

## **NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL DECISION**



**DECISION OF:** THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

**WITH ADVICE FROM:** DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT, ASSETS AND TRANSPORT SERVICES

**DECISION NO:** 24/25 DP EAT 16

**SUBJECT:** BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP) INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME AT CHURCHILL A38 / A368 CROSSROADS

**KEY DECISION:** YES

**REASON:** The decision will result in the council incurring expenditure of over £500,000 and will be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **Introduction**

The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is a joint initiative between North Somerset Council (NSC), the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), the Department for Transport (DfT) and bus operators.

Our communities tell us they want more reliable, frequent and affordable bus services. That's what we're working hard to deliver through our infrastructure schemes – improving junctions to offer better flow for all traffic, resulting in quicker, more reliable, bus services, that get people where they need to be more efficiently.

We want North Somerset communities to have a modern, efficient, reliable, and affordable public transport system they can enjoy for years to come. The BSIP is working to achieve this goal by delivering packages of joined-up improvements, from more frequent bus services to more affordable fares, which work alongside our new bus service and sustainable travel infrastructure schemes, to benefit residents and communities.

Together, these changes will help make bus travel the first public transport choice, and more financially sustainable longer-term, helping to protect our vital services for the future.

Current UK Government funding for improving bus services through the Bus Service Improvement Plan is available only for a short time. Its long-term legacy will be more reliable, efficient and frequent bus services, new electric buses which are better for the environment, and more financially secure bus services, fit for our growing population, now and in the future.

Our infrastructure schemes are designed to enhance and protect residents' bus services, and promote more sustainable travel for years to come, by:

- introducing dedicated bus lanes and intelligent traffic signals to give bus users priority in key areas, and at peak times. These changes help make bus services quicker, more

reliable, and more affordable for residents – and more financially viable for bus operators to keep running requiring lower or no public subsidy

- incorporating better crossings and pavements for pedestrians, cyclists and others using lower-carbon forms of transport. This will improve the travel experience, encouraging more people to walk, wheel and cycle wherever possible, and making it easier to get to bus stops in some locations
- creating attractive new transport hubs in communities, offering a range of facilities such as secure cycle parking, real-time information displays and electric charging points, and bringing a place-making boost to town and village centres
- and replacing or improving existing stops and shelters on priority routes – making the experience of waiting for, and making, travel connections better for residents.

Our current targets across the West of England area are summarised in the following table:

Category	Target	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Target by 2025
Bus journey times	Reduce average bus journey times (minutes) on designated corridors by 2% by 2025 and by 10% by 2030	61	*63	No data	55	56	61	<b>62</b>
Bus punctuality	Achieve 95% of services running on time, defined as being no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late, by 2030. Target for 2024/25 is 82%	*77%	N/A	74%	71%	67%	72%	<b>82%</b>
Passenger growth	Return to pre-pandemic patronage levels by 2025 and grow patronage by at least 24% from that level by 2030	-	*70.2m	22.5m	46.8m	55.3m	63.7m	<b>70m</b>
Bus Passenger satisfaction	Increase bus passenger satisfaction to 89% for 2025 and 95% for 2030	85%	*86%	No data	No data	78%	79%	<b>89%</b>

Bus fleet de-carbonisation	By the end of 2023 all buses operating in the BSIP area will meet the Euro VI emission standard	No data	No data	48.2%	88.6%	96%	98%	<b>100%</b>
Bus fleet de-carbonisation	By 2030, at least 75% of the local fleet will be either zero-emission or ultra-low emission and by 2035 all buses will be zero-emission buses (ZEBs).	No data	No data	0%	0%	3.6%	6.6%	<b>N/A</b>

These targets will be monitored using the following methodology:

<b>Level</b>	<b>Pre-monitoring</b>	<b>During works</b>	<b>Post monitoring</b>
Scheme monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus journey times</li> <li>• Bus patronage</li> <li>• General traffic speeds</li> <li>• General journey time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep log of issues raised</li> <li>• Monitor alternative routes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus journey times</li> <li>• Bus patronage</li> <li>• General traffic speeds</li> <li>• General journey time</li> </ul>
Corridor monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus journey times</li> <li>• Bus reliability</li> <li>• Bus patronage</li> <li>• General traffic speeds</li> <li>• General journey times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor bus journey times during works on corridor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus journey times</li> <li>• Bus reliability</li> <li>• Bus patronage</li> <li>• General traffic speeds</li> <li>• General journey times</li> </ul>
North Somerset monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus journey times</li> <li>• Bus patronage</li> <li>• On-time performance</li> <li>• Passenger satisfaction</li> <li>• Bus emission standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus journey times</li> <li>• Bus patronage</li> <li>• Passenger satisfaction</li> <li>• Bus emission standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus journey times</li> <li>• Bus patronage</li> <li>• On-time performance</li> <li>• Passenger satisfaction</li> <li>• Bus emission standards</li> </ul>

In order to meet these targets, the BSIP's capital-funded infrastructure schemes are designed to work hand-in-hand with initiatives to improve passenger journeys, such as fare offers and more frequent services. These initiatives are funded through a separate BSIP grant of £57 million, which was jointly awarded to NSC and the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to deliver in partnership. The BSIP is governed by an Enhanced Partnership (EP) between North Somerset, the Combined Authority, the other Highway Authorities in the West of England area, bus operators, and other key stakeholders. It is intended that, through the EP

process, capital and revenue investment from NSC and WECA is met with comparable investment in improvements to services by the bus operators.

The BSIP funding was subject to a final Department for Transport (DfT) outline review of the proposed schemes, which concluded in June 2022 and resulted in the confirmation of funding being granted in November 2022. With this confirmation of funding being later than anticipated, a change request was submitted and accepted by the DfT to extend the deadline for delivery of investment to October 2025. A subsequent change request has been accepted by DfT to extend the deadline of investment to March 2026.

