



Priority for People

Creating safety and calm in the Bradford Area

Taming the Traffic is a major current public consultation exercise which polled the whole Bradford Area in 2008, responding to widespread public concern that the balance between the need of motor traffic and the needs of people to travel safely on foot and by bicycle had tilted too far in favour of motor vehicles.

This lack of balance – principally expressed as intimidation of pedestrians and cyclists, meant that many were resorting to their cars eg

- To take children to school, even in small villages
- To go shopping although the shops are within walking distance

. . . thus multiplying the problems.

The resulting pollution was felt to run counter to a growing awareness of the significance of global warming, and the reluctance to travel other than in the perceived safety of a motor vehicle was having a significant effect on residents' feeling of well-being – and confining others to their homes.

The consultation was reviewed at well-attended workshops held at Cumberwell, out of which the **Priority for People** program was formulated and 4 Action Groups were constituted to make sense of and address the issues raised by the public:

- **Safer Community** – to address the concerns raised most often in the consultation
- **Connected Community** – to facilitate free movement within the Bradford Area
- **Historic Core Zone** – a potential solution to issues, meriting study in its own right
- **Planning for the future** – addressing the long-term plans which shape the Area

As has been the case in previous consultations that we know of, **intimidation of pedestrians and cyclists by motor vehicles** spontaneously rose to the top of the list of all concerns expressed by the respondents.

Among the many illustrations of what was meant by the “lack of balance”, pretty well wherever the width of a road is too narrow to support two lines of traffic and a footpath, there is no footpath – or traffic freely drives on the footpath.

Traffic 1, Pedestrians 0.

The Safer Community Action Group has sought constructive, practical ways to redress the balance between motor traffic and pedestrians and cyclists without taking away necessary commercial activity or by simply demanding extra expenditure:

- By analysing the consultation responses to identify the major themes
- By further researching these major themes to gain insight into the root causes of the intimidation
- By looking for innovative ways of bringing about a change in the balance between motorists and pedestrians/cyclists without simply spending more

We are now ready to engage constructively with the Authorities in whose power change lies, for instance the Highways Authority and the Police – although there will be others.

A word of caution though – if the results of the consultation, expressed through us, are simply thrown into the **existing decision-making systems** then the outcomes – where pedestrians crossings are to be built for instance – will inevitably be the same as the existing Local Transport Plan and nothing will change. So, as well as our work which puts a fresh light on to the causes of the intimidation which residents feel and which are shaping their lives, we need a significant re-tuning of the way in which individual projects are assessed by the Authorities to reflect the clear change in how residents are feeling.

We stress that the outcomes we look for are to reflect the expressed priorities and concerns and to result in execution of the projects that will make most difference, not simply to cause **more** projects to be undertaken than are currently envisaged. Focus, not quantity.

The three major themes

Large vehicles – and the intimidation they cause

Crunch points – where traffic meets specific, critical human activity

Vehicle speeds – the general effect they have on human activity

It is interesting to note that in each case our work has a strong interdependence with the Historic Core Zone proposals. Baldly, unless there is some control over the volume, speed and size of vehicles **before** they reach the HCZ, it is likely either to become a gigantic traffic jam or to do little to alleviate the unpleasant aspects of being a pedestrian or cyclist in Bradford itself.

Luckily, the steps needed to provide a cushion to the HCZ are the same steps which will bring direct benefit to the outlying communities and the residents of Bradford outside the HCZ.

This paper does not address the key role of the **Connected Community** Action Group insofar as every journey by Public Transport or bicycle may be one less car journey.

Each **major theme** needs very different treatment but a clear common thread is that co-operative, explorative, open-minded working with the Authorities is the only way to achieve the innovative changes that the residents of the Bradford Area will perceive as worthwhile and which avoid significant increased expenditure.

Luckily, innovation itself is not necessarily expensive !

Large vehicles

A separate paper has been prepared addressing **large vehicles**.

A summary of the Taming the Traffic responses concerning large vehicles is attached at Appendix A.

