

West of England Partnership  
Joint Scrutiny Committee  
22 January 2010

## South Bristol Link Major Transport Scheme Bid

### Purpose of Report

1. To seek Member's views and comments on the proposed South Bristol Link major transport scheme bid to the Department of Transport prior to its consideration by the Joint Transport Executive Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> February and the Cabinet of Bristol City Council and the Executive of North Somerset Council in February/March.

### Background

2. In October 2009 the Joint Transport Executive [JTEC] approved the concept of the South Bristol Link [SBL]; that is, a combined orbital highway and Rapid Transit with adjacent foot/cycleway between the A370 and Hartcliffe. Later the same month, the Executive Members (with responsibility for transport) of Bristol City and North Somerset Councils approved an 'inner' alignment as the 'preferred' option for public engagement in November and December 2009; this scheme is outlined in Figure 1.
3. These approvals were preceded by several years of option appraisal, comprising:
  - Review of the evidence base, including the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study (GBSTS, Atkins, 2006) and the A38-A370 Link Road Study (JMP, 2002);
  - Developing a 'long-list' of potential options;
  - Building a transport model to compare options;
  - Distilling the long-list of options down to a 'short-list' of 5 options by considering how they performed against the project objectives and whether they would be deliverable and fundable;
  - Comparing, appraising and reporting on the performance of the 5 options using Department for Transport [DfT] criteria;
  - Public and stakeholder engagement (November to March 2009) and reporting on the opinions received;
  - Collecting additional data and updated the transport model;
  - Identifying a preferred option;
  - Public and stakeholder engagement on the preferred option (November and December 2009);
  - Bid preparation for submission to DfT in March 2010 (subject to Member approval).
4. The SBL is one of several major transport schemes in the Joint Local Transport Plan [JLTP] that are being promoted by the West of England authorities. The SBL would link the A370 with the A38 and the A4174 at Hartcliffe Roundabout adjacent to Hengrove Park.

5. The local objectives of the SBL are:
  - a. To facilitate regeneration and growth in South Bristol;
  - b. To reduce congestion in South Bristol and adjacent areas of North Somerset;
  - c. To improve accessibility from South Bristol to the city centre and to strategic transport links, including the trunk road network and Bristol International Airport [BIA].
6. The South West of England Regional Assembly re-confirmed the SBL as a priority in the second Regional Funding Advice [RFA2] for construction between 2014/15-2017/18 and allocated £47m. This is linked to some policies in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy [RSS], which propose significant development in South Bristol, but not to the draft RSS proposal for an urban extension to the south-west of the city, which is not supported by the local authorities. In addition, BIA has submitted an application to expand and Bristol City Football Club is in the process of gaining approvals for a new stadium in Ashton Vale.
7. This report summarises the opinions received in the consultation on the preferred option and describes the key features of the scheme that, subject to Member approval, will be submitted to the DfT in March 2010; this is called a bid for Programme Entry and if successful, would trigger the detailed design and planning permissions required to build the scheme.

### **The Option Selection Process**

8. The option selection process was described in the report to the Joint Transport Executive [JTEC] Meeting of 1st October 2009; for convenience, the main points are summarised below:
  - The project has followed DfT's prescriptive guidance on the development and appraisal of major transport scheme bids<sup>1</sup>;
  - The project started with a wide range of options in terms of route alignments and modes (i.e. car, bus, Rapid Transit, rail);
  - The project team undertook a first sift of options to leave five options that were appraised in more detail and were the basis for public/stakeholder consultation between November 2008 and March 2009<sup>2</sup>;
  - The five options shown in Figure 2 were assessed against DfT and local objectives, it was concluded that Options 4 and 5 (combined highway and Rapid Transit) performed best and should be taken forward, but enhanced with the highway component extended from the A370-A38 section to Hartcliffe as well (to help deliver better the local objectives);

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<sup>1</sup> 'Guidance for Local Authorities seeking Government funding for major transport schemes' and 'WebTAG' (Web-based Transport Appraisal Guidance), DfT.

