

The Backwell Bus Lane proposed by the BSIP team of North Somerset Council is essentially a project estimated to cost £2.2m for a 260 metre bus lane designed primarily to get 6 evening rush hour buses through Backwell crossroads 58 seconds quicker although there are several reasons why this timescale cannot be achieved.

Backwell Parish Council has considered these plans in various forms for almost two years. Apart from the fact that we consider this a huge expenditure for very little benefit our major concerns all along have been focussed on highway safety especially for cyclists and pedestrians.

This was highlighted in a stage 1 road safety audit for an earlier design and there has been nothing for the later version and especially for the latest idea to move the school bus stop well away from the school.

In order to add a bus lane to the A370 and thus create an additional carriageway the proposal is to make these carriageways just three metres in width which is the absolute legal minimum for a heavily used A road and regular bus route. There will be no opportunity for vehicles to safely overtake cyclists for several hundred yards on the Bristol bound side which is likely to create motorist frustration from which accidents can occur. This is surely contrary to a highway policy of making roads safer.

In a recent meeting with the BSIP team we were informed that although not shown on the current plans it would be necessary to move the school bus stop from its present position 100

yards from the school entrance to the other side of the village. In a recent conversation with the Chair of School Governors I was astonished to learn that no one at North Somerset had bothered to discuss this with the school which is of serious concern.

The proposed new site is totally unsuitable given the considerable use of the Post Office car park which serves four businesses and the extremely important parking spaces on the opposite side of the road used especially by older and disabled patients of the doctors and dentists surgeries.

Unfortunately we consider this project to be a complete folly. The 58 second saving quoted is unlikely to be achieved given the installation of a puffin crossing in the middle of the bus lane and use by cyclists who typically travel at 10 – 12 miles per hour.

I am sorry to have to say that we have absolutely no confidence in the design capabilities of the BSIP team. We are not impressed by the wiggly lane designs of the Brockley and Woodhill schemes and consider that they are playing fast and loose with highway safety in Backwell for minimal benefit.

Hannah Young recently noted in correspondence that there is considerable use of public transport in Backwell and buses often stop for minutes at a time . So the ability for following traffic to pass stationary buses is paramount. In two years this project has failed to create a design to achieve that.

It is quite remarkable that this grant scheme from the DfT was tendered for without any discussion with local experts

such as the Parish Councils or any feasibility studies.
Moreover rather than acting in a collaborative way BSIP has simply withheld data and not even responded to Freedom of Information questions in the timescale or manner directed by Parliament, The BSIP team live in an expensive cocoon of public money.

In conclusion there are many locations where bus lanes are appropriate and effective. This is not one of them. For the sake of highway safety and potential reputational damage for [North Somerset this project should now be closed and scarce government funds directed to be used more appropriately elsewhere.

Charles Hatcher

Councillor

Backwell Parish Council

27th May 2025