In order to deliver North Somerset's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) capital-funded infrastructure schemes, a variety of contractual arrangements are required. The initial schemes were delivered through the council's Term Service Contract. The remaining bus priority schemes are to be delivered through a Design and Build contract awarded to Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd. The decision to award the contract was made by the October 2023 Executive Committee. The October 2023 decision requires a subsequent Executive Member decision at the design stage before commencing delivery of each scheme.

**Please note:** The BSIP funding from UK Government is ringfenced. This means it cannot be used to pay for any non-BSIP related council activities, such as filling potholes, or other council services.

## **Pause and review**

In April 2024 we paused the live programme of BSIP infrastructure projects, such as junction updates, and the introduction of new bus lanes. The pause followed months of engagement with local communities on early proposals for schemes in Backwell, Clevedon, Rownham Hill, Lime Kiln, Churchill and Worle High Street – aimed at improving congestion, enhancing local travel experiences and creating infrastructure needed for now and in the future.

During this 2024 pause and review period, the only new BSIP infrastructure project being delivered was at the A370 Wood Hill junction, as part of the Congresbury congestion scheme.

The 2024 pause and review period was implemented in order to:

- assess completed schemes to monitor their effectiveness and learn any lessons to apply to future works
- consider any changes we needed to make to our approach as a result of the new Department for Transport guidance on bus priority (LTN1/24)
- continue to engage with communities and their representatives about the range of proposed schemes
- gather further data and undertake testing in areas where this is needed in order to make a decision
- set a new timeline for decisions for approval of remaining schemes to allow fuller consideration of each scheme and reduce scheme-related disruption to the local road network for residents.

The assessment of delivered schemes' effectiveness, the 'lessons learned' from the delivery of the Brockley Combe scheme, and our review of the DfT LTN1/24 guidance, were all considered by the council's Transport, Climate and Communities Scrutiny Panel in July 2024.

This ensured the BSIP programme was able to fully benefit from the review, by enabling us to draw on the additional data, and carry learning forward into future, approved, schemes.

Changes agreed to the BSIP programme as a result of the 2024 pause and review period include:

- reducing the scope extent of current proposals for several schemes, including Martcombe Road near the M5 roundabout, Southern Way in Clevedon and Rownham Hill near Bristol, and removing the Portbury Hundred scheme completely
- continuing to monitor completed infrastructure schemes to understand their impact and draw out any lessons learned for future schemes
- undertaking a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the programme delivery to identify areas of improvement for the remainder of the funding period
- developing a bus lanes policy to clarify restrictions and work towards a default position of motorcycles being allowed to use these unless a particular local issue prevents it
- continuing to develop the engagement approach to deliver improvements in the way stakeholders and the wider community are communicated with.

Both during, and since concluding, this period we have:

- continued to engage with local communities and their representatives on the next schemes, including for transport hubs, within the programme
- developed policies against new national guidance, which were reviewed at an all-councillor session, hosted by the Transport, Climate and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Panel, in January 2025.

With the 2024 pause and review period complete, our BSIP infrastructure programme is now moving forward, with improvements and updates under way, planned, and proposed, across North Somerset. This means some of the next infrastructure schemes in the programme are now set for an Executive Member decision.

## **A38 Corridor**

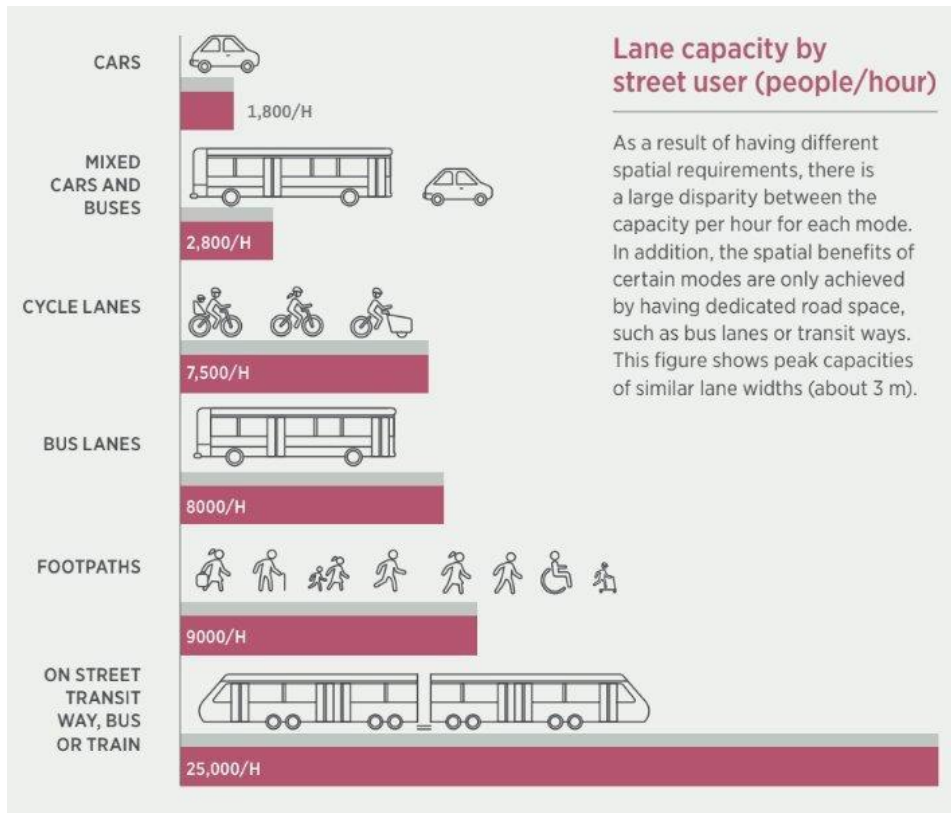
The A38 is a major arterial transport route running through North Somerset and connects the M5 at Junction 22 to Bristol Airport at Lulsgate, and further into Bristol. The A38 carries approximately 17,000 vehicles per day. The A38 commonly suffers from congestion in the morning and evening peak periods, and this is exacerbated in the summer months due to increased holiday traffic and can be significantly affected by displaced traffic from incidents affecting the M5 motorway or A370 corridors.

