



Built Environment Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Public transport in towns and cities

Tuesday 5 July 2022

10 am

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Baroness Neville-Rolfe (The Chair); Lord Berkeley; Lord Best; Lord Carrington of Fulham; Baroness Cohen of Pimlico; Lord Grocott; Lord Haselhurst; The Earl of Lytton; Lord Moylan; Lord Stunell; Baroness Thornhill.

Evidence Session No. 14

Heard in Public

Questions 154 - 169

Witness

I: Baroness Vere of Norbiton Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Department for Transport.

Examination of witness

Baroness Vere of Norbiton.

Q154 **The Chair:** Welcome to the House of Lords Built Environment Committee and our public evidence session in our inquiry into public transport in towns and cities. Our inquiry is considering future trends in public transport use and innovation, and we are also interested in the extent to which local authorities are well equipped to deliver the high-quality public transport services that we all want. We will be making recommendations to the Government later this year, and we are delighted that our witness today is Baroness Vere of Norbiton, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport at the Department for Transport.

The session is being broadcast on parliamentlive.tv. A full transcript is being taken and will be made available to you, Minister, to make any corrections after the session. Please could members and witnesses keep their questions and responses brief, as we have a lot to cover this morning?

I will kick off with the first question. In general, what is the best way of improving public transport in urban areas, Minister? In particular, we would like you to focus outside London, which we have found is perhaps a bit ahead of some of the other areas. We are unclear whether the key to success is funding and/or clear policy direction and leadership.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Thank you very much for inviting me here today. My policy area is roads, buses and places. Places is essentially devolved to the four nations of the United Kingdom, but also to the various areas that have devolved settlements with the Government. I feel fairly well placed to answer your questions today. I am representing the Department for Transport as a whole, so I am very happy to cover areas not in my portfolio.

I could be here for the next hour and a half to answer the question you have just asked, so I will try to be brief. I think there are three areas. There is the policy—how it is delivered and who does the delivering—and the funding. On policy, ever since the current Secretary of State came in nearly three years ago we have focused very much on strategy, vision, setting the national framework for what we see as the future of transport in our country. As part of that, we have had the Williams-Shapps plan for rail, the massive IRP investment, the national bus strategy, the cycling and walking gear change, the transport decarbonisation plan and so on. It is very much about where we see Government going, and setting the national message and narrative.

When it comes to who does the delivering, one of the most surprising things I found when I got to the Department for Transport three years ago is quite how much of this is devolved. It is devolved to London via the GLA Act and to the areas with their own settlements, such as Manchester and Liverpool City Region, and we know that there are more coming down the track. Then there are the local transport authorities. It

is quite a complicated picture, but substantially a lot of what we do is devolved.

How do we help those places to get better? If you are one of the metro combined authorities, you would have received funding to help your capacity and capability to develop your own local plan. For example, they got £50 million in 2021-22 to develop their local plans and their investment ask from government. Local authorities have also received funding, but I will not go into that because we are at the moment we are focused very much on the urban areas.

Then there is the funding. From the perspective of the big urban areas, there have been two real pots of funding over my time in the Department for Transport. We are coming to the end of the transforming cities fund investment of £2.45 billion that went to 18 different places—the metro combined authorities and some other significant places, for example Portsmouth and Norwich. We are very much focused on delivery there, because some of that was delayed by Covid, so it is very much now about getting back to the local authorities and saying, “We gave you £2.45 billion. You promised to do this. Have you done it?”

The next pot that you will be aware of is the city region sustainable transport scheme—that trips off the tongue; I will call it the CRSTS from now on—which is £5.7 billion. We spoke to all the places that were going to get the CRSTS and asked them to submit their plans for cross-modal urban transport, focusing on growth and productivity, levelling up, decarbonisation, deliverability and value for money. They submitted those plans back to us and we tested them to make sure that they would do what they said on the tin, that they could be delivered, and we have now allocated the funding to those areas.

That is our broad strategy for making improvements to urban transport.

The Chair: In the light of that, in your experience, having been there for some time now, is it the policy direction that you have described or the enforcement, which I think you have added to the list, or is it the funding, the money, that makes the difference between an area having good public transport and having struggling public transport?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It is all three, and it is also about how long that area has been particularly focused on public transport. My experience is that areas differ. They sometimes struggle to see that transport underpins pretty much every other ambition that any local area will have for employment and getting people to local public services. That is why it is the interrelationship between all three. Historically, potentially we have not done as much as we could have done on valuation and checking deliverability. It was a sort of “Here’s the money. Off you go”. That is fine, but it is a bit too much devolve and forget. We have to make sure that we go back to the areas and say, “Okay, but have you done it? Have you really delivered what you said you would?” That is what we are very much focused on now.

Q155 Lord Stunell: Can you tell us how levelling up is weighted against ensuring value for money? In many cases, you will get better value for money by investing in, say, opening up housing land in the south-east than in the north-east with a transport intervention. How are you adapting the metrics and maybe even confronting the Treasury to make sure that the levelling-up agenda is delivered by the investment you are making?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It depends on the sort of intervention that you are trying to make, but, as you will know from the way we do our project appraisals, the Treasury has updated the Green Book so that there is greater emphasis on the strategic case but value for money remains key. In general, you could say that projects in the south-east will always be better value for money than elsewhere, but that is not always the case. I look at projects all over the country that have very good value for money, but the strategic case is also incredibly strong. The levelling-up element of everything we do is always a consideration. For example, for the BSIPs we checked levels of deprivation and that we were not investing in just one region—all these things. The term “levelling up”, although set out in the 12 missions in the levelling-up White Paper, is very much just an underlying framework of the way we think about things.

Lord Stunell: Does it not really make a difference to the metrics you use when looking at a particular scheme or a particular authority’s bid as to whether it should be supported?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: There is no levelling-up metric per se, because levelling up can mean lots of different things. A lot of that comes down to the strategy and how it integrates with other transport schemes but also with a spatial plan in a particular local area. It comes into all sorts of things that we do. There is no single metric, no.

The Chair: To clarify, there are 12 target metrics in the levelling-up White Paper. Which are the ones that matter to you in your role?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: One matters to me in my role more than any other, and that is the metric that by 2030 we will see a move towards London-style transport systems to improve public transport connectivity.

The Chair: That is where we came in.

Q156 Lord Moylan: Minister, we have interviewed and taken evidence from transport professionals from many different parts of the country and from transport academics in our inquiry into urban transport. One thing that strikes me is that, in their approach, much of the case for large-scale public transport investment is driven by a policy assumption that there is an objective to reduce the number of motor vehicles in towns. It is so common among them that if you challenge it at all, they look rather blankly at you.