In summary the outlook is surprisingly hopeful insofar as we believe that much can be done over time with little additional expenditure if only a holistic and focussed approach is taken:

- The concept of a Safety Zone (roughly equivalent to the Bradford Area) will put a tight focus on traffic movement planning and the implementation of appropriate controls – and their siting. The proposed Safety Zone is shown in Appendix C, and may also bring clear benefits to the Trowbridge Area which it partly encompasses.
- A principle source of intimidation is vehicle **size**, not necessarily **weight**, but little is currently done to control this, although useful effective measures may be available.
- Following consideration of the Safety Zone and traffic flows in and round it, signage and work with SatNav companies/hauliers can provide further positive encouragement and guidance the drivers and operators of large vehicles.
- The creation of focussed signage on the perimeter of the Safety Zone will also support tourism in the Bradford Area, in a similar way to the implementation of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Crunch points

At first we thought that we were dealing with a complex and seemingly unrelated assortment of pressure points – for instance outside schools, or where pavements don't exist / are too narrow and so on. It is this very ill-assortment which makes these issues hard to prioritise by the Highways Authority and which gives rise to multiple lobby groups on specific points. But it is by no means the case that every school – or every missing pavement – represents a problem.

On closer examination the issues raised on the consultation reflect what we now call **crunch points** – where some essential human activity crosses a vehicle flow – and this correlates well with the places identified in the consultation as needing action. It is in these crunch points that, by current assessment methods, emotion seems out of step with “facts”. In fact the people involved are side-stepping the dangers (for instance by jumping into their cars) because their activity is indeed “essential”, which skews the data (eg accidents) on which the assessments are made !

The Local Transport Plan is not considered to be a bad representation of what needs to be done, but the absence of a few key elements that came up regularly in the consultation suggests that the methodology of measuring, assessing and prioritising needs fine but significant tuning. Just for instance:

- The absence of a crossing at the busy Lock Inn location – because one is too difficult to implement – and the regular sight of pedestrians stranded in the roadway raises two key issues:
 - Firstly, by dropping “difficult to implement” items from the LTP they are prioritised *below* less important items, which is perverse
 - “Difficulty of implementation” combined with a high need is a clear signal for innovation. We immediately think of the following; there must be others:
 - A tunnel alongside the canal
 - A footbridge
 - Traffic-light-controlled one-way working, which is consistent with the adjacent physical calming measures in the Frome Road
 - Special approval for a Pelican crossing with lights at an extended distance
- The accident statistics at the junction to Monkton Farleigh on the A363 may not justify the safety improvement which is earnestly desired by frightened residents, not least because many take the alternative difficult (but perceived to be safer) routes via South Wraxall or Bathford
- straight consideration of vehicle volumes, pedestrian numbers, accidents etc will not tackle the issue in Holt - a village divided in two by the B3107 without a single safe place to cross. Therefore half the children cannot walk to school on their own – and are either walked to school or driven by their parents. Of course, being taken to School means (hopefully) that they never become ‘accident statistics’ thus skewing the very data on which assessments are currently made.

We are hoping to work with the Highways Authority to find a way to take sensible account of the growingly vocal and demonstrable “balance of people vs traffic” agenda into the assessment scheme being used. Specific issues which a refreshed assessment scheme and innovative delivery methods might address in a future LTP are shown in Appendix D.

We recognise that this must also cause some projects to fall out of the LTP – if skilfully done we will end up with the same expenditure but even more closely correlated with the legitimate, expressed needs of the communities involved.

Vehicle speeds

Consideration of vehicle speeds needs yet another way of being addressed !

26% of all responses to the Taming the Traffic consultation spontaneously (ie in the comments section) referred to the speed of traffic as being an issue, usually a straight safety concern but also driving people and their children into cars.

We have amassed a considerable list of hotspots – both within Bradford, within specific villages and on the interconnecting roads – where traffic speeds cause intimidation to pedestrians, safety concerns when crossing and drive cyclists off the roads.

