



Our Ref: JDS

Backwell Parish Council

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By email only to:

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9 October 2018

Dear North Somerset Council,

Re: Issues and Options consultation

Backwell Parish Council is grateful for the chance to respond to this consultation. We are doing so in two parts:

- a) This letter taking a high-level response to the principles / overview.
- b) A more detailed point by point response which will be submitted later under separate cover.

Each of our two responses should be read with knowledge of the other.

To avoid repetition, we will assume the reader is fully aware of our responses to the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) and the Generating Ideas consultations. There are major problems with the Issues and Options document, which are outlined below:

1. Premature

We consider the JSP to be an unsound document and have said so in our responses. The Issues and Options document is predicated on the JSP being accepted in its current form and, while we understand the reasons for that, this makes your document premature.

2. Speculative

The estimated costs of the infrastructure required to deliver the 700 houses in Backwell (and the huge development in Nailsea) have not been published. Since there is no indication of where such funds would come from or whether they will be available, this speculative document is causing anxiety to our residents by threatening a treasured local amenity (including the important “Strategic Gap” from Nailsea) without any indication of how this would be delivered. Taking the example of a road close to Backwell Lake, the very wet flood-plain area means the infrastructural costs would be substantial.

The absence of identified sources of funding, the inability of the developers to fund these works in totality, and the likelihood of costs escalating when site specific issues, engineering solutions are factored in, puts into question the ability to deliver housing sustainably in this area.

3. Transport

A key point is that the existing transport infrastructure at Backwell would be unable to support the delivery of 700 homes, even with local road improvements. Notwithstanding our objections to these proposals in principle, delivery of this number of dwellings at Backwell would require significant enhancements to the highway network and community infrastructure in order to achieve a sustainable form of development. The JSP must address these issues directly to ensure that any allocation brought forward through the new Local Plan to 2036 is capable of delivering sustainable housing, supported by the timely delivery of adequate infrastructure. Based on the current JSP and Issues and Options papers, these transport issues are unresolved and therefore the strategic allocation at Backwell is perverse.

4. Conflict with other policies: Settlement Hierarchy

Backwell (a service village), has been identified as suitable for a SDL of 700 houses. But the North Somerset policies include: *‘The service villages are identified as locations for small scale settlements.....’*. and clearly this proposal is not a small-scale development.

Sustainability

Backwell has been identified in a NSC document as the most 'sustainable' of all North Somerset's villages. However, the developments, as proposed in the Issues and Options document would so dramatically alter the village that it would no longer enjoy the community traits that made it sustainable. Thus, the plan is self-defeating of the policy of being sustainable.

5. Fails to adequately assess and describe other options

Other much more suitable sites for the SDL are well known to us and so presumably North Somerset Council. Some are closer to Bristol with much fewer transport problems and lower infrastructure costs.

6. Anxiety making

This document is unwise because it is generating a lot of anxiety amongst our residents BEFORE the big issues have been thought out and resolved.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Soothill
Chair and on behalf of Backwell Parish Council