The chairman of the National Infrastructure Commission, Sir John Armitt,

said earlier this week in the *Telegraph*, "Congestion charging zones, low traffic neighbourhoods and road tolls must be introduced across Britain to drive the public away from using cars". He does not, of course, speak for the Government; he advises the Government. But Chris Boardman, the national active travel commissioner, made very similar comments in the newspaper yesterday.

We have heard of driving-out reductions of at least 30%, but it varies. This is not being driven by managing existing road space, which is obviously finite, because the focus is on reducing existing road space, and it is not driven by pollution, because the switch to electric vehicles, which we read in the newspapers, is going faster than expected and would, of course, reduce local pollution. Is this government policy, and what is the rationale for it?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I am very happy to answer that. government policy is always to retain choice where appropriate, but one has to have a balance. When we are looking at our urban centres in particular, yes, we are looking at reducing carbon emissions. However, we are also looking at other things such as air quality. Electric vehicles have tyres, and tyre wear is a very important contributor to particulate matter and so poor air quality. They can also create noise from the tyres, and, of course, there is the impact on congestion and in the public realm as to whether one wants to sit outside a café and have a stream of cars going past you. The Government's position is very much that we should provide different types of modes of transport in urban areas such that people have a good and viable choice, whether that is for cycling and walking or public transport. All of this was set out in the transport decarbonisation plan.

The point about road space is important, because one of the things that worries me more than anything else, given the limited amount of road space, is the ability of our supply chains and our freight networks to get goods to shops effectively and efficiently. Road space will always be a challenge. From our perspective, if we can shift people on to public transport because it is appropriate, if we can encourage people to cycle because they have segregated cycle lanes, we want to see that happen. But, as I said, transport is mostly devolved, so it is up to local authorities to come up with the plans to put those things in place.

Lord Moylan: As you, understandably, encourage people to switch to electric vehicles and, effectively, make it mandatory—no other option from 2030—do you think that you have conveyed to them sufficiently that there is a policy of reducing road space in towns to the point where there will be 30% less mileage available to them when they are the proud owner of their new electric vehicles?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I do not recognise the 30% figure, but I recognise—

Lord Moylan: You have a figure that you do—

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: No, I do not. The Government do not set targets on this. I am not aware that I ever seen any target apart from wanting to make 50% of journeys in towns and cities walking or cycling, because they tend to be less than 2 miles. That would be a perfectly viable option, but electric vehicles have reduced in price enormously. You said that they would be banned from 2030. That is only the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles, and obviously there will be a flourishing second-hand market by then. I do not think it is fair to say that you would buy a new vehicle and then not be able to drive it. It is just that you need to be able to drive in a sensible fashion. You need to have choices, where they exist, to make the journey on a different mode.

Lord Moylan: Do you feel that people understand this properly?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Yes, I do.

Lord Moylan: Good. Thank you.

The Chair: We will now move on to buses, electric or non-electric.

Q157 **Baroness Thornhill:** Thank you very much for coming today. Back to buses, we absolutely understand the Bus Back Better scheme and the requirement that local transport authorities had to produce their plans by last October, and that by April this year they had to have opted into a franchise or an enhanced partnership. I have tried to find the evidence base for how effective that has been. I was quite pleased to see that one of the things you feel the department could do better is monitoring and getting back. I have heard much about Hertfordshire's enhanced partnership plan, but as somebody who is keen to use public transport I have not seen very much of that.

The strategies are there—you must have done this by whenever—but do we know what is actually happening on the ground to improve services, especially as we have heard evidence that there is very real concern that services will be cut due to the funding gap? As we know, it is mainly the poorer, the ethnic minorities, the low-waged and so on who use buses, so I guess what we are asking you is how important buses are to government policy. Do you have any plans to ensure that at least present levels are sustained and that this predicted drop in services will not happen?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Let me talk a bit about the bus service improvement plans and the enhanced partnerships, and the whole process around this, because it falls into two buckets.

I was delighted that everybody managed to submit the BSIPs by the end of October. They were assessed, and some were funded and so on. The next stage is the enhanced partnerships, which are a statutory intervention that requires a certain process to be gone through. Areas had to submit their draft enhanced partnerships by 30 June. That means that they are not made yet, so they are not in place, but it was our opportunity to check how they are getting on and to make sure that they have everything they said they would have in their bus service

improvement plans. In getting the draft EPs ready, there would have been many conversations with the operators about what the operators will commit to the whole process, because this is about a partnership between local authorities and operators.

That is where we are in the process. That was a few days ago and we are doing that now. Do I want it to happen more quickly? Absolutely, but can local authorities do it more quickly? Absolutely not. It is absolutely right that the local democratic processes take place. Also, the key thing that we want to see with the enhanced partnerships is engagement with the local community to make sure that the services match what is now sometimes a very different pattern of travel.

That is where we are, but in due course you will be able to see the enhanced partnership for each local area published, and for areas that receive funding a summary will be published of all the funding they receive, what they will deliver for it and what the operators will deliver for it. All local areas will be required to publish data on patronage every six months. All of that is coming, so we will be able to hold local areas to account and see what has happened.

On the changes in services, we have seen a speeding up of some things in the travelling realm that have caused what some might call scarring and some might call a change in usage. I am seeing a significant difference on buses depending on the location, time of day and type of traveller. Although I can generally say that patronage on rail and buses is about 80% of where it was pre-pandemic, there are huge variabilities in those numbers.

Allied to the enhanced partnership draft plans that are coming in to us, we are now looking for a light-touch network review. We have asked local authorities to talk to their local operators while the bus sector is still getting recovery funding, and we tell them that we require them to keep 90% of services at the moment. That will go down to 80% by the end of September, but that is a limit, not a target. We do not want things to go down to 80%, and in some areas they will not need to.

The point is that we must establish what our steady-state, financially sustainable bus service looks like in each local authority. Local authorities have a lot more power than they had previously in holding operators to account and encouraging them to take a network perspective rather than an individual profitability by route perspective.

All the network reviews were due in by 1 July, so you can see that there is a bit of a match-up between draft EPs and the network reviews coming in. That will give us much better visibility on what different areas are proposing for their services going forward. If I may say, as this is my favourite topic, existing bus funding is still here. We still have BSIPs, concessionary fares, contributions in the block grant. Those are there to support business-as-usual services.

Baroness Thornhill: Can I clarify one thing? I was interested in what

you said about profitability by route, because if there is ever an issue that gets to a local politician it is when the bus service is being cut and so on, which you will be aware of. Also, it is the low-paid and poorer people using buses, and they sustain essential services. If you cannot get your care worker to the care home on time, that has a knock-on effect.