In summary, only for this paper, some of the speed hotspots are shown in Appendix B.

We feel very strongly that a piecemeal approach can only add to the confusion of motorists (who complain today of not being sure what the speed limit is in any one place), which is unlikely to improve things and, if enforced may only cause resentment.

We would love to see a unified approach to the Area, reflecting and reinforcing the Safety Zone resulting in, for instance:

- Less and simpler signage
- Certainty for motorists as well as pedestrians and cyclists
- Clearer expectations for residents

Not being traffic management experts, we wish to combine our knowledge – gained through the Taming the Traffic consultation process and in subsequent and related work – of where the hotspots are with the knowledge of the Highways Authority on the available speed control methods (Limits, speed-activated signs, physical methods, innovative “psychological” approaches to driving habits, monitoring by volunteers etc) and the associated regulations/pros-and-cons to work out a strategy for the Bradford Area which brings effectiveness and clarity as well as providing a calmer general environment in which to set the HCZ.

We would be delighted if Wiltshire Council were to use the Bradford Area as a trailblazing pilot project for Wiltshire in this respect . . . or if there is a similar initiative elsewhere in the County that we can follow.

Additionally we will wish to discuss the provision of better data – we would like to see more of the data that is available and, where appropriate, to help collect it including being trained to operate speed guns. Just by way of example, a 2002 study we have recently seen concerning Bradford on Avon would today firmly support a 20mph speed limit through much of the town.

We do recognise that our approach may need revised **policies** generated by Councillors with respect to vehicle speeds in Wiltshire, in addition to the active involvement of Wiltshire Council Officers in their implementation.

Appendix A

Taming the Traffic responses concerning large vehicles

Large vehicles

The public questionnaire contains information regarding HGVs in the comments column, and the number of **spontaneous** mentions of HGVs (roughly 87 times out of 600 returns) shows the depth of feeling on this subject – more than on any other subject as far as can be seen.

Control of HGVs within existing frameworks

The highest support was for control of HGVs within present frameworks, with a total of 143 mentions, broken down as follows:

- 57 enforcement of the existing weight limit on BoA town bridge
- 51 introduction of a toll on BoA town bridge
- 20 lowering the weight limit on Boa town bridge
- 12 introducing other limits eg width, length or height
- 3 introducing physical barriers eg narrow sections or a one-way system

Encourage changed behaviour

Next come schemes to encourage different patterns of HGV behaviour, with a total of 95 mentions as follows:

- 29 restricting the hours when deliveries are permitted within BoA
- 28 providing better signage, and further out at the boundaries of the community area
- 21 re-thinking the designated and preferred routes for HGVs through the area
- 9 re-programming Satnavs
- 8 encouraging stores to provide and co-ordinate a delivery service

Banning HGVs altogether

A small but significant group want to ban HGVs altogether from Bradford on Avon:

- 10 introduce a total ban on HGVs within Bradford on Avon

Other communities

The only other community with the Area to make comment on HGVs was **Holt**, which shares the B3107 with Bradford on Avon – both populations made extensive references to traffic on this road and previous consultations within Holt have spontaneously put safety fears at the top of their concerns.

