**BRA Bulletin 4.12.18**

**AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT**

(This letter is also sent as a WORD attachment for those who prefer to create a hard copy)

**Dear Member**

**Introduction:** Almost exactly a year ago, residents were invited to comment on a Joint Spatial Plan (JSP), which covered the West of England (North Somerset, Bath and NE Somerset, Bristol City and S. Gloucester). This proposed that 700 houses be built at Grove Farm to the west of Backwell. Comments from the public were “extremely critical of the proposed development location”, as formally noted by North Somerset Council (NSC). Despite this, the JSP has continued its steady forward progress, as has NSC in producing its Local Plan (LP) “Issues and Options”. **Much time and effort have been spent refining an unpopular concept. No one seems to be acting on the strength of local feeling.**

In our bulletin of 22.11.18, we suggested that members might like to comment on the LP “Issues and Options” by the deadline of Dec 10th. **However, if members only have the energy for one comment at this seasonal time, a comment on the JSP by 7th Jan 2019 is the more important. The JSP runs to 2036, and will have a huge impact on our village, with a 40% growth in households and environmental damage. This is our one last opportunity to comment before the formal hearing next May.**

**Early Responses to the JSP:** The comments made a year ago showed unhappiness that, given such a wide region to choose where to develop, the JSP should site 700 houses in good agricultural land, in an attractive area which would be severely harmed by the new infrastructure needed to cope with the new houses. There are many more suitable sites, including The Vale, near the new South Bristol link road.

**Latest from the JSP:** There are now 10 pieces of detailed evidence that have been produced, to support the JSP. These can be seen on the JSP website on:

[**https://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/consult.ti/JSPAdditionalEvidence/consultationHome**](https://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/consult.ti/JSPAdditionalEvidence/consultationHome)

There are hundreds of pages, and cover topics including transport, sustainability, employment and habitat.

The JSP Main Publication Document was produced in Nov 2017, has 49 pages which can be viewed on:

[**http://www.backwellresidents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/SD1A-The-Publication-Plan-November-2017.pdf**](http://www.backwellresidents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/SD1A-The-Publication-Plan-November-2017.pdf)

**Our Technical Response:** BRA is represented on the Backwell Parish Council Working Party (as is Backwell Resistance (BR)), which has employed a planning expert and to which BRA is making financial contributions. It is essential that we make the appropriate response at the technical level, and we feel we are being well advised. **However, as well as this response it is important that as many residents as possible comment from their own perspective.**

We have concentrated on the transport section: WED 008 - Emerging Findings Transport Report (Nov 2018) which can be viewed on:

 [**https://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/gf2.ti/-/978402/43116357.1/PDF/-/WED\_008\_Emerging\_Findings\_Transport\_Report\_Nov\_2018.pdf**](https://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/gf2.ti/-/978402/43116357.1/PDF/-/WED_008_Emerging_Findings_Transport_Report_Nov_2018.pdf)

For those short of time we recommend looking at pages 18 to 25 of this section.

\* The JSP has identified Backwell as suitable to take a strategic housing development of **700 houses, called a “village extension”.** Its location, with **minimal nearby employment land**, and extensive infrastructure requirements does not meet any target of sustainability. **There are other areas within North Somerset which are much more appropriate.**

\* An increase in housing numbers of 40%, over a fairly short period of time would effectively **destroy Backwell's "village feel",** and put far too much strain on existing facilities - medical, education etc.

\* To even attempt to reduce the additional traffic congestion created by such a development would **require massive new infrastructure - roads, bridges, drainage etc.** The JSP hardly makes any attempt to explain how the required funding might be found.

\* The detailed traffic proposals include **a new road from Flax Bourton near the cricket ground, over or under the railway and west across Backwell Common to the proposed new Nailsea/Backwell station transport hub, where a new two deck car park might be built.** The cost of such a scheme, including necessary flood prevention requirements would be prohibitive; the environmental damage to the Green belt, the nature conservation area around Backwell lake, together with the very marginal gain to a small number of road users who would benefit, make this whole proposal unjustifiable**.**

\* The A370 junction with Station Road is already a recognized bottleneck in the middle of the village. The JSP talks about "easing this situation**”. One apparent possibility is to close Station Road to general traffic at the railway bridge** - an extraordinary suggestion which would cut off Backwell from Nailsea (its services and employment areas) and cause chaos in surrounding lanes.

\* **The site of the proposed development is on good quality agricultural land,** and such loss of valuable food producing agriculture land appears to have been dismissed throughout the JSP proposals. In addition, the land lies directly in the path of the highly valued and protected Greater Horseshoe bat colony. The JSP proposals for mitigating this issue do not comply with relevant Habitat Regulations.

**What does the JSP say regarding Backwell on Page 25 of WED 008?**

5.6 Summary (a direct quote from the document!)

***“The technical appraisals have identified a programme of measures that will address the transport objectives and are forecast to have a strong business case. They will support economic growth and housing delivery in this area and will have a wide range of positive social impacts. The appraisal also identifies a range of potential environmental impacts but mitigation measures will be designed to address these impacts. All of the components are considered to have a strong financial case and have a medium or high delivery case”.***

**The BRA committee does NOT think that the mitigation measures will begin to address the problem. Whatever you think please make a comment, no matter how short.**

**How to comment – by 7th January 2019:** Any previous comments to the JSP you made will remain on their file. The comments required now are only in relation to the additional 10 pieces of technical evidence, which provide more detail on how the JSP would be implemented.

You may respond by the following routes:

**By email to:** comment@jointplanningwofe.org.uk

**By post to:** West of England Joint Spatial Plan, C/o South Gloucestershire Council, Planning

PO Box 1954, Bristol, BS37 0DD

**On line:** via the JSP website by clicking on the Respond line at the bottom of the page of

<https://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/consult.ti/JSPAdditionalEvidence/consultationHome>

**NB:** If you submit your comment by email or post please make sure you give your name and address or email address.

**Attachments:** A statement from Backwell Parish Council summarising the current position is attached, along with this bulletin in WORD format

Best wishes

From your BRA Committee 4th December 2018

**Visit our website on** [**www.backwellresidents.org.uk**](http://www.backwellresidents.org.uk)

**Email us at backwellresidents@btinternet.com**