On the profitability by route, are any incentives built into the system to genuinely encourage local authorities to keep those services going rather than them being the ones that are cut?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We have been incredibly clear with local authorities about our expectations, and we have been very focused on encouraging them to build up their in-house capability. Over many years, some local authorities have felt that transport should be deprioritised, that it can sort itself out, that national government will do the big stuff and the operators will just do the little stuff. One of the key things that we have done—£23 million last year, £15 million for certain places going forward—is to make them understand. They know that they have this power. We have been very clear about our expectations in the guidance that we have sent out, but it has to be a local decision. I cannot change that; nor would I want to.

Q158 **The Earl of Lytton:** Good morning, Minister. This question follows on from what Baroness Thornhill was saying. We understand the situation about sequential—I think that is the right term—cuts to the bus service improvement plan funding. It is perfectly obvious to me that there is no bottomless pit. Does your department assess what has been lost through those changes in funding? We also understand that your department made it clear that it was not going to fund transport bodies that show insufficient ambition. I am very interested to know what the metric is behind that and whether it is sufficiently clear and robust. I was not sure, and I think colleagues are not sure, how ambition would be quantified in those terms. Finally, as an outcome, do you think that more authorities will follow the Greater Manchester example and adopt franchising in the future, and do you support that?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: You started by mentioning a narrative that seems to have taken hold but which is not the case. We said that the Government would invest £3 billion in buses over the course of this Parliament. That breaks down as: BSIPs—about £1.1 billion; zero-emission buses—£525 million; bus funding in CRSTS for the MCAs—£780 million; and other funding of £196 million, which includes Cornwall Superbus, the rural mobility fund, capability and capacity funding; and Covid emergency and recovery funding of £419 million. That takes us to £3 billion at the moment. Do I think it might end up being slightly more than that? Actually, I do, but we still have a few more years to go in this Parliament.

It is not the case that the £3 billion has somehow disappeared or changed. That is exactly where we have been spending that money. We published the national bus strategy in March 2021—my word, things were different then—and we subsequently went through all sorts of further

restrictions, the Omicron outbreak and so on. We have supported buses over the last two and a half years to the tune of £2 billion. Obviously £419 million of that is in the £3 billion, but £1.6 billion is not. We have ensured that the system has managed to keep the essential workers who we needed travelling.

I feel that we are coming out of the pandemic itself in a relatively good place, but on the ambition that we asked for from local authorities, we were very clear. We set out in guidance in May 2021 exactly what we were looking for in the BSIPs: strategic fit, engagement, interventions, outcomes and deliverability. Obviously there was far more detail than I have been able to highlight. We then prioritised those that scored the best, which was quite an interesting process. I was a bit concerned that we would end up giving it to basically rich places that did well, so I also asked to check against deprivation, car usage, regional spread and urban/rural split to make sure that we were not funding one type of place. I am content that the investment went to lots of different types of places but also to those places that were most ambitious.

There were places that came towards the bottom of the list that I looked into and was saddened by. For whatever reason, there are some places in this country, unfortunately—I will not name them now, but I might one day—that do not particularly like buses and do not invest in them. We give them money to invest in their buses and they literally do not use it. That is a local decision and I cannot change it, but that is a very small minority. A lot of places submitted very good bids.

Another thing about BSIPs is that it not just about a reliance on funding. This is not a one-off bid for funding. It is all about a long-term plan for buses, and there are lots of things that you can do in your BSIP that do not require funding, such as a passenger charter, maintaining your existing bus priority, delivering all sorts of elements of ticketing that do not need funding, and building operator relationships, which, as I said, did not really exist before and have improved. That is how we established who was going to get funding and our general guidance on BSIPs, and we will expect them to be updated every year.

You also asked about franchising. At the moment, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are looking at franchising. Greater Manchester is the furthest down the track on that, and we have seen this taking quite some time. From a departmental perspective, our view is that enhanced partnerships can achieve very similar outcomes much more quickly and much more cheaply. We encourage places to look at an enhanced partnership first. If they have done that and they want to do franchising, we have absolutely no objection to that. Obviously, metropolitan combined authorities can do franchising already; they do not need to ask the Secretary of State. If you are a non-MCA area, you do have to ask the Secretary of State. My view is that if we got an application that said, "This is why an enhanced partnership would not work. We're going to use franchising", there is no

reason why we would not say, "Crack on". It just takes a lot longer to get results, which is my concern.

The Earl of Lytton: Going back to the question of bidding for funding, you said that you stood back and looked to make sure that the thing looked fair in evidence and you were not just favouring the better, wealthier and more geared-up and gung-ho people, but there might be situations where you felt that a bid was not particularly good but an area needed that sort of help. Do you try to say, "Surely you could do this?", or is it just the bid that comes in and it is like any sort of prizewinning submission—they either make or they do not?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It is a slightly different world nowadays than when I first got to the Department for Transport three years ago. We have a lot more interaction during bidding processes and afterwards in offering support and feedback. I looked at some of the places on the list that I was not going to give funding for and it breaks my heart, but the point is that I then have to think, "What am I doing here? I am giving away taxpayers' money. If they're not going to make a good go of it, that's the wrong choice".

We are investing £15 million in this current financial year for areas that did not get any funding from BSIPs. This funding should be sufficient for them to employ one person or to split it over a number of people with proper bus expertise in order to encourage them to use the bus centre of excellence to get best-practice learning, not only from the bus centre of excellence in different local authorities but from sub-national transport bodies that are also very involved in this space. We have a much more supportive relationship with local authorities that are not doing so well. That is a wider picture that goes beyond buses into local transport plans, and over the course of this Parliament we will see local transport plans coming to the fore. That will be the next way to ensure cross-modal, integrated transport solutions and good, clear thinking from local authorities.

Lord Moylan: My ears pricked up, Minister, when you said that you had added car usage to your criteria for funding BSIPs. Can you tell me what that meant?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Sorry, I meant car ownership, not car usage. I wanted to check that we were funding areas with high and low car ownership. If we are trying to see the impact of well thought through solutions, ensuring that we have covered both areas is beneficial.

The Chair: We will move on to light rail and trams, but we might want to come back to you on the £3 billion figure. Thank you for the breakdown, because there have been concerns that DfT has cut the amount available to buses. I think we need to get to the bottom of that for our report, but thank you very much indeed. We also had a witness who did not seem to understand the criteria for the bus funding and why he had been turned down, so I was glad to hear that you have this pot of money to try to help people to up their expertise on bidding, which I think is what you

were saying. That is very helpful, thank you.