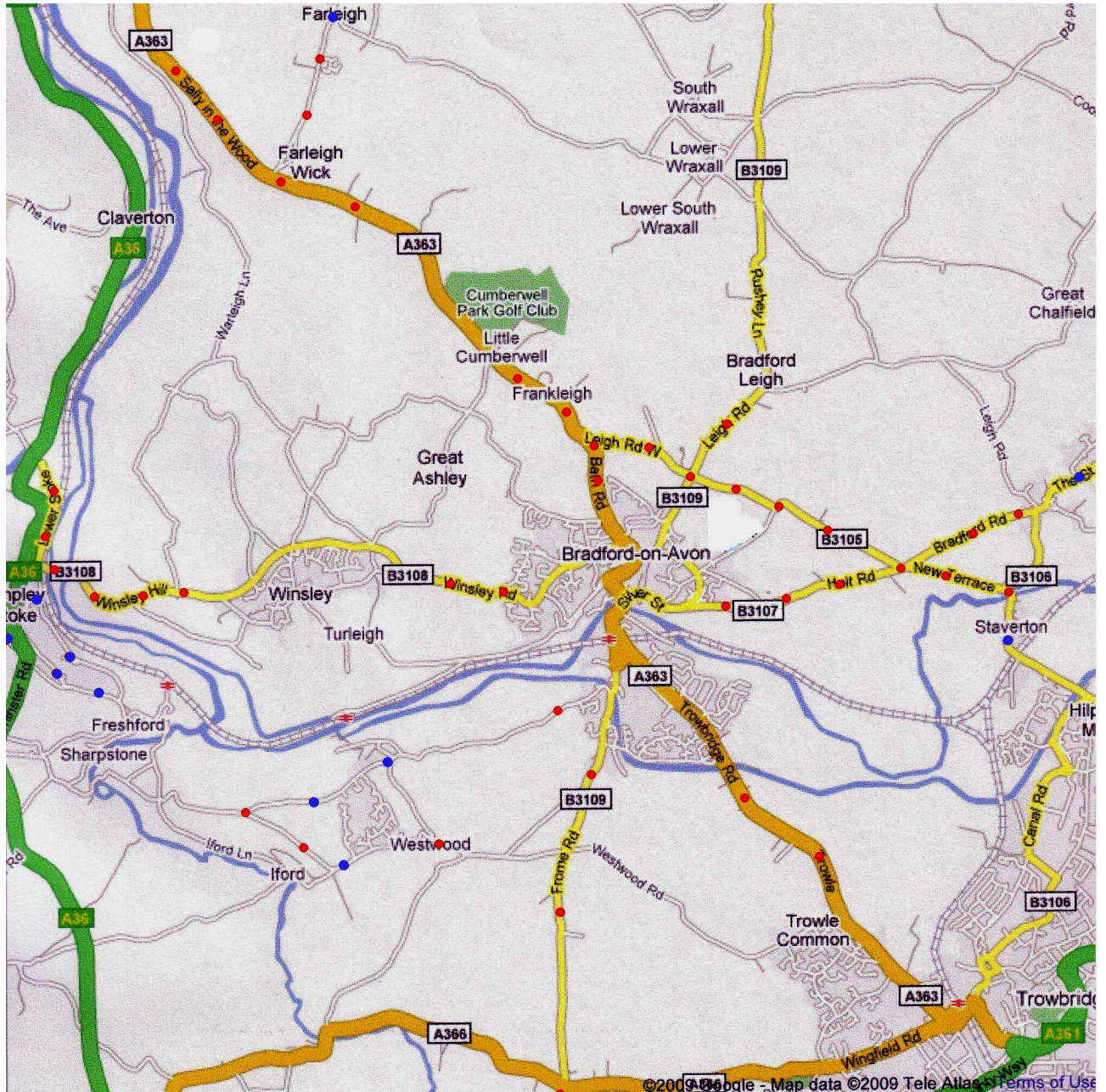
Note that **Staverton**, which has particular problems with HGV traffic, was not included in this round of consultation.