<sup>2</sup> Further details are contained in the 'South Bristol Link Option Appraisal Report' (Mott MacDonald, February 2009) and the 'South Bristol Link Options Consultation Report' (BCC/NSC, June 2009). Both can be found on the West of England website: <http://www.westofengland.org/transport/south-bristol-link>.

- JTEC approved the enhanced Option 4 and 5 (Figure 3) for further assessment, following which the Executive Members (with responsibility for transport) of Bristol City and North Somerset Councils approved enhanced Option 4 (combined highway/Rapid Transit on an 'inner' alignment) as the 'preferred' option for public engagement in November and December 2009.

### **Scheme Description**

9. The preferred scheme is shown on Figure 1 and described from north to south A370 to Hartcliffe.
10. The SBL Rapid Transit starts from the Long Ashton Park & Ride site. The single carriageway highway has a separate roundabout junction with the A370 Long Ashton Bypass, south-west of the Park & Ride site. The latter is considered to be a better way of merging link road traffic with the A370, rather than combining it with the heavy traffic on the B3128 (from Clevedon) and then merging with the A370; to do so would require the rebuilding of the existing A370/B3128/Park & Ride junction, which would add significant cost to the project (~£9m) and could have an adverse impact on the adjacent Ashton Court Estate.
11. The Rapid Transit and highway routes head south across Ashton Vale, merging at a junction that would provide access to South Liberty Lane; both routes are safeguarded in the North Somerset Local Plan as the 'blue' and 'red' routes respectively. This would create a triangle of land in the Green Belt, up to half of which would have a large flood-attenuation pond to cater for surface water drainage.
12. There is concern that this layout would have a greater adverse impact on the Green Belt and could be more vulnerable to development than would be the case if the SBL highway also followed the inner blue route to the Park & Ride site. The concern about the greater footprint of the preferred scheme is acknowledged, however, the alternative would also require a large flood-attenuation pond.
13. The remaining land within the triangle of land is prone to flooding (ranging from 1-in-75 to 1-in-200 year probability), or is former landfill (the Kennel Farm Landfill). Given these land conditions and that the council would need to acquire most, if not all of the land in this triangle, the concerns about it being developed for housing or employment are not considered well-founded. The SBL would offer the opportunity to provide significant environmental mitigation, public access and preserve this area of land from development in the future.
14. At the point where the Rapid Transit and highway meet a signal junction and a Rapid Transit stop (Brookgate) would serve South Liberty Lane. The combined Rapid Transit/highway then crosses underneath the main railway line, which requires a new bridge structure to permit 2 highway lanes, 2 Rapid Transit lanes and a foot/cycle way. Consideration is being given to including greater width in the structure to facilitate future widening.
15. South from the railway bridge, the SBL climbs the Colliters Brook valley to a new junction with the A38, which requires a southbound highway climbing lane for slow vehicles. As it climbs the side of the valley, the SBL would be built on terraces separated by retaining walls.