The volume of traffic using the A38 is likely to increase due to development both within North Somerset and elsewhere on the A38 corridor. The approved expansion of Bristol International Airport to 12 million passengers per year (currently around 10 million) will also increase the number of people using this corridor.

The A38 is an important corridor for public transport. With public transport carrying over one million passengers to and from the airport each year, the benefits of delivering improved reliability, punctuality and faster journeys on this corridor would be considerable. The approved airport expansion brings significant potential to increase the market share of buses and carry even more passengers. While most bus services run to and from Bristol, there have been new services introduced in recent years servicing the airport from other locations. Also, with other services serving local villages and the University of Bristol vet school there are

numerous opportunities for bus services, both north and south of the airport to benefit from bus priority improvements.

Buses have the capacity to carry a large number of passengers within existing road space. On the A38, approximately 22,000 people are transported each day by 20,000 non-bus vehicles, whereas around 3,500-5,000 people are transported by about 200 buses per day. Increasing the capacity of bus services using A38 is a key means of reducing the impact of future growth on congestion on our road network.



The A38 corridor is currently served by five scheduled bus routes with many more national express services, a total of up to 16 buses an hour, The Service A1 between Bristol and Bristol International Airport now has a frequency of one bus every 12 minutes, and patronage is over 100,000 per month and growing. Other services include the A4 between Bath and Bristol International Airport, and U2 between Bristol and Bristol University veterinary school at Langford, National Express services between Cardiff and Bristol International Airport, and Falcon service operators between Bristol and Plymouth.

Focusing on Churchill Junction, it is currently served by three scheduled bus routes. The Falcon service operates a key strategic route between Bristol and Plymouth, with buses running every 60 minutes. The service is essential for connecting regional travel within the Southwest of England.

Additionally, the junction is served by the 125 bus route, which provides journeys between Weston-super-Mare and Wrington. With patronage over 4,500 passengers per month. The third service is the 62, which connects Bridgewater College and Weston-super-Mare. Furthermore, the area benefits from the demand-response transport service, WESTlink.

Focusing on the 125 service, it holds significant strategic value. The council aims to expand the service to establish a new commercial bus corridor between Weston-super-Mare and Bristol via the A38. These plans were outlined in the June 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) refresh. The ambition is to introduce a high-frequency service, ultimately running four buses per hour, from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol, passing through Churchill Junction, and Bristol Airport. This will be opened up by the completion of the Banwell Bypass.

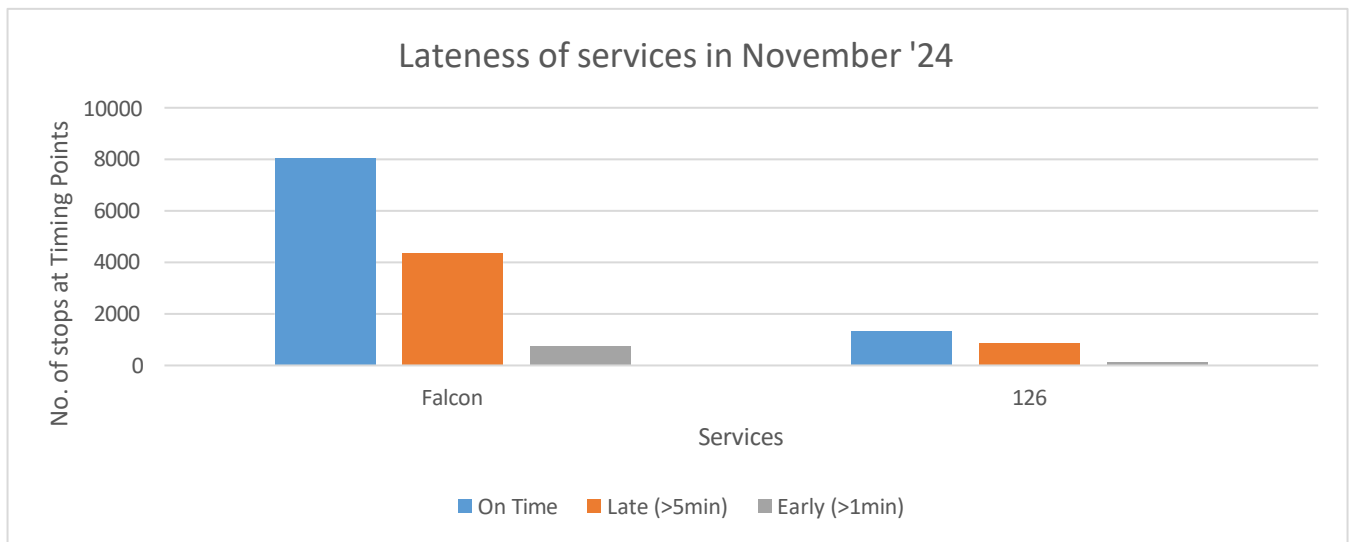
In addition to reducing journey times, the bus priority measures aim to enhance reliability and punctuality. These improvements are expected to benefit current and future bus service in the area.

**Corridor business case elements**

To understand the effects of congestion on A38, bus journey times were analysed between Ashford Road and Shute Shelve Hill, in both directions. This covers a 8.1-mile-long section of the A38 between the North Somerset / Somerset boundary and Bristol Airport. The analysis took into consideration four 4-week time periods in June 2023, November 2023, June 2024, and November 2024.