Q159 Lord Haselhurst: Thank you, Minister, for being with us this morning. We have noted in our studies and our visits the extent of the return of the tram, and there is also evidence, scarce at this time, to suggest that people will more readily use a tram than their car as opposed to a bus than their car. It is early days yet, but there are some suggestions that particularly those with tram networks are making that point. I think it is fair to say that we were very impressed by what we learned in Coventry about its very light tramway. It seemed exciting, not because of what it did but because it is using technology that puts this country ahead of the game, which is not always the case. We find ourselves having ideas, but then they are exploited and copied by others. Do you feel that this needs very careful examination to see what more can be done and that this would be a great enhancement in our city centres?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Yes. I love a tram and light rail. It is a very good alternative to heavy rail. However, it depends on population density. Your value for money probably does not work unless you get between 2,500 and 3,000 people per hour in each direction, but that does not mean that the Government do not support it. For example, some of the CRSTS funding is going towards improvements to tram in Manchester on Metrolink and in West of England on whatever theirs is called—I cannot remember.

We very much think that trams and light rail are a good option, but it is interesting that you said that you might have evidence that people would be more likely to use trams than BRT. We feel that bus rapid transit works incredibly well. We had quite a few proposals for bus rapid transit in our bus service improvement plans; 22 local authorities wanted to take a bus rapid transit forward. I think they are better for areas with a slightly lower population density. I think that six or seven of the areas that suggested that they wanted to look at it received significant funding and so should be able to take them forward.

The bus rapid transit that I have been on or am aware of—I have been on the one in Portsmouth, and there is the Glider in Belfast—function very well, so I would be very keen to see any evidence on the tram versus BRT, but I also think that they have slightly different roles and that it would depend on the local area. I think the one in Portsmouth is on an old railway track that was never going to be reopened. If you have that there, stick some concrete down and put some buses on it and you have a very efficient, cheap and quick service. I keep trying to visit the Coventry Very Light Rail or speak at their conferences, but I have not made it yet because things happen, which is very disappointing because I am very keen to see it. I have heard wonderful things about it. Again, this is where the devolution piece comes in. Who is supporting the very light rail in Coventry? It is the West Midlands Combined Authority, and the funding is coming from there and from other local funding sources.

The next step for very light rail interventions would depend on business cases being developed. Before the Government could invest in them, we

would need to see a business case. I am not aware that we have had a strategic outline business case as yet, but we would certainly be open to receiving one.

Lord Haselhurst: Are the Government continuing to look very carefully at this to see whether they can do anything to push this project over the line? It has not yet been established beyond all doubt that it will work within the parameters laid down by those who have invented it. It is so much cheaper to install than traditional tramways. I hope that you are keeping a sympathetic eye on it.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I am keeping an open mind. With all these things one does not want to be the heavy-handed Government coming in and throwing lots of taxpayers' money at something when the people who are closer on the ground to the invention and possible rollout of this thing are much better placed to fund it. But I am certainly not closing my mind to it at all, and I think that the next stage is to establish where it could be used and how much it would cost—what does the business case look like for it now? I agree with you that it could be cheaper. It does not have the same throughput as other interventions, but it depends on population density, so it may well work because it is much cheaper.

The Chair: Minister, you have talked about the different roles of the tram and the BRT. Could you expand on that?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It goes back to the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all transport policy that works in every urban centre. It depends on how things have developed over a particular time. Leeds, for example, does not have a mass transit system. It is the biggest city in Europe that does not have one. Part of the £100 million that the Government are investing in the route to Leeds involves starting to work with Leeds on what their mass transit solution might look like. There are many different ways of looking at it. BRT works very well because it can be established much more quickly, but again it will depend on what existing infrastructure is already in place and how it would link into heavy rail, for example. If you were suddenly to do an underground network or a tram system like the one Manchester has, that is a much bigger undertaking, and it can be far more expensive and take much longer. Just look at what happened to trams in Edinburgh.

It is a decision for the local area. What do you want to achieve in what timeframe and with how much money, and who are you transporting? How many people are on these particular travel corridors? Those things always come into consideration. That is why looking at all the different options is important, and that always happens as part of the business case. From my perspective, I do not have any particular leaning to light rail or BRT. It just depends on what the local area thinks is best.

Q160 **Lord Grocott:** Thanks for that. There is a lot of information there, but I am still puzzled, as I have been when listening to a lot of our witnesses so far on our visits. I know that your answer will in part be that a lot of this is devolved and you are bound to get different answers in different

areas, but it is striking that where I live in the Midlands, for example, you have Birmingham and Nottingham within easy reach with tram systems, and Coventry thinking about a super-light system. On the other hand, you have Derby, Leicester and Stoke without. I do not know much about the systems across various countries in Europe, but trams into major urban areas seem to be far more common there than here, although whether they are or not is beside the point.

Can we get some overview of this from the Department for Transport? I know you will say that it is devolved, but if your department cannot give us some sort of assessment as to why they operate in some areas and not in others, why they get funded in some areas and not in others, and does not have a strategic view as to their overall benefits, I do not know who will do this. In particular, I did not quite catch the exact figures you gave on population density as a determining factor. What are the metrics that would determine, in your or the department's judgment, whether it would be sensible for a place like Derby, Stoke or Leicester to apply and establish a tram system? If it is population density, what are the figures, and if there are other factors, what are they?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: There are literally thousands of them. There are two elements here. You can ask me and I can try to write something for you, but the Government will literally not take a national, "Right, we shall have trams there, there and there". It is not what we do. If Leicester wants a tram, or any mass transit system, it is very welcome to develop one according to the business case model set out by the Treasury. Within that, you have value for money. How do you do your BCR and your value for money? That is where a large number of interventions come in in all the different categories, whether it is travel time saving, air quality, noise, carbon—all the things that go into your BCR calculation—which are then overlaid by the qualitative elements that give you your VFM.

Lord Grocott: Sorry to interrupt, but is this kind of evaluation that you are talking about, with all the various metrics, available?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Department for Transport appraisal guidance is published, of course. It sets out how you appraise a project, and if any place wanted light rail and could see a funding stream for it, it would need to do that process of checking that the project is the best available option for that area. There will not be, "Above X population density it works. Below that it does not", because it might have different impacts on carbon, which also would change the balance. Having devolved much more spending—the transforming cities fund was £2.45 billion, and the next round, or the equivalent, which is the CRSTS, is now £5.7 billion—you can see what is happening to the money. There is much more devolution of funding, and greater sums of money, so that people can have the five-year visibility and certainty about what they have in their war chest to fund. If they want to put that into light rail, they are absolutely able to do so.

Lord Grocott: This may be more of an observation than a specific

question. Is not the dilemma always there? It is nothing new to the current Department for Transport. You talk about decisions being devolved, and I think there is a general feeling that that is a good idea, but it has always been devolved, with a kind and very careful eye kept by central government, the body doing the devolving: "We've given you this money, but we're going to keep checking whether you're spending it wisely or not".

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Of course we will.