16. The junction with the A38 would be a roundabout with partial signal-control to manage the interaction between general traffic and the Rapid Transit vehicles; some of which would continue along the SBL to Hengrove Park, others along the A38 to BIA. A Rapid Transit stop (Castle Farm) would permit interchange between BIA and Hengrove Park services.
17. South-east of the A38, the Rapid Transit vehicles would use segregated bus-ways in the centre of the route; the highway lanes would be on the outside and a parallel foot/cycle path would be provided. The SBL would cross the northern part of Highridge Common; common land lost to the scheme will be replaced by acquisition of adjacent agriculture land.
18. SBL leaves Highridge Common at the junction of Highridge Green/Highridge Road/King George's Road, which would be signal-controlled and with an adjacent Rapid Transit stop. SBL would follow Kings George's Road, which would be widened to 2-lanes for general traffic and 2-lanes for Rapid Transit with residents' parking and landscaping areas on both sides, a foot/cycle path on the north side and a footway on the south. This layout can be accommodated on highway authority land and is considered the best compromise between fully segregated Rapid Transit and residents' concerns (e.g. loss of parking, front gardens, severance). Crossing facilities would be provided for pedestrians and cyclists. . This arrangement is proposed as a result of early responses to recent consultation; and will be further revised with the involvement of the local community.
19. The SBL junction with Queen's Road and Hareclive Road would be signal-controlled, with adjacent Rapid Transit Stops; in between, the SBL would follow the safeguarded alignment and its layout would be the similar to that on King George's Road. Beyond the Hareclive Road junction, the SBL follows Whitchurch Lane to the Hengrove Park roundabout with the same layout of general traffic and bus lanes. Crossing facilities would be provided to minimise severance. The Rapid Transit continues to a new terminus at the South Bristol Hospital to be built in Hengrove Park.
20. The SBL would build on the Rapid Transit that should be running between Ashton Vale and Bristol city centre by the time SBL is completed. The services using the SBL Rapid Transit route would comprise:
  - A new service between the city centre - Ashton Vale – Hengrove Park, running every 18-minutes during the day, it would link with the proposed North Fringe – Hengrove Package Rapid Transit route;
  - The BIA Flyer, running every 10-minutes, which with new vehicles, would divert from its existing route via the A38 to take advantage of the segregated, faster route via Ashton Vale.
21. Rapid Transit stops are proposed at the following locations:
  - Ashton Vale (for the South Liberty Lane trading estate and existing residents);
  - The junction with the A38 (for interchange with local bus services);
  - Highridge Green;
  - Queen's Road;
  - Hareclive Road;

- Imperial Park South;
- Hengrove Park Hospital.

22. Public rights of way would be maintained, with diversions if required.
23. A package of complementary measures would be implemented with the SBL, comprising:
- Traffic management on the B3130 through Barrow Gurney to preserve the forecast traffic flow reductions;
  - Traffic management on Kings Head Lane and Bishopsworth Road;
  - Improved traffic signal control through Cumberland Basin gyratory.

### **Public Engagement**

24. The second round of public consultation aimed to gather views on the preferred scheme rather than whether or not a project was needed. Nonetheless, responses to the questionnaire tended to polarise into those who are opposed to the principle of a link at all and those who see it as important and needed as soon as possible.
25. The consultation included distribution of over 6,000 postcards to households in affected areas, notices to local press and other media, pamphlets and questionnaires distributed via local libraries, community centres and at three public exhibitions.
26. A report of the consultation is being prepared at the time of writing; the following summary presents a preliminary assessment of views received.
27. Those who oppose the scheme generally believe that it is of no benefit; that it will damage the Green Belt, add to pollution, divide local communities and harm local business. A large majority of opposition (approximately 85%) originates from residents of King George's Road, Highridge Green and from Long Ashton, where some residents see the scheme as potentially facilitating housing development.
28. Groups who have written expressing opposition to the scheme include:
- Hands Off Long Ashton;
  - Bristol Green Party;
  - Malago Valley Conservation Group;
  - Alliance Against South Bristol Ring Road.
29. The views of those who support the scheme are generally that it will improve access, help regenerate South Bristol, be good for local businesses and form a valuable component of essential infrastructure. A frequently stated concern is that it is taking too long to implement. Most support for the scheme has come from businesses, including those at Imperial Park, Symes Avenue, Hengrove Park, Cater Business Park and Ashton Vale.
30. Groups supporting the scheme include:
- GWE Business West

- South Bristol Business Group
- Withywood Community Forum and Park Group
- The University of Withywood
- Better Transport Links 4 South Bristol
- Highridge Neighbourhood Forum

31. There are many suggestions for modifying the preferred scheme, both from those who generally oppose it and from those who broadly support it. As mentioned above, the design has recently been modified in response to early concerns regarding severance (better crossing facilities have been introduced) and preference for more prominent rapid transit (now proposed to occupy the middle of the carriageway where shared with road). There are some who would proceed with the scheme if it did not include new highway, notably the NHS, but these are matched by those who would favour the scheme if it dropped the rapid transit component.
32. Some responses, including that from GWE Business West, seek consideration of potential need for dual carriageway road and higher capacity junctions. Others would favour a different alignment, further west for the section between A370 and Highridge Common.
33. There is awareness of environmental issues from both opponents and supporters: the former refer to conflict with existing local and national environmental policies; the latter point out the damage and pollution currently caused by queuing vehicles, especially HGVs, on unsuitable local roads.
34. In conclusion, there are strongly held views regarding the South Bristol Link. Most of the opposition to the scheme comes from local residents who understandably feel concern at the prospect of large number of vehicles travelling on roads outside their homes, and from those who regard Green Belt as sacrosanct. Support for the scheme is strongly expressed by businesses who regard it as a valuable way of helping regenerate South Bristol and improving access for their staff and deliveries. Despite many residents' opinion that the scheme would not benefit business, no business that has responded to concur with this view.