Bus journey times towards Bridgwater can vary by about four minutes between peak and off peak times, between 14 and 18 minutes. The biggest peak is experienced in the PM between 4-6pm. Bus journey times travelling towards Bristol both a peak in the AM and PM, with a PM peak between 4pm and 6pm, and an AM peak between 7am and 8am approximately. Peak journey times in this direction vary between 14.5 to 18 minutes.

The existing punctuality data for the affected services is below:



Around 40% of buses using the southern side of the A38 are currently either late or early (see graph above). This is considered a significant barrier to people who might use these services.

The traffic data demonstrates the potential for journey time savings through improvements at the Churchill junction.

**A38/A368 Churchill junction infrastructure scheme**

This scheme aims to improve congestion at the A38 / A368 junction for general traffic, with better flow for all road users, which will enhance bus services as a result. Changes at Churchill will support a higher volume of traffic than is possible currently – with additional traffic expected through approved and proposed new development, and following completion of the Banwell Bypass.

Through helping to improve bus journey times, it is intended that this scheme will contribute to better bus punctuality, passenger numbers and passenger satisfaction. This will, in turn, help to secure financially viable bus services on the A38 corridor, providing long-term transport options for residents.

### **Scheme identification**

The A38 / A368 Churchill crossroads were identified as a location on the A38 corridor where buses suffer delays, especially at peak times. Four options were considered for a bus priority scheme to address this problem. These were to:

- 1) realign and upgrade the existing signalised crossroads. It was considered that this option would not yield significant benefits and was not progressed.
- 2) convert the crossroads into a standard roundabout, with bus lanes. It was considered that this option would not provide sufficient additional capacity, and the bus lanes would be relatively short. Therefore, this option was not progressed.
- 3) create an oval shaped layout instead of a standard roundabout configuration, to make better use the available land. However, it was considered that this option would not be able to cope effectively with imbalanced flows on the different arms of the roundabout, and therefore was not progressed.
- 4) create an oval-shaped roundabout with traffic signals capable of providing bus priority. This option would create additional capacity on all arms of the roundabout, by matching signal green time to demand. This is the preferred scheme option, which has been developed for delivery.

Further improvements to the A38 corridor, particularly around the airport, are planned through the Major Road Network package of works, expected to commence in winter 2025. The MRN improvements will work in conjunction with the BSIP scheme already delivered at Barrow Gurney and these proposed changes at Churchill to address capacity concerns for buses, general traffic, and to improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

### **Concept development**

Of the four original options referenced earlier in the previous section of this report, the fourth option was selected as the preferred option for inclusion in the original BSIP submission as it offered the greatest potential benefit.

The preferred option was then developed into an initial concept during 2022 and 2023 and was reviewed by the Executive Member for Highways and the Transport, Climate and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Panel in July 2023. This concept was then taken to ward



members, parish councils, businesses, the public, and other stakeholders for feedback, during the engagement period held between spring and autumn 2024.

The initial concept design has been reviewed by the appointed design consultants and amended to reflect feedback from these consultation and engagement exercises. The consultation and engagement activity is summarised in the Consultation section of this report.

As a result of this engagement process, the designs have tried to achieve a comprehensive approach which incorporates walking, wheeling and cycling. This has achieved better connectivity through and around the junction by improving the crossing facilities.

The scheme preliminary design has now reached a high degree of maturity. An extract of the current preliminary design is appended to this report. Its key features are:

- replace crossroads arrangement at Churchill Gate junction, with an oval shaped signalised roundabout
- 35m bus lane to provide bus priority, prior to the junction on the A38 northbound
- bus-only lane on the north-west side of the junction to access the existing bus stop
- all approaches to the roundabout to have signal-controlled crossing and improved facilities for walking and cycling