Lord Grocott: You are, but I would have thought that the sanction in a properly devolved system is the electorate in the area to which it has been devolved. If it is wasting money and making a mess of local transport, it will presumably pay for it at the polls; otherwise, it is not really devolution, is it? It is just shifting responsibility, but grabbing it back whenever you think it is necessary.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: No, it is both. You have to ensure deliverability for the taxpayer. It is most important. It is one of the roles of government to make sure that we are getting proper value for money if people say they are going to deliver something. The local electorate will not have the same amount of insight as the Government and does not have the same ability to challenge local areas to say, "We've given you taxpayers' money amounting to"—say, in Manchester—"£1 billion. Have you delivered on what you promised?" We can publish what was promised and what has been delivered, and then local electorates can of course take a view as to whether they think it was reasonable because of X, Y, Z or priorities changed, or whatever. We have to have clarity as well. I do not think that devolve and forget is the right way forward.

Lord Grocott: But it is pretty complicated, isn't it? I do not want to get into this, but there is such a dog's breakfast of different structures in local government, different funding mechanisms and different methods of securing the funds. We have received many criticisms in evidence about how funding decisions are made. It takes a doctorate in whatever to master the system. Surely there is a case for a rather more simplified system of funding.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I do not have a doctorate and I understand it.

Lord Grocott: I am glad you understand it. I would be worried if you did not.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It is my job to understand it, but it is also the job of people in local government. My concern has been the hollowing out of dedicated transport resources in local authorities, and it is what we have been putting funding back into. I am trying to do the maths in my head. Last year, something like £62.47 million went back into capability and capacity funding, and that does not include the MCAs. I agree with you that we need to have greater expertise in local authorities, but one of the things that I think will help to fix this and to focus the minds of local

elected members and senior officials in local authorities is local transport plans. Everyone knows that it is a statutory requirement to have a local transport plan. However, it does not say when the plan must be updated, and 61% of local authorities have not updated their local transport plans since 2011. That is appalling.

BSIPs are just one element. We have to stop being so single-modal in our thinking and get the local authorities to develop cross-modal integrated local transport plans, which will help with the bidding elements and clarity about the funding they may get from other sources, whether that is highways maintenance or integrated transport block funding. That is the next step: making sure that local authorities deliver local transport plans. We will be considering levers to encourage them to do so and publishing guidance. There will be a consultation on the guidance later this year.

This is important. It is not just about the provision of transport. It is also about the provision of transport in a decarbonised and sustainable way. Everything has to be linked. They have to think about EV charging, air quality and so on, and many of them have not done so in 11 years. That is terrible.

Q161 Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: Something that has been absolutely uniform in this inquiry no matter what size of authority we are talking to, including the very big ones, is a complaint about the horrors of the bidding process, how much time it takes and how much time is wasted. These are big authorities with proper audit processes. They could be trusted to do a bit more in bidding and with a bit less control from the centre. Does the centre, as represented by you, Minister, have any plans to change the process of allocating funding?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It depends on which type of funding we are talking about. If all bids were universally fabulous, there would absolutely be a case for reducing the bids. They are not. I have mentioned BSIPs. I could mention ZEBRA—zero-emission bus regional areas. Some of the bids were not good enough. Even I could see that they were not good enough, and I have no formal training in analysis of the transport sector.

There is a balance. I would ideally like to get to a stage where we end up with better local transport plans, which we will if the local authority has taken the time to identify the sorts of things they would want to invest in. First, it will be easier to bid and, secondly, it will be easier for government to give them possibly slightly more money such that we can reassure ourselves that we are getting value for money for the taxpayer.

However, for the big amounts where we still need to maintain an element of check-in and sign-off, whether that be for road enhancements, zero-emission buses or the levelling-up fund, bidding will continue, because we are looking for the best projects. It is a cost of doing business for local authorities. The better local authorities do better bids and win more often.

What worries me is the places that do not win, but some local authorities do not bother to bid at all. Those are the really worrying ones. My job now is to focus on areas that have not done so well and to give them all the support we can, and possibly link them up with a mentor local authority in their region, but not so close that they are competitors, to help them lift their game. I am not saying that bidding will disappear; I do not think it should disappear. But I do think that we need to consider the balance between how much is straight shipped out the door with very little accountability to central government and how much has to go through a formal bidding process such that we achieve the best outcomes for the taxpayer.

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: One of the things that seems to me to be missing in the process, and which might be useful—although not in my local authority, Cambridge, thank you; we are pushing hard on this—is post-project evaluation. I have not heard a word about post-project evaluation: "You got the money. What did you do with it? Did it work?" It is very difficult to force a local authority into doing that evaluation. They just want to go on and do the next thing, whatever the next thing may be. This is one of the few areas in which I suggest that more centralisation, insisting on post-project evaluation, could be useful.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We already insist on it, and it already happens.

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: In every case?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I cannot say in every case, but it is something that we do. I can write with further details. Let us look at BSIPs. Two types of evaluation will go on. The first is from the Government, which will be monitoring and evaluating the programme as a whole as it rolls out and monitoring and evaluating the impacts. Secondly, we require all local authorities to publish certain data, as we set out in the national bus strategy, about how their interventions have worked locally. There will be monitoring and evaluation locally, published for local electorates to see, and from a national government perspective we will be looking from the taxpayers' perspective at whether it is working. We monitor and evaluate all the time.

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: You also force local authorities to do the same?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: For which sorts of projects? I am not sure what is missing?

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: I chair the residents' committee of the longest access road from the east into Cambridge and the road north. They are disasters in both cases.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Disasters in what way?

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: We have the exactly the same people—the same consultants, the same team—on the next road, and post-project

evaluation would have caught that. I find myself wondering why we cannot force the local authority to do it and whether the centre could not adopt that as a general principle for all local authorities. These are big projects, £1 million and some.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government would have invested in this project?

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: Yes, they would. My hesitation is only that it was under the original city deal, but that is government money.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It is difficult to talk about particular projects or whether or not that scheme was a disaster.

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: Government money was there.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: And it was a disaster? Why?

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: It went very slowly and it did not happen. It was scheduled to take a year and it took two and half years.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Sometimes these things happen, but okay, yes, at that point—

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: It is exactly the same people doing the next road.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Okay, and at that point I would turn round and say that that sounds to me like a local accountability issue.

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: Indeed. From the ground I sit on, it is difficult to force it.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: That is local accountability.