### **Financial Implications**

35. The estimated outturn capital scheme costs at the time of writing are shown in the following table, assuming construction 2014/15-2016/7 and inflation at 2.7% per annum. All costs and contributions would be split equally, 50/50, between Bristol City and North Somerset Councils.

**Preferred Scheme Capital Costs (preliminary cost estimates at 14 Jan'10)**

<b>Costs</b>	<b>£m outturn</b>
Preparation Costs (gross) <sup>4</sup>	7
Construction Costs (inc land) <sup>1</sup>	42
Quantified Risk Assessment <sup>2</sup>	6
<b>Total Quantified Cost Estimate <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Funding</b>	
Local Preparation Cost Contribution <sup>4</sup>	4
DfT Capital Contribution <sup>5</sup>	47
Local Capital Contribution	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>

**Notes:**

- 1) The construction costs are under review. The value of land is based on its use for Green Belt agricultural use, not its possible development value (given the draft RSS, which would be much higher); land in Bristol is owned by the council.
- 2) A Quantified Risk Assessment has been undertaken and will be updated as further design work and investigations are progressed; it reflects the current best estimate and likelihood of cost increases due to, for example, worse than anticipated ground conditions or higher utility diversion costs.
- 3) If costs escalate about the Total Quantified Cost Estimate, these are initially shared between the local authorities and DfT; if costs escalate beyond a level agreed with DfT, these would be wholly borne by the local authorities.
- 4) Preparation costs from Programme Entry to Conditional Approval and Final Approval have to be secured locally initially, but up to 50% of eligible preparatory costs can be reimbursed by DfT in arrears for successful bids; the above assumes a 40% return.
- 5) The DfT capital contribution is currently capped at £47m in RFA2.

36. The councils would have to secure £7m for preparatory costs to secure Conditional and Final Approvals from DfT for the preferred scheme; given the current economic situation, the councils will have to underwrite the preparatory costs. On the basis of the preferred option, the source of this funding assumed to be from:

- Council's capital;
- Developer contributions (including BIA and sites in South Bristol); and
- Reimbursement of preparatory costs by DfT (claims submitted to DfT in arrears with bids for Conditional and Final Approval).

**Procurement and Operation**

37. The procurement of the scheme involves the following major work streams:

- Infrastructure (e.g. the carriageways, structures, signals);
- Hardware systems (e.g. ticket machines);
- Rapid Transit services;
- Client-side management of the Rapid Transit operation.

38. At the time of writing, the preferred approach for infrastructure would use a combination of 'design and build' for the infrastructure, together with selected use of existing framework contracts for ancillary construction and some of the hardware systems.
39. The Rapid Transit services would be procured on the same basis as that currently being established for the route between Ashton Vale and the city centre. To maintain quality, it is considered essential that the councils specify all aspects of the services and, hence, that services are contracted. A contracted service approach has the advantages of providing the ability for the councils to:
- Fully determine the service specification (including ticketing & fares);
  - Tailor service specification to budgetary and other constraints by tendering a range of specification variations (to counter over specifying and or tenders coming in over budget);
  - Provide incentives for the appointed operator to maintain operational performance of the service by use of financial penalties / rewards;
  - Contractually safeguard the provision and timing of the introduction of the Rapid Transit service;
  - Ensure value for money to the councils and that they secure a share of any operating surpluses arising from the investment;
  - Reduce conflict with operators of existing commercial bus services (such that they would not challenge the scheme as 'anti-competitive');
  - Reduce risks to both the operator and the councils in respect of cost and continued operational performance.
40. The SBL would be adopted and, hence, its maintenance costs would fall to the local authorities. The other revenue costs identified that could potentially fall upon the council are to support the Rapid Transit services; the latest modelling working suggests the following:
- The BIA Flyer would be a commercial service and pay an access fee to use the Rapid Transit between the A38, Long Ashton Park & Ride and the city centre;
  - The services to/from Hengrove Park might require an initial operating subsidy; this will be confirmed before bid submission.