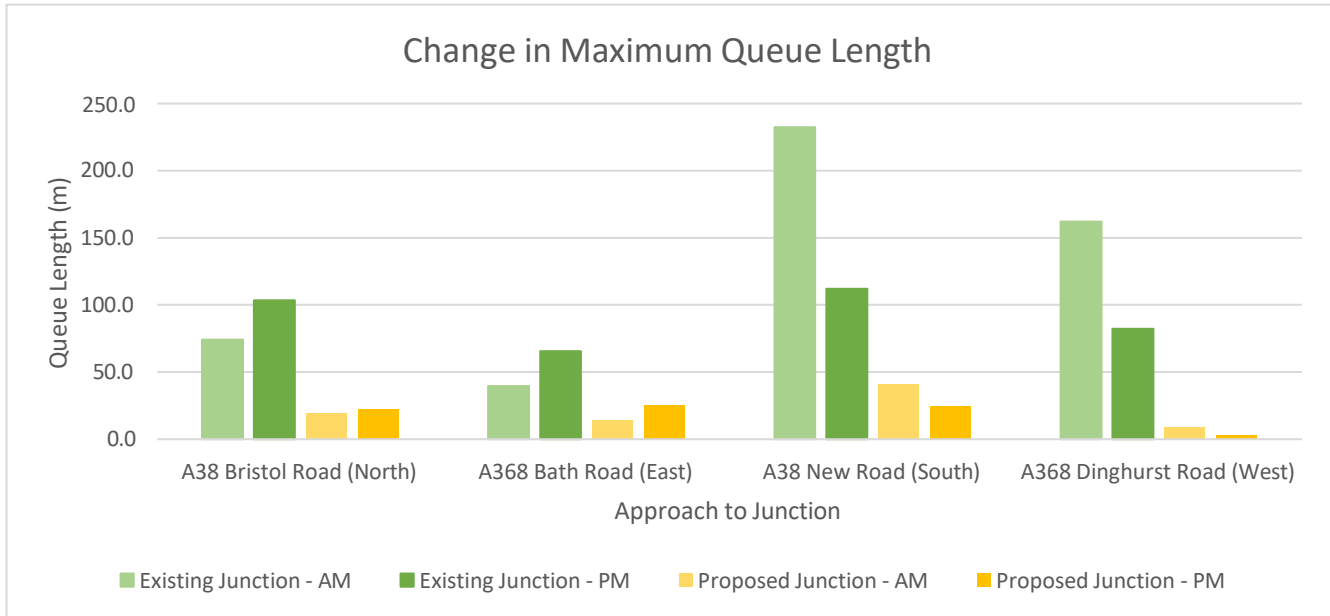
## **Benefits realisation**

The existing junction and BSIP concept design have been junction capacity tested in order to understand the changes in junction performance which are likely to occur as a result of this scheme. The junctions have been assessed using an industry-standard modelling tool (LinSig) to understand the impact on junction capacity, queuing, and the average amount of delay experienced by vehicles passing through the junction.

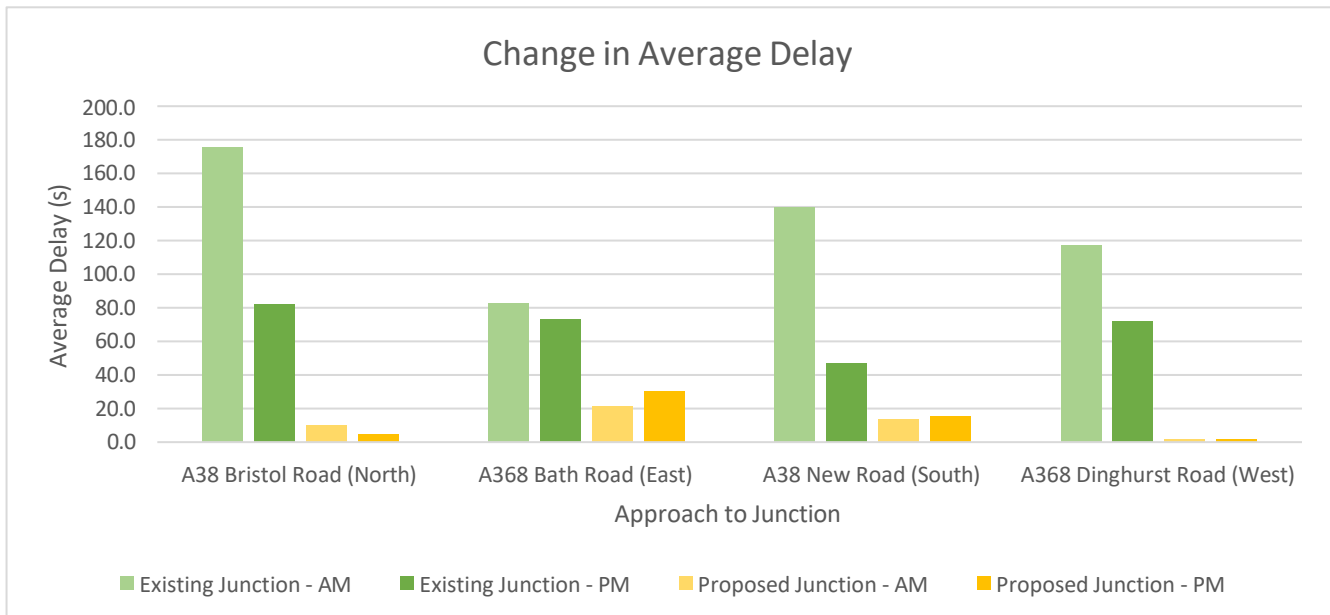
The model of the existing junction has been closely matched to the current on-street operation, based on information provided by North Somerset Council's Traffic Signals team. The modelling of the BSIP scheme identifies how the junction is likely to work in future, including the operation of the traffic lights and pedestrian crossings. The modelling parameters are in accordance with industry-standards, and have been applied consistently across the assessment of all BSIP schemes.

Traffic data from October 2018 has been used to inform the assessment. Information has been collated from a Junction Turning Count (JTC) survey which tells us the number and type of vehicles turning through the junction (e.g. cars, buses, HGVs etc.) all of which has all been accounted for within the model. The 2018 data has been used owing to the fact that this data was readily available to the council at the start of the project, and because traffic flows between 2020 and 2022 will have been impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a proportionate approach, given that the purpose of the modelling exercise is to test the implications of the proposed BSIP scheme in comparison with the existing layout.

Overall, the modelling assessment demonstrates that, with the BSIP design implemented, the junction will operate well within capacity, reduce queues and in turn journey delays across all arms of the junction. This is demonstrated in the graphs below.



*Note: Results are the worst-case across lanes on each approach arm.*



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The scheme will bring a net benefit to general traffic movements through the junction owing to the general improvement in capacity available from introducing a higher order of junction control (i.e. a signalised roundabout over signalised crossroads). This equates to quicker journeys through the junction, by approximately two minutes (average) on the A38 during the morning peak, and one minute during the evening peak.

Reducing levels of congestion is also likely to make journey times more reliable, with less variation between journey times from one day to the next, although this would require a significantly more complex model to confirm. This is because junctions operating at or close to capacity are more sensitive to spikes in congestion as a result of fluctuations in traffic flow.

The reductions in queues and delay, and associated journey time improvements, will be a result of increased capacity within the junction. Additionally, forming a short bus lane along the A38 will assist buses in bypassing a northbound queue on the A38, providing a useful

improvement in bus journey times over journeys by private car at peak times. The northbound bus bypass / bus stop at Churchill Gate will assist the 125 inbound bus service (Weston-super-Mare to Wrington). The traffic signals at the new roundabout will be able to detect and respond to approaching buses (through use of GPS trackers), further improving reliability and reducing bus journey times.