Q162 **Lord Haselhurst:** Thank you. There is evidence that the mayor-led authorities, to coin a phrase, are getting on with the job, in sharp contrast with what may be happening in other parts of the country where various bodies overlap and they cannot agree what priorities they should have because the sub-regional groups in the region will stick very hard to their particular concerns. Does it concern the Government that when one talks of levelling up one has to try to level up in some of the areas that have not gone down the Government's chosen path of combining and having an elected mayor?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Yes indeed, but of course the Government did say in their levelling-up White Paper that we would offer greater devolution to areas that wanted it, and I probably have a couple of devolution deals on my desk at the moment that are very welcome. However, a bit of this comes back to Lord Grocott's point that local government is messy. There are, however, many levels—parish, district, county, unitary, and MCAs. We have a very complicated system of local government. We have to trust, and we do trust, the local electorates to hold places to account. I have said previously that I know who I need to

help and I am very keen to be able to get out there. DfT officials all over the country cover different areas and are there to provide interaction between the local authorities, but where there are disagreements on the ground about which project should be prioritised, it is not for Westminster to come in and tell them. I am not going to do that.

The Chair: Perhaps I could try the question from a different angle. I am keen to help authorities that are not necessarily the big ones, because there are consumers, users, of buses in these non-mayoral areas. Do you feel that they now have a lack of resources? Are you giving them enough feedback and help on successful and unsuccessful bids? Are you requiring too much? Should you be giving them more money without strings in these areas, given the difficulties they have?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I disagree with this “mayoral good/everyone else bad” type of differentiation. Some of the local transport authorities that I have a lot to do with are very good and very innovative. I could name them, but I probably should not because I might forget some and get into trouble. Many places have got it; they are with the programme and they are successful. Look at the BSIP list. Lots of places—you get my drift—tend to be pretty good in lots of different areas.

Have we been doing enough to support the places that have been unsuccessful? We have been doing a lot more than we used to, which I think is positive. Take the levelling-up fund. DLUHC took the lead in that and gave feedback to all the areas that were unsuccessful. We did the same thing on BSIPs, and officials remain open to discussing things going forward.

Do I think there is more to be done? Always. There will always be more to do, because it is a very complicated thing and unfortunately some local authorities go in the wrong direction. They used to be good and then they became not so good, often because of a change of control following a local election.

It is a complicated picture. We want everybody to reach a very high standard. I do think that the local transport plans will at least allow us to see the level of ambition, which I think at the moment is sometimes a bit opaque, and that will help national government and local electorates to see the areas that are not trying hard enough.

The Chair: Thank you for that. I hope you will look at South Yorkshire, which gave evidence that they had not had adequate feedback. We are concerned about waste on bidding, as I am sure you are. You want the bids to be effective and not to have a succession of rejected bids, because taxpayers’ resources are going into just that.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I agree, but remember that the BSIP is for life, not just for Christmas. That was never going to be nugatory spend, because the BSIP is an important forward-looking document.

Q163 **Lord Best:** My question is about the links between public transport and

development, particularly the building of new homes and the fact that the housebuilders build large estates that build in from day one what Lord Moylan in an earlier question called car dependency. Government will allocate £4 billion to try to ensure some links of this kind, but how much of that funding is to do with public transport and opening up infrastructure possibilities that will lead to more development, and how much is for public transport?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: It is slightly like asking “How long is a piece of string?”, because it depends on which projects come forward. I agree with you that when we plan developments, we must make sure we have access to multimodal transport interventions and sometimes we do not. One thing I have learned about housing is that one size does not fit all. For example, it will depend on what the project is, where it is, who the sponsor is and what the local planning authority has decided. At the top end, I will sometimes put in a new motorway junction—not very often, but if one is really needed, I will put in a new motorway junction, paid for by the developer because if it was not for the housing, I would not be putting it in and so it needs to be paid for by the developer. I am always open to doing that, subject to the safety case and all the other business cases that we need to think about. One of the things that I think is missing, however, and that I hope we will be able to resolve, is the interrelationship between a local authority’s spatial plan and its transport plan, which because, as I have mentioned, it is so out of date, is basically useless.

Lord Best: So is the local plan.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Yes, so is the local plan, so it is time for the two to be beefed up, modernised and joined up so that you can figure out what a local area is going to do. Obviously, much of this falls within DLUHC and, forgive me, I am not an expert in housing, but I get approaches from people all the time about developments asking if I can help to support them by doing X, Y or Z. I am always open to that, but my job is to get people around and not necessarily to build a road so that a developer can make even more money out of their housing. So there has to be a fair contribution from a developer.

Lord Best: But you are not sure, it is not predetermined, how much of that special cash to unlock sites would be for public transport.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I do not think it should be predetermined. Somewhere in my briefing, I have a number of about £730 million. I have not set it because I do not think that I should. If it ended up that you needed three-quarters of that money because transport was the defining thing, you would use it. Things tend to come in on a case-by-case basis, depending on the development. Sometimes you can use HIF money. I think we are using HIF money for DLR trains. So there are different interventions for different amounts of money.

Lord Best: Flexibility.

Q164 Lord Berkeley: I want to talk about cycling, walking and road space and things like that. I was surprised that I could see no reference to cycling in your written evidence, and walking does not appear until paragraph 95. I hope that does not reflect the Government's policy. You did mention both in earlier evidence—your report on cycling and walking, *Gear Change*, which was welcome—but I do hope that there is a bit of joined-up thinking going on here. One issue that you did not mention, I think in response to Lord Moylan's question on road space, was the question of safety. That is equally important for pedestrians and cyclists and it needs space.

Alongside that, you mentioned road space for deliveries. Can you tell us a bit more about that, because it is clearly important? It needs to be zero carbon in future, but deliveries are vitally important and how they are done will affect road space. Among all this of course you have the interchanges and the centres for changing between buses and trains and trams and walking and cycling, which all need to have the best quality of life.

My last question: when you give money to local authorities, as you did at the beginning of Covid for the excellent cycling improvements, what are you doing if the local authority, like Kensington, puts in a cycling route and then decides to take it away so there is more space to park the Mercedes? Do you take the money back? This is all part of enforcement and I wish you well.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I apologise for cycling and walking not being top of mind here. Maybe it was because we were answering the questions a bit too narrowly.

Anyway, cycling and walking are key parts of the Government's strategy. As I said earlier, I think in response to Lord Moylan, we want 50% of journeys within urban centres to be cycling, walking or public transport and that is very important. We have a total fund of £2 billion to commit to cycling and walking and of course we have established Active Travel England and updated the guidance LTN 1/20 about what a safe cycle lane looks like, because there are too many lines on the road and not enough "wands", I think they are called. We are very keen to work with local authorities. This is one area where there has had to be a quite steep learning curve because some local authorities have not focused on cycling and walking in the past. It has just been something that people do rather than something you properly have to think about—but if they are going to think about it properly, they will have to make proper plans, which is why we allocated £30 million to local authorities to do that.