### **Value for Money**

41. To achieve Programme Entry from DfT it is necessary to achieve a Benefit to Cost Ratio [BCR] of at least 2.0; modelling undertaken to-date suggests a BCR of more than 2.0. Work on optimising this will continue during February and be reported to the Executive Members prior to bid submission.

### **Risk Management**

42. A full Quantified Risk Assessment is being undertaken, but to-date some of the main risks and mitigation measures are considered to be:
- Lack of government funding (scheme delayed or cancelled) – risk accepted;

- Lack of local funding for preparatory costs (scheme delayed) - secure funding from council capital, developer contributions, other third parties (e.g. SWRDA);
- Lack of local funding for the local capital contribution (scheme delayed) - secure funding from council capital, developer contributions, other third parties (e.g. SWRDA);
- DfT delays in making decisions (scheme delayed) - close liaison with DfT, prompt replies to questions;
- Changing political priorities (scheme delayed or cancelled) – risk accepted;
- Difficulty in securing requisite statutory powers (scheme delayed) - follow appropriate processes for planning applications, Side Road Orders, Traffic Regulation Orders, etc;
- Need for utility diversions (increased cost) – increase budget and incorporate into risk assessment;
- Construction of railway under-bridge (increased cost, delay) – early and ongoing discussion with Network Rail, incorporate into risk assessment.

### **Governance**

43. The SBL project will continue to use the now well-established West of England governance arrangements for major schemes; it is anticipated that to meet DfT's reporting requirements, the lead authority would be North Somerset Council.

### **Next Steps**

44. A report seeking approval to bid (to the DfT) will be taken to the meeting of the Bristol City Council Cabinet on 25th February 2010 and to the North Somerset Council Executive on 23rd March 2010. Subject to these approvals, finalisation of the bid document will continue, culminating in submission to the DfT at the end of March 2010.
45. Once a bid is submitted, there is a 3 stage preparatory process before DfT releases funds and scheme construction starts, namely:
- Programme Entry;
  - Conditional Approval; and
  - Full Approval.
46. **Programme Entry** is when DfT conditionally agrees to fund a scheme having considered the MSBC. Further preparatory work is then required to secure **Conditional Approval**; namely, detail design, public engagement, obtaining statutory powers (e.g. Compulsory Purchase Orders, planning permission, public inquiry), method of procurement, delivery programme, updating and submitting the bid to DfT. With Conditional Approval secured, tenders for scheme construction have to be prepared, issued and a preferred bidder selected; a bid for **Full Approval** would then be submitted to DfT that contains the final confirmed scheme costs and forecast benefits.
47. Assuming that DfT judge the March 2010 bid for Programme Entry to be compliant, history suggests that DfT would take at least 6-months to grant 'Programme Entry',

during which period DfT officials will be seeking clarification and asking further questions of the SBL project team.

48. With Programme Entry secured, the programme for the next phases of work would include the following:

- 2010, October Programme Entry, gear-up project team and start work on surveys and design;
- 2011, continue survey and design work, prepare application for planning permission, public/stakeholder engagement;
- 2012, planning permission, prepare applications for statutory powers;
- 2013, public inquiry, receipt of inspector's decision and submit bid for Conditional Approval;
- 2014, Conditional Approval, prepare and issue tender for scheme construction, submit bid for Final Approval;
- 2015, Final Approval and construction start;
- 2016, construction;
- 2017, complete construction and open.

