



Dear Councillor

RE: THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE DRAFT JSP ON YOUR COMMUNITY

Consultation closes December 19 – ensure you have your say

You may be aware that 5,400 new homes around Banwell and Churchill have been proposed in the latest draft of the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP). We are writing to you to set out the risks of this proposal remaining in the emerging JSP.

This proposal will have a major impact, not only on Banwell and Churchill, but on many of the other rural towns and villages in North Somerset. Even if this development never happens, its inclusion in the final JSP will leave those towns and villages in North Somerset such as Nailsea, Congresbury and Sandford unable to defend themselves against further planning applications, as we explain below.

We strongly believe the draft JSP should be changed to replace Banwell with our proposals for three villages next to Bristol (known as 'The Vale') – by far the most sustainable and deliverable location. If you would like to meet our planning experts to discuss why, please contact Andrew.smith@conversationpr.co.uk to arrange a meeting.

The draft JSP must be 'sound'... but is it?

Along with the neighbouring three local authorities, North Somerset Council has agreed to find land for 105,000 homes. The final number could be higher. We strongly believe locating 5,400 homes around Banwell and Churchill will be proven to be unsustainable and undeliverable within the plan period (to 2036). This would result in the JSP being found 'unsound' - preventing it from being approved when it is examined by a Government-appointed planning inspector.

How an 'unsound' JSP will leave towns and villages open to continual planning applications

For a number of years North Somerset Council has been unable to maintain a five year supply of housing land. This has allowed developers to make applications and appeals on land never before earmarked for housing - exactly what many North Somerset towns and villages are currently fighting. An 'unsound' JSP would mean that housing land supply would not increase and piecemeal applications and appeals would continue to be successful.

Banwell simply won't happen in time to ensure a 'sound' plan

Even in the unlikely event the Banwell/Churchill allocation is found to be 'sound' by an inspector, we do not believe this would change the vulnerability of North Somerset towns and villages, because the new homes simply wouldn't be built in time. Schemes of this size – reliant on major enabling infrastructure - can take 20+ years from conception before they deliver any homes...and Banwell/Churchill has only just been identified. Even if it can be started before 2036, it will simply be unable to deliver anything like 5,400 homes by 2036. Relying on Banwell and Churchill to deliver a large amount of housing will leave the towns and villages of North Somerset - already under pressure - extremely vulnerable to more applications and appeals: This will continue unless the JSP can truly demonstrate a secure and sufficient supply of land for new homes.

Will the proposed Banwell by-pass and M5 junction happen?

The incentive being offered to Banwell is the promise of the long-talked about by-pass to relieve pressure on local highways (notably the A368) and a new M5 junction, next to the A371. The JSP states that the by-pass and motorway junction would need to be built before the housing. However, there are major technical, planning and cost issues which are likely to prevent this road from being built within the next 15-20 years, which – in turn – will delay the housing, rendering other towns and villages in North Somerset vulnerable to continued piecemeal housing development.

Would a new by-pass actually reduce congestion?

Although a by-pass and new motorway junction could address current congestion issues around Banwell and Churchill, the Councils' own assessment¹ shows that if the new development around Banwell is taken into account, it would subsequently lead to significant problems on the A371 into Weston-super-Mare and on the A38 *all the way to Bristol*, as well as causing rat running on local roads.

Will Banwell, Sandford & Churchill be kept separate from the 5,400 new homes?

It's very difficult to see how the existing villages can be kept separate from the 5,400 new homes. To the south is the highly important and visually sensitive Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and, to the north, much of the land is within the floodplain. Taking into account these constraints and the very fragmented ownership of the land, it is difficult to see how the new development will be kept separate from Banwell, Sandford and Churchill, which could end up being 'swamped' by the new development.

Where will all the new Banwell and Churchill residents drive to work?

One of the big questions about where to locate any new homes is one of sustainability. A major pillar of sustainability is reducing the number of miles travelled by car. This means new homes must be close to jobs, services, schools etc, with access to attractive alternatives to travelling by car. 5,400 new homes at Banwell and Churchill will inevitably lead to millions of extra miles being driven every year, as many people will commute to Bristol as well as Weston-super-Mare. This is entirely unnecessary and unsustainable.

The true cost of an additional 28.7 million kilometres driven per year

A development of 5,400 homes around Banwell would lead to an estimated 28.7 million kilometres driven per year by people commuting from the site (based on the most recent travel to work information). This would lead to an estimated 3,527 additional tonnes of CO2 emitted per year.

Why is our plan - for three new villages close to Bristol – so much more sustainable than Banwell?

The case for The Vale is extremely clear. It is next to Bristol, where most people work and study; it has the new South Bristol Link Road already built; has the new Metrobus service taking 17-20 minutes to get into Bristol city centre (Temple Meads). It includes potential for a new train station on the Weston-to-Bristol line; proposals for a new Park and Ride on the A38; and extensive cycle routes into Bristol, including along the popular Festival Way. This excellent transport infrastructure will benefit both new and existing residents across North Somerset and SW Bristol. Development at The Vale will also assist the delivery of important transport infrastructure to Bristol Airport, including the potential for a light rail link, which will provide significant benefit to the region's economy. *And those are just the transport advantages.*

What else does The Vale offer?

Our proposals include: a new college; three new primary schools and one new secondary school; 130 hectares of parkland open to everyone; employment land; space for GP and dental practices; village centres; as well as many other community benefits. And we remain open to all ideas. You can find out more at www.thevale-northsomerset.co.uk.

How 'The Vale' would help deliver a 'sound' plan

Of course, we have a vested interest in the JSP being changed to replace Banwell with our proposals for three new villages in what we have called 'The Vale'. This is land we own or control, so a planning inspector can be sure we can deliver the new homes and necessary infrastructure (unlike Banwell and Churchill which are in dozens of separate ownerships).

Green Belt vs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ... what's really at stake?

The Vale is in Green Belt, though it comprises only c.1.9% of all Green Belt land in North Somerset. It also neighbours Bristol and is already heavily influenced by the urban area. This Green Belt land currently includes major roads, large areas of landfill and a golf course. However, any development at Banwell and Churchill would be on green fields at the very edge of the highly sensitive Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Green Belts can - and should - be reviewed when there is a significant need for new homes which cannot be accommodated sustainably on non-Green Belt land. The four Councils putting together the JSP have already accepted the 'exceptional circumstances' needed to review the local Green Belt, which is why Green Belt land has already been proposed for development in the JSP (for example in Whitchurch). So there is no reason why The Vale cannot be included.

What can you do?

There are several things you can do to protect your community's interests, but the main one is to make your views known through the formal consultation which has now started and which closes on December 19. It is important that as many people as possible have their say. You can find the consultation website at <https://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/consult.ti/system/register>.

If you would like to meet us to discuss further, please email Andrew.smith@conversationpr.co.uk.

¹ *West of England Joint Spatial Plan Emerging Spatial Strategy: Transport Topic Paper November 2016.*

Yours sincerely,



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