So Active Travel England is up and running. Chris Boardman is on board, we have a good chief executive as well and they will be supporting local authorities as they develop their plans. They will be a very useful hand-holder. The MCAs will probably not need it so much because many of them, Manchester for example, already have good cycling and walking plans because Chris Boardman came from Manchester before he went to Active Travel England. Some places will need a lot of hand-holding,

particularly around ensuring that they put cycle routes in the right places so that people do use them rather than choosing a different route because it is shorter.

I will not comment on Kensington because of course that is in London and therefore that is a whole different kettle of poisson, which we will not go into right now. However, if another area either prematurely took out a cycle lane or tried to put one in that was not compliant with LTN 1/20, we would claw back the funding. It is as simple as that and we have provisions to do that.

Lord Berkeley: Very quickly, there is safety.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Yes.

Lord Berkeley: I hope that goes along with the new pollution from rubber tyres and the other criteria you mentioned at the beginning. Safety for pedestrians and cyclists must be number one.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Absolutely. All of that is taken into account in the new LTN 1/20.

The Chair: Does that include pavement safety? I ask as someone who tries to walk when I am in London back and forth to the House. I constantly find cyclists and scooter riders whizzing past me, which obviously encourages me to use public transport

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: That is dreadful. We have to crack down on those cyclists and those e-scooters on the pavement. They should not be there.

The Chair: But that is London, you are saying, I think.

Baroness Cohen of Pimlico: They are short of legislation in that area. That is the problem.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: We are not short of legislation. It is illegal to cycle or e-scoot on the pavement, full stop. We just need police officers to enforce it.

The Chair: That is a good, clear statement. Thank you. I will call the police next time I am under threat. That brings us to legislation.

Q165 **Lord Carrington of Fulham:** I gather that a transport Bill is coming forward at some point. The question, I think, is what this Bill will cover. I want to look at some of the challenges facing us in terms of transport, not so much the challenges in terms of rail and so on but possibly harking back to Lord Berkeley's question about bicycles, deliveries, buses and all the other competing users of the road space.

We have taken evidence from some bus companies, who perfectly reasonably said that they have had bus lanes put in, the bus lanes have then been constricted to put in bicycle lanes and their bus service has degenerated to a point where it is difficult for them to meet the targets

set for the buses—and they claim that the cycle lanes are used spasmodically, probably at commuting times, but more likely when the sun shines and not when the rain pours. This is a serious problem, creating dedicated parts of the road space for modes of transport that are aspirational in terms of Chris Boardman's statistics rather than reflecting the reality of usage.

How do you balance in legislation these very competing demands and indeed competing lobby groups to achieve maximum use of road space?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: There are two buckets here. There is the new legislation question and the second thing is the application of existing legislation. In terms of road space allocation, I do not feel that I particularly need any new legislation. Digitisation improvement of traffic regulation orders would be a bonus and that might be coming down the track, but that is very much taking the existing scheme and making it digital and quick, which would be great.

I accept that within any particular area, choices have to be made about how you allocate your road space and it does go back to Lord Berkeley's point about freight and deliveries. I go back to local accountability and local choices. We set the guidance. We will be updating the likes of the *Manual for Streets*. We have updated the road space allocation guidance. We can set out from the centre the things that need to be considered. We cannot define how every high street will be configured. If you are an operator, you have quite a lot of leverage. You go back to local authorities. If they are going to get their enhancement plans agreed by the operator with proper metrics in there that show improvement, they will have to work with them and would therefore be able to re-look at their road space allocation.

We have done some things that I think will help buses and the flow of all vehicles, including cars, in congested areas, and that is by commencing Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act, which will allow local authorities to enforce things like stopping in hatched junctions and driving in bus lanes and so on.

It is a balance. I do not need any new legislation at the moment that I can think of other than things such as the TROs being updated but the new legislation that we will be having, and I will leave rail to one side because it is very complicated and boring, will have other elements which we are calling broadly future of transport type stuff. There I am sure that Lady Neville-Rolfe will be pleased to hear that we hope to have some stuff on e-scooters. I will look forward to debating that in the Chamber with her.

There will also be some other quite interesting things, which I hope the noble Lords will join in on; self-driving vehicles will really stretch our little grey cells. Various things will be coming in, but I cannot say more because it has not been introduced yet.

Q166 **Lord Carrington of Fulham:** Self-driving vehicles: that will be interesting, particularly in urban areas because they too will need

dedicated lanes, the way they work at the moment. They may not work that way in future but the technology is certainly not there yet to be able to cope with them mixing with other sorts of transport. To work now, they still have to interlink with each other and with vehicles that have similar types of transponders on them to enable them to interact.

Coming back to your answer on road usage, I understand that you would like that all to be in the hands of local authorities but that, could I suggest, is slightly an over-simplification. My policies are all about London. I do not know anywhere else outside London so you must excuse me but I am assuming that what happened in London has happened in places such as Birmingham and Manchester as well. Let me give you two examples. You mentioned Kensington and Chelsea and cycle lanes. The problem in London, and it is the same with other places where the local authorities have boundaries between each other, is that one local authority may decide it wants a cycle lane and another one may decide it does not. You then end up with a considerable problem because the reason that one does not want to have cycle lanes may be because it wants buses and the other one does not want buses, it wants cycles, so you end up with a conflict and the only way of resolving that is through you.

The other example I will give you is of the junction between the exit in Hyde Park's carriageway and Lancaster Gate where an extremely expensive scheme was put in to narrow the road down to give priority to cycles, which now causes massive traffic jams in all directions for buses and for vehicles coming across the north-south route across the park and nobody takes responsibility for sorting out the traffic jams. They say, "This is just wonderful because it is good for cycles" and I can tell you, because I know it quite well, that remarkably few bicycles use it, for whatever reason.

The only way of cutting these Gordian knots is through the Department for Transport, I would suggest, because local authorities seem, or are, incapable because they cannot agree with each other but equally seem unwilling to tackle these problems. Of course the electorate has a role but the electorate does not vote on cycle lanes and bus lanes; they vote on all sorts of other things, mostly to do with national issues even in local elections.

Lord Moylan: That is before you get me going on the South Carriage Drive and what has happened to that as a result of the Park Lane bicycle route.

Lord Berkeley: Before the Minister replies, may I also say that I use that area quite frequently on a bike? There are lots of bikes and it is extremely safe, and that is the key. I congratulate the Minister on doing it.

Lord Carrington of Fulham: But Lord Berkeley, you do not take a bus and the buses take for ever to get down Lancaster Gate.

Lord Berkeley: That may be.

Lord Carrington of Fulham: Buses are more important than bicycles.

The Chair: I do not know if the Minister has anything to say on this Gordian knot but then I am going to bring in Lord Grocott.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I definitely have something to say on this. I do not have the power. I literally do not have the power to fix that and I do not want it.