The scheme will bring wider improvements and benefits, including:

- 1) Creating significant additional capacity within the new junction (as our capacity assessment based on 2018 flows suggests). This means the updated junction is likely to be able to accommodate the expected additional traffic associated with approved and proposed new future development. Capacity work undertaken for the Banwell Bypass project highlights the current A38/A368 crossroads as a significant pinch point on the network, representing a potential barrier to growth.
- 2) Improved pedestrian crossings. Currently, signal-controlled pedestrian crossings are available on Dinghurst Road and the A38 New Road. While there is also a crossing over Bath Road, this is not controlled and is therefore undesirable given the nature of traffic passing through this junction and the challenge this can present to disabled people and other vulnerable road users. The proposed scheme provides signalled crossings on all arms of the junction, which will enable suitable crossings for all users and, in some cases, improving pedestrian journey times through the junction. While the crossings are set back from the junction itself, few origins or destinations of walking trips are close to the actual junction, and therefore this is unlikely to inconvenience pedestrians.
- 3) Placemaking benefits. The proposed roundabout stands to improve both the 'gateway' to Churchill and Langford, and active travel connections, which may support more non-motorist journeys through the junction. These features will give an improved sense of place at this location. There are also opportunities for landscaping within the roundabout, as well as on the periphery of the junction, such as at the bus stop to the north-west, as the design is developed.
- 4) Maintenance benefits. The proposed roundabout would be provided with a new road surface and associated drainage system, whilst affected but retained areas of existing road will benefit from being resurfaced. Existing drainage systems would be maintained and improved as part of the proposals wherever possible. Traffic signal and street lighting infrastructure would be replaced. The betterment achieved will reduce reliance on revenue-funded maintenance at this location in the short and medium terms, allowing those funds to be used elsewhere on the network.

The scheme is demonstrated to result in a significant net improvement to traffic capacity at Churchill Gate, which will benefit bus movements as well as general traffic. It is expected that the changes will also provide increased bus service reliability and punctuality for existing bus services by reducing the variability of journey times through the junction. To improve the commerciality sustainability of services, reducing operating costs via decreasing the amount of time spend in delays and therefore improving journey times is important. This in turn will enable greater bus use and passenger satisfaction.

There is an aspiration to increase frequency and service offering in the area - including a new Weston to Bristol bus service that would use A368 and A38 - which the changes will facilitate through faster journey times and increased reliability.

The junction is likely to incur marginally higher maintenance costs due to there being more road surface, and traffic signal infrastructure, under this BSIP scheme, than in the existing junction design. This is not considered to be material, however, and would be offset in the short and medium term through maintenance activities, such as road surface and drainage improvements, which would be carried out as part of the scheme.

In conclusion, analysis shows that the recommended design will yield significant benefits in terms of capacity and congestion reduction for all traffic, as well as journey time improvements for local bus services. It is also expected that the changes will reduce journey time variations, leading to better punctuality and greater customer confidence, and help to enable sustained and improved local bus services. There are additional benefits for vulnerable road users, and the proposed scheme will provide a benefit to the condition of the affected roads.

### **Delivery programme**

The next steps are the continuation of preliminary and detailed design processes, before review of the contractor's target cost in summer 2025. Statutory consultation to make the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders will take place during spring/summer 2025. We currently expect the works to commence on site in September 2025 and to be completed in March 2026.

### **DECISION:**

To approve the design for of Churchill BSIP scheme, and to authorise officers to proceed with the implementation of the BSIP infrastructure scheme at the A38 / A368 Churchill junction.

### **REASONS:**

To realise the journey time and reliability improvements necessary to ensure the commercial sustainability of local bus routes.

### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED:**

1. The 'do minimal' adjust signals option is not recommended because it will not yield significant benefits without the bus lanes and bus gates
2. The on-carriageway bus lanes, without widening, would remove one or more lanes from each arm and have a detrimental effect on the general capacity of the junction
3. The widening of the carriageway was preferred, as it improved general capacity, and reduced journey times for buses.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The October 2023 Executive Committee decision has authorised the award of the design and delivery phases of the project to Alun Griffiths, to a total value of £15.4m. Therefore, no financial decision is required at this stage.

## **Costs**

Exact scheme costs are unknown at this stage, but are estimated to be £3.15 million, which is within the overall available budget for the BSIP schemes. This includes all design work and surveys required for various aspects of the scheme such as drainage, Statutory Undertakers Apparatus and environmental mitigations. Costs will be charged to KDT150 project code BSIP002.

Project BSIP002 has an allocated grant funding of £3.15m, which is in-line with the current forecast costs.

## **Funding**

In May 2022 the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded North Somerset Council (NSC) an indicative £47.8 million in capital funding, to spend wholly on bus infrastructure schemes within North Somerset.

## **LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The Highways Act 1980 provides the council with the necessary powers to make changes to the public highway.

The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 provides the council with the necessary powers to implement bus lanes and other traffic restrictions on the public highway. This is achieved by making Traffic Regulation Orders, for which there is a defined statutory process.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 provides the council with the powers to enforce bus lanes and related restrictions.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The wider BSIP programme, including the bus priority infrastructure scheme discussed in this report, will contribute to the reliability and attractiveness of the public transport network, with the aim of reducing car journeys within North Somerset and beyond.

The BSIP has ambitious targets to:

- reduce bus journey times by 2% by 2025 and by 10% by 2030
- achieve 95% of services running on time, defined as being no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late, by 2030
- return to pre-pandemic patronage levels by 2025 and grow patronage by at least 24% from that level by 2030
- increase passenger satisfaction to 89% for 2025 and 95% for 2030
- aim for all buses to be zero emission by 2030.