### **Recommendation**

#### **That Members:**

1. Provide their views and comments on the proposed South Bristol Link major transport scheme bid.
2. Endorse the South Bristol Link major transport scheme bid to the meeting of the JTEC on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

Officer presenting the report:

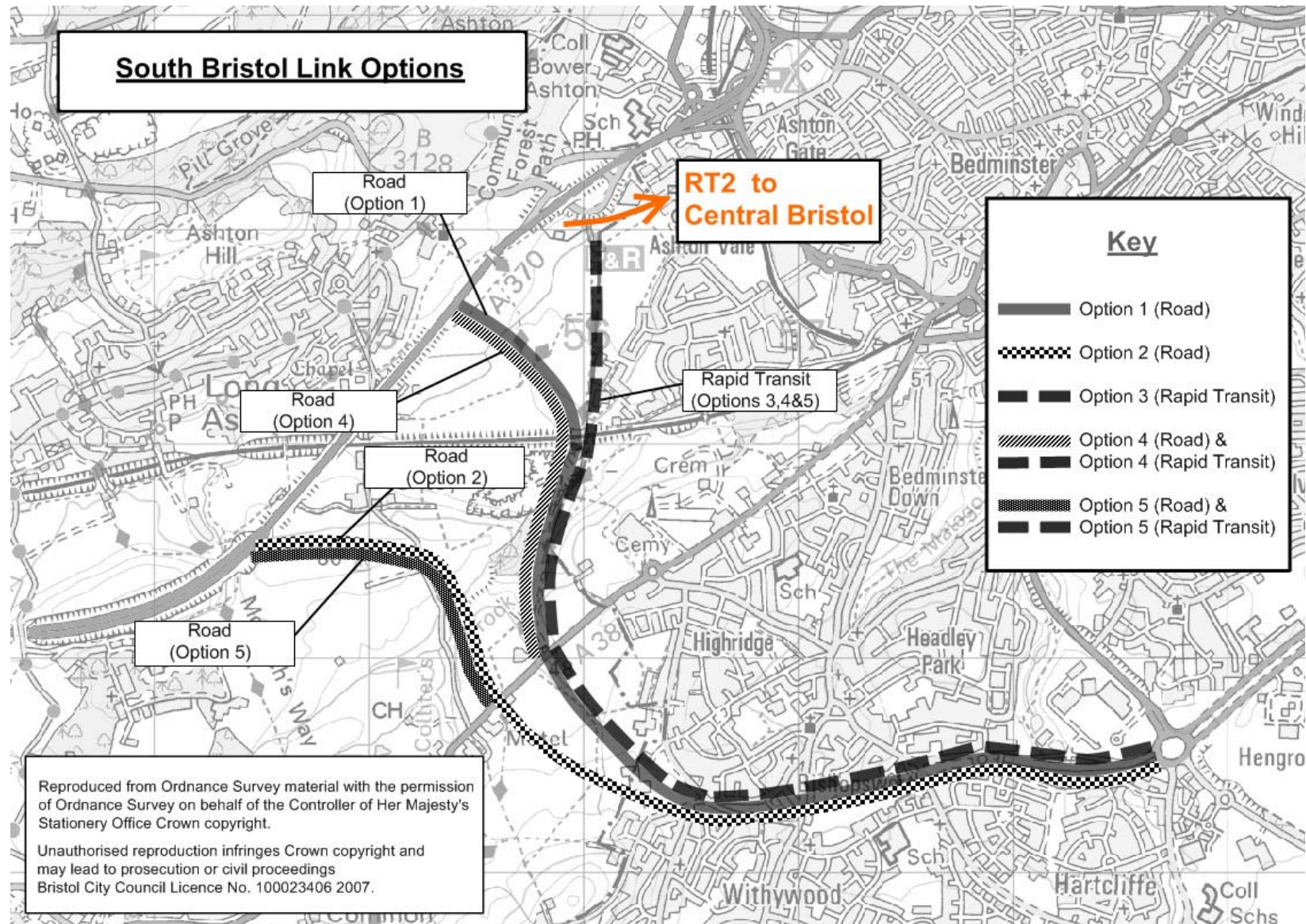
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**Figure 1: South Bristol Link Preferred Option, January 2010**



Figure 2: South Bristol Link Options, February 2009



**Figure 3: South Bristol Link Options for Further Appraisal, September 2009**

