so resist the removal of suburban high street kerbside short-term parking. **Bristol Chamber of Commerce** needs to be invited to liaise with its colleagues in Bath or Hereford where the commercially beneficial effects of semi-pedestrianised shopping streets have been experienced.

In the **city centre**, the Local Authority has compromised itself by becoming financially quasi-dependent upon parking charges: which would be fine for a rural tourist enterprise, but is inappropriate for a supposedly modern European city. Wholesale **pedestrianisation** is required, with loading access controlled appropriately.

In the residential suburbs, politics is muddied by the greater lobbying power of car owners (non-car-owners tend to go hang). Even the emergency services have yet to make a dent in obstructive residential

parking in our often narrow streets. Eventually the political will must arrive. Eventually. As car-ownership levels decline in the inner city, more streets can be turned over to low-cost '**Home Zones**' of the type experimented with in Mina St in St Werburghs.

- **Development control guidance.** Development control town planners sometimes help; sometimes not. The city needs stringent low **parking standards** for both residential and commercial developments; multi-vehicle households should not be pandered to (and certainly not designed for). This can only happen as alternative transport modes are invested in (see TfGB's *Rapid Transit* and *Bus Plans*), including a comprehensive cycleway network. Parallel design initiatives – which have experienced several switches of fashion and official guidance – are '**shared use**' **carriageways** (pedestrian/vehicle) and **edge of site collective parking**.

No temporary car-parking should be permitted on **vacant development sites**.

Bristol's problem is not only anarchic on-street parking; it is also the city's backlog of **private off-road car parks**, both in the city centre but also at numerous other entertainment, sports, leisure and cultural activity centres across the city, as well as major public open spaces. Operators expect their users to arrive by car, and make little other provision. Education is needed here: through **Business West**, the **Tourist Board**, **schools** and **universities**, **hospitals**, **sports** and **leisure institutions** and so on. When (or if) a Workplace Parking Levy is implemented, BCC's Planning Dept. can discuss with property owners their planning options for changed land-uses at sites and on floors of buildings, to mutual benefit.

To the city's many committed car drivers we say: If places like Bristol are to have a future car dependency must come to an end. More car drivers should be on the buses, trams or their bikes. Our plans ultimately assume that Central Government must intervene to curb car dependency (except for the disabled and those who live in remote locations), even if cars are all electrified.