The Churchill junction scheme will contribute towards achieving these targets, supporting a sustainable bus network and encouraging a travel shift from private cars to public transport which will contribute towards the council's climate change and environmental objectives.

## CONSULTATION

There have been various points of consultation and engagement on the BSIP programme and its specific schemes. For the A38 / A368 Churchill crossroads scheme, consultation and engagement has been undertaken with stakeholders spanning a period of more than a year.

This has included discussions with ward members, Executive Members, parish councils, bus operators, businesses, and the wider public.

In 2023, three briefing meetings were arranged with our Executive Member, local ward member, and local parish councils, to discuss the initial concept designs for the junction. In October 2023, a [press release](#) was issued to local media, and published on the council's website and social media channels, announcing the Churchill junction as one of ten different locations being considered for bus priority infrastructure schemes.

Taking forward feedback from the Executive, ward and parish briefings, an online public survey was then launched for feedback for six weeks in spring 2024 (from Friday 23 February to Friday 5 April 2024). A drop-in community event was also later publicised and held, with Churchill and Burrington Parish Councils, on Tuesday 17 September 2024, and attended by 129 people, most of who were Churchill residents, with 42 people submitting feedback. It was necessary for this session to be held later than the public survey, to accommodate the 2024 pre-General Election period.

The local insights and feedback received were discussed and considered to inform a revised and refined concept design. This has been summarised in an online report, available at: [Engagement Summary](#). This report was published on the council website on Thursday 5 December 2024 and shared with ward members, event attendees, and through the Bus Times newsletter for local representatives, including councillors at all levels, and MPs.

Other ward members had also taken an interest in this scheme and there was a constructive briefing with Blagdon and Churchill ward members on the 17 July.

The developing scheme design has been shared with First Bus, who support the proposals.

Below is a summary of comments raised and key themes from the public consultation and briefings with local representatives, and how these have been considered by the project team.

### Common or significant issues raised and officer responses

Source	Detail	Action taken
Local residents	Request that the scheme includes improvements for pedestrians and cyclists.	Controlled crossings will be provided on all arms of the junction. Improved pedestrian and cycling facilities will be provided elsewhere.

Local residents	A perception that changes are unnecessary as the current junction arrangement works and is safe. Traffic lights on roundabout counterintuitive and will cause more congestion.	Design has been modelled and will improve the capacity of the junction (see details above). Reduced queue lengths expected. The proposed junction is designed to current standards and safety will be audited during design and after construction.
Local residents	The bus lane is unnecessary. Length of bus lane a concern (will not	Modelling has shown a modest improvement northbound for buses which will benefit journey times and service reliability at peak times. Modelling shows

	achieve desired outcome but increase congestion)	that the bus lane will not affect capacity for other traffic. Cyclists will also benefit from use of the bus lane. There could be scope to make further bus lane improvements southbound at a later date.
Local residents	Dinghurst road footway too narrow for pedestrians. Age of the pedestrians should be considered as many children walk from Langford to Churchill to the Secondary school, and their safety must be paramount. Dinghurst Road needs widening.	There is no available land to widen the footways on Dinghurst Road. However, alignment of westbound footpath has been improved, such that there is reduced likelihood of vehicles mounting the kerb. The design will continue to go through a prescriptive safety audit process
Local residents	Flooding on Dinghurst Lane (Road?) an issue which needs to be addressed.	Drainage requirements will be carefully considered at the roundabout. Highway drains and gullies will be cleansed and surveyed to identify problem areas.
Local residents	Improvement to bus services needed first as not enough buses currently to warrant the disruption/ proposed changes. Location of bus stop needs consideration to service all buses.	Infrastructure improvements are intended to support and existing and future bus services, as outlined elsewhere in this report.

Local residents	Proposed works may have negative effect on timings for the school run, commuting and using the junction as a through route for business. Overnight road closures will mean lengthy and expensive diversion.	Traffic management requirements will be reviewed under the Construction Management Plan between NSC and the appointed contractor. We will endeavour to reduce the impact on the local businesses and residents as a much as practicable. Timings and queue lengths for traffic will be closely monitored to minimise impact to the travelling public. Nighttime road closures for resurfacing works will be a necessary element of this scheme.
Local residents	What consideration has been given to the environmental impact? Will the chestnut tree and Jubilee memorial trees be removed and what will happen to the Hands of Friendship sculpture?	Environmental Impact Statement is to be prepared. To the south, one tree will be lost, but others will remain. The sculpture is not expected to be affected.
Local resident	Lack of provision for cyclists in proposals	This site doesn't include a national cycleway route. Insufficient footway width to provide a continuous 3m wide shared use path.
Local resident	Speed of vehicles a concern, exceeding 30mph	The proposed roundabout will be designed in accordance with the current 30mph limit. Speed through the junction is expected to be much reduced.
Local resident	No projected figures to support an increase in traffic due to expansion of Bristol Airport and Banwell Bypass	See details regarding expected capacity increase detailed in this report.

### Summary of future/remaining engagement

The design changes to the junction have been directly shaped by community engagement and discussion on the initial concept design. Future engagement will include a press release, highlighting any design elements which have been amended due to feedback on the initial proposals, highlighting the vital role this has played in the scheme's evolution.

A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) will also be published publicly on the council's website in spring/summer 2024, giving a further, formal opportunity for the public to engage on the evolved concept designs.

In the run-up to, and during, the main period of works, further updates will be shared through the council's Bus Times newsletter to local representatives, on the BSIP website pages, and social media channels, as required. Residents and businesses in the vicinity of the scheme works will also have an opportunity to sign up for timely updates from the contractor, Alun Griffiths, during this time.



## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

There is effective project and programme management led by officers with support by an external consultancy to aid in both design and contract management.

There is an agreed internal governance to oversee decision making which includes regular reporting through appropriate boards.

A Quantified Risk Assessment (QRA) has been prepared for the scheme which will be reviewed at key milestones throughout both the design and build process. The QRA will be reviewed and updated on completion of the preliminary design. The risk register is a live document for the duration of the programme.

### **Key risks**

The following have been identified as key risks:

- 1) **Statutory Undertakers Apparatus (SUs)** – As with all construction projects, the location of buried services and the potential need to divert or protect those during works present a key risk during the initial stages. This risk is being managed by engaging with the SUs at an early stage and, where possible, designing out any significant works.

- 2) **Journey time delays, complaints, disruption during works** – This risk will be managed by careful planning during the pre-construction phase and mitigated during the scheme construction period.
- 3) **Drainage** – The location, condition and suitability of existing drainage is a key risk. This risk will be managed at all stages of the scheme, throughout its design and construction, through investigation, CCTV and cleansing. This will mitigate any significant issues associated with these works.

## EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes

The assessment shows there are positive or neutral outcomes for this scheme for all users, albeit with low or negligible levels of impact across the various groups. Mostly it will aid the disabled, people on low incomes, and both younger and older age groups, by helping to improve public transport viability.

## CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

The North Somerset Council Corporate Plan 2024-28 includes key commitments to:

- deliver the Climate Emergency Strategy and action plan, and progress towards net zero by 2030
- deliver large-scale projects that improve the infrastructure and sustainability of the North Somerset area
- continue to invest in our highways and transport network to connect places and communities
- deliver on public transport improvements and support more cycling and walking across North Somerset to help decarbonise travel.

This includes '*offering transport choices that make the most of our infrastructure and provide opportunities for better use of public transport*'.

Regionally, the council is a member authority of the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body (STB) and has recently adopted its Strategic Transport Plan 2024-2050. This firmly sets out the wider region's commitment to action on the essential decarbonisation of our transport networks, with one of the five overarching principles being 'Decarbonisation and Air Quality', and sets the target to achieve a shift of 17% of current vehicle kilometres to sustainable modes.

Sub-regionally, as part of the West of England, the council's overarching transport strategy is the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4), which clearly outlines the direction of travel for decarbonising our transport network. This includes:

- that 'to transform our region, we will need to be flexible, agile and brave in our approach to the climate emergency'
- 'tak[ing] action against climate change and address poor air quality', as one of the five key objectives
- recognising the need to 'provide transformational alternatives' to car driving
- 'consider[ing] ways to manage demand possibly through congestion charging, emissions charging and workplace parking levy-type schemes', as a sub-region.

More specifically for public transport, the plan commits to:

- reinventing public transport through mass transit, smart ticketing and making it more user friendly, convenient, safe, direct and attractive, linking key destinations to enable everyone to use it
- rethinking how we use our existing transport corridors including reallocating more road space to buses, pedestrians and cyclists
- demand management measures to influence travel choice and raise revenue to reinvest in alternatives
- first and last mile-type solutions to provide a linked-up transport network.

The emerging North Somerset Local Plan will continue the strong policy-led approach to transport decarbonisation through its sustainable transport strategy, by proposing development in locations where sites will be required to reduce the need to travel and reduce car dependency, by being located close to existing facilities and connecting into existing and improved sustainable transport networks – providing more options to get around. As part of the 'Regulation 19' consultation version (winter 2023-24) of the emerging North Somerset Local Plan, land is proposed to be allocated at the below locations for residential development:

- Land at Dinghurst Road, Churchill
- Land south of Bristol Road and north of Bath Road, Churchill
- Land off Says Lane, Langford
- Land bounded by Pudding Pie Lane, Ladymead Lane and Jubilee Lane.

These sites are well placed to benefit from enhanced bus priority and therefore better overall bus services as a result of the A38/A368 Churchill Crossroads BSIP bus priority scheme. The scheme also provides capacity benefits for general traffic, compared to the existing layout of the junction.

In December 2024, central government updated the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with the aim of enabling local planning authorities and the development industry to deliver more homes to reduce the national shortage. This has meant a return to mandatory housing targets and has resulted in North Somerset Council needing to identify an additional 8,500-9,000 homes on top of the approximately 15,000 homes already identified in the Reg 19 Plan consulted on in 2023-24. This NPPF update includes the need to identify residential development within Green Belt land if no other appropriate locations can be identified.

The additional sites are still being identified and will be consulted on in early Spring 2025. As a result, we are not yet able to fully understand the impacts and transport mitigation schemes required on the transport network to mitigate the impacts of this enhanced level of development. However, future-proofing our bus network for bus priority to avoid congestion would be a sensible investment in light of this, particularly as there are benefits for general traffic as a result of the BSIP scheme at Churchill as well.

Once the additional sites have been finalised for inclusion in the emerging Local Plan, strategic transport modelling will be updated. This will enable the Council to understand the impacts from the full scale of proposed Local Plan development (including the additional sites) and allow for the identification of transport mitigation schemes to enable the

developments to be delivered consistent with the objectives of the Local Plan and its Spatial Strategy for sustainable developments.

**APPENDICES**

Scheme concept plan.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**


[Report to The Executive – 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021 - Update on the Development of a Joint Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\) with the West of England Combined Authority and Bus Operators](#)

[Report to The Executive – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 – North Somerset Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)

[Executive Committee – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 - Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\) - Contract Award of Design and Build Contractor](#)


SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed  Executive Member for Highways and Transport

Date: 30 January 2025

WITH ADVICE FROM:

Signed  Director of Environment, Assets and Transport  
Services

Date: 30 January 2025

**Appendix – Proposed design**