Appendix B

Speed hotspots from the Taming the Traffic consultation

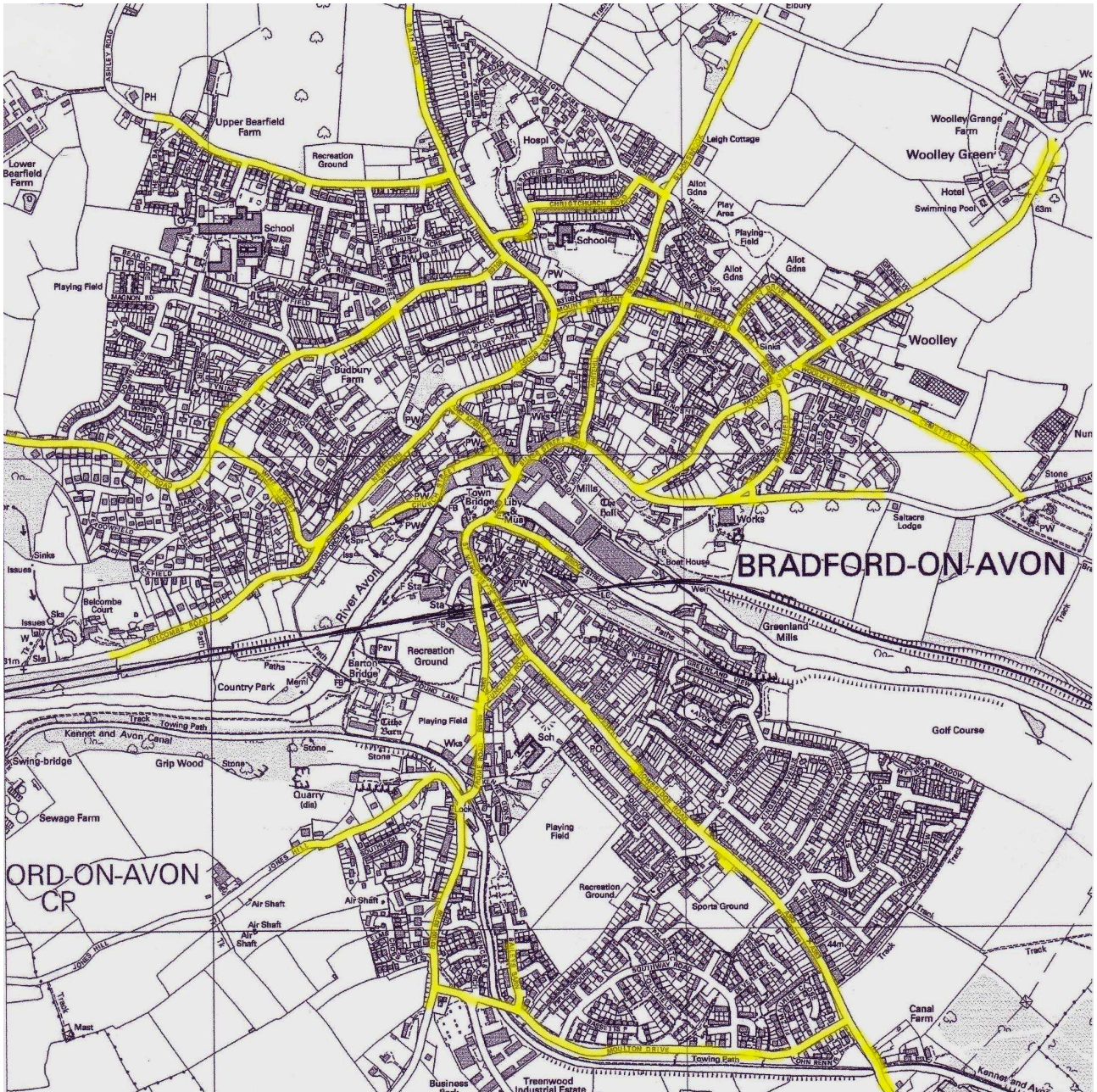
In the Bradford Area

Red spots indicate stretches of roads where there are reported speed issues, blue dots indicate communities where there are reported speed issues.