Lord Carrington of Fulham: But you have the Bill.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: No, I do not want that power. That is TfL's problem.

But now I will say something about the new legislation because you did make a very important point. For example, going back to Kensington and Chelsea and the local highways authorities and so on, in London there is the red route network as you know and the Mayor of London has responsibility for those routes. They do not have that in Manchester and the other MCAs but I am going to give them that. So we will have key route networks that will mean that in those really busy travel corridors, we do not end up with that situation—there was one MCA that did have a problem—so they will be able to plan their key bus, freight and whatever routes in a key route network. That is hopefully coming in the Bill.

As is—one more thing, because we did mention it—self-driving vehicles. We want to talk more about this, but one of the other things that will probably be in the Bill is a type-approval process for cars. That is how you type-approve a vehicle to go on the roads. They will probably not need transponders. But that is the process it will go through.

Q167 **Lord Grocott:** This is off the back of Lord Carrington's question. We have heard a bit about metrics in relation to trams and population and so on. What about the metrics that go into determining whether a cycle lane should be introduced or not? They can be very expensive to introduce, I am sure, with traffic lights and everything else as well as the lanes themselves and the fact that they reduce the speed of buses and all those kinds of problems. In providing funding or encouraging local authorities to build cycle lanes, what are the bases on which the Department for Transport would assess that? More importantly—and I do agree this is observational—but frequently these cycle lanes have virtually no one them, although I am sorry about my good friend Lord Berkeley here. What assessment is made, and when, as to whether putting a cycle lane in has been a big mistake? That is the question.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Cycle lanes like all transport projects are assessed on a business case so assessments will be made about use, modal shift, health benefits—all those things will go into it—plus of course they have to be compliant with LTN 1/20 guidance. That is how the system works but they will have even more government oversight because of Active Travel England, which will approve or not a cycle lane before it is given any funding.

Lord Grocott: But if the experience after, say, five years is that it is very little used and is causing congestion, does it then get shut down?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: Obviously it will be evaluated and a decision will be taken, probably by the local authority.

The Chair: If you have any examples of assessments that have been done—I know cycle lanes have been around for at least five years—it would be good if your department could share them.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I will see what I can find out; happily.

The Chair: That would help. We have two final questions.

Q168 **Lord Moylan:** This is slightly more a reflective comment than a question. I can fashion it into a question.

I did spend a long time going back over the last 20 years thinking hard about and looking at the question of the allocation of road space. The first thing to say is that it is what I would call a Soviet-type approach based on a top-down allocation of resources—scarce resources. We all agree that road space is a scarce resource, especially in urban areas so how it is used, the approach traditionally has been a top-down allocation with this part for cycles, this part for buses, this part for pedestrians—we call it the pavement—and so on and so forth.

There are two problems with that. The first is that it is inefficient. It does mean that some of those facilities are simply not used a large amount of the time when they could be used by other modes. Secondly, it tends to be driven by whoever has the loudest voice. Lord Berkeley, who is one of the most persuasive advocates I know, and the London Cycling Campaign behind him, for example, have very loud and persuasive voices and they tend to get their way whereas pedestrians and sometimes others—disabled people for example—have to fight and they may have loud voices too, and so on. Allocation tends to be driven by that. Yet there is plenty of evidence from the early part of this century from places such as the Netherlands, that a different approach, which says if you allow the different modes to share space—in an urban area; I am not talking about motorways—without allocation of space, they tend to move much more slowly and look out for other people rather than constantly looking at the lights that are directing them to go this way and that. I do not know if you have ever had a chance to revisit shared-space principles during your time responsible for roads to see if there is something there that could help solve this Gordian knot.

You will say, and quite rightly, that the final decisions are made by local authorities. I understand that. But the *Manual for Streets* used to be very good on shared space and you do have tools that can direct and shape the way local authorities, highways authorities, think about these issues. Is that something that you would be interested in exploring?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I think the reality is that in many areas you have both. This is quite a philosophical discussion that we probably should not go into right now but it is the case that you have many types

of roads that do different things. You have the big transport corridors where segregation is absolutely essential because you do not want everything travelling at the speed of the slowest vehicle or passenger even if it is a car. I would rather my buses were full because they were whizzing past cars because it is a more efficient way of getting people from A to B. But of course we also know that there are lots of places where shared space has been tried, to greater or lesser degrees of contentment from local residents, and it is of course something that the Government are supportive of. It is for local authorities to decide. If they want to make a particular area a shared space area, they can do that—and they do and sometimes it causes a great amount of trouble.

Q169 Baroness Thornhill: I hope to end on something hopeful and positive, Minister. I wholeheartedly agree with what you said about one of the big barriers being the local planning authorities' plans and the local transport plans not being co-ordinated, collaborative and so on, and demonstrably where authorities have worked together has been where the greatest successes have been.

I would argue that the system of producing these plans, the process, encourages silo working. In effect, a local authority's plan is a housing delivery plan, how to meet government targets, and they are not actively encouraged even at a district level to talk to the authorities around them about a bigger strategic transport plan. As you rightly said, whatever percentage it was you said, they have not dusted them down since 2011. I also know that PAS, the Planning Advisory Service, has commissioned some work that has proved what you in a sense have said and I am agreeing with you.

So how in government do we get planning to work with transport to get that better co-ordination? Then you would not have Lord Carrington's arguments because local bodies would be working together and would agree that that was the thing they had to go forward with.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: The Government are very focused on this. We will need to see what comes forward in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill, which will be sponsored by DLUHC. There will be some planning reforms in that. I think it is very much beholden on us—and, again, we do this much more than we used to—to have much closer collaboration between DfT and DLUHC in terms of greater visibility about what is coming down the track. In some circumstances, transport takes a long time to put in so the more that we can see visibility around regional and, at the next level down, housing forecasts and so on, the more it will help us in planning our business cases and making sure that the right transport projects are funded.

The Chair: Minister, one final point of clarification before I thank you. You talked about franchising and enhanced partnerships. It was not clear whether you supported the move to franchising for example by Manchester or whether you were saying you did not support franchising.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I am mostly agnostic. If it is the right thing for the right area, it may well work in Manchester. It is turning out to be

quite expensive and taking quite a long time. In our view, most areas could achieve the same thing more quickly and more cheaply by doing the enhanced partnership route, but of course you have a lot more powers if you do franchising. So it depends on your relationship with your local operators. If you have a good relationship with your local operators, an enhanced partnership is absolutely fine. If that is not working out quite so well, you might want to do franchising. I do not have a particularly firm view on one or the other.

The Chair: That is a very helpful clarification. Thank you so much. It just remains for me to thank you for a very lively session.