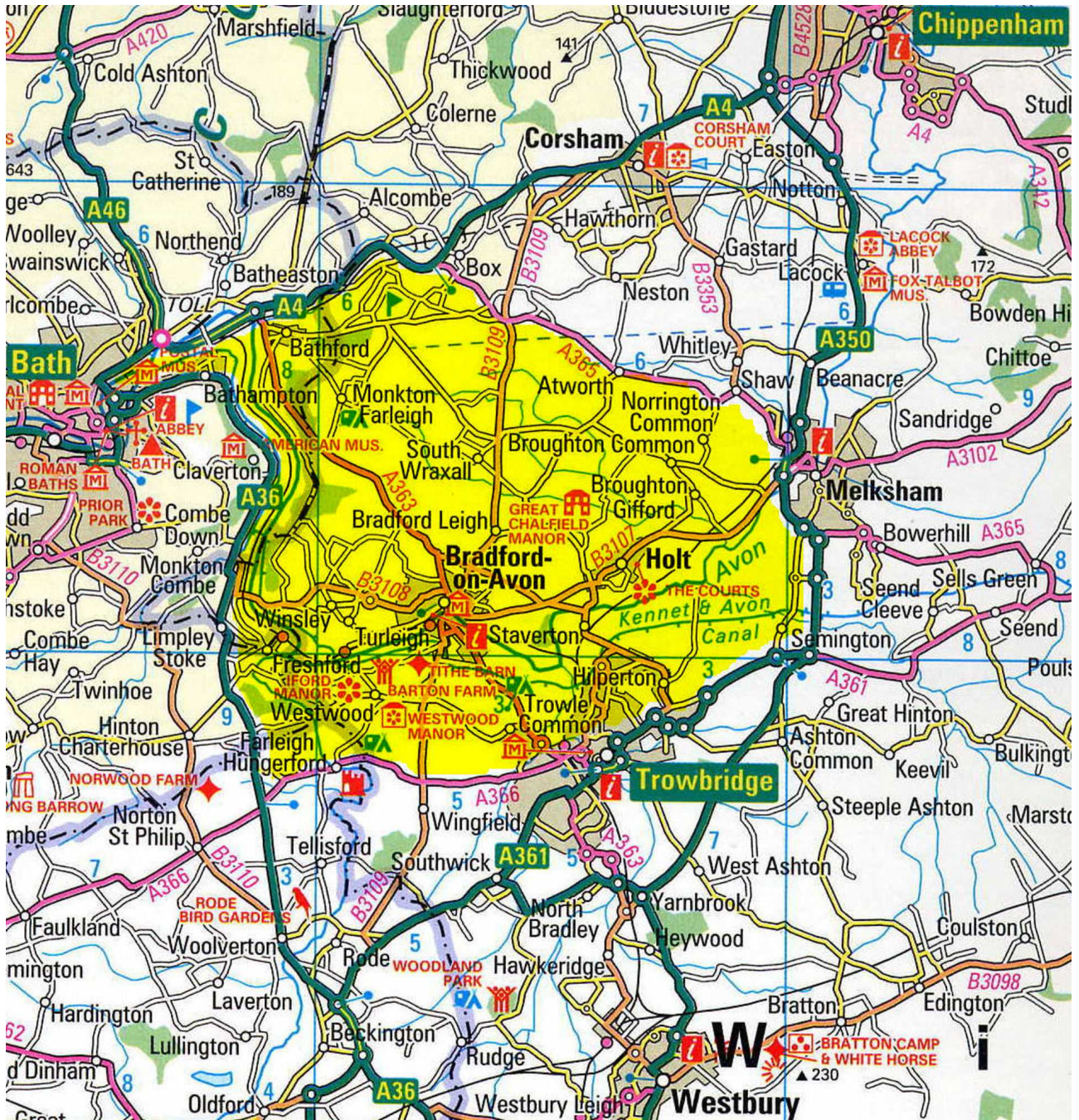
Within Bradford town

Roads where there is a reported speed issue are marked in yellow



Appendix C

The proposed Bradford Area Safety Zone



Appendix D

Crunch points

Items which might be included in a future LTP when a new “balance between people and traffic” is struck:

- **Pedestrian crossings**
 - Bradford on Avon
 - The Lock Inn
 - Abbeyfield
 - Trowbridge Road
 - Mount Pleasant to Springfield
 - Bath Road
 - Holt – near the School
 - Staverton – Hammond Way
- **Footway improvements**
 - Wingfield – B3109
 - Holt – alongside the Recreation Ground
- **Junction improvements**
 - Monkton Farleigh – A363 junction
 - Forewoods Common