

Whitchurch Parish Council
Response to the
West of England Joint Spatial Strategy consultation

Introduction

In order for this Parish Council to comment on the West of England Joint Spatial Strategy, it is important to summarise housing development in the village over the past 4 years because it brings into context our strong views.

1. Until 2012, the village consisted of circa 490 houses surrounded by a Green Belt that in essence had not changed for many years.
2. Due to inadequacies in BANES Core Strategy, Barratt Homes were able to obtain consent for building 47 houses on Sleep Lane – an 11% increase on existing numbers.
 - This development was rejected by BANES & the Parish Council, however because BANES Core Strategy was considered lacking by the Inspectorate, Barratt Homes were able to build these houses – essentially a predatory application.
3. BANES then resubmitted their Core Strategy with a plan to deliver a further 200 houses in Whitchurch but on Green Belt land sold off by the charity Horseworld.
 - We must make it clear that the Parish Council and a huge majority of people in the village strongly objected to this, the main grounds being-
 - i. Incursion into Green Belt
 - ii. Inevitable increased traffic congestion in & around the village which is already at saturation point – not just at peak times.
 - iii. Inadequate infrastructure (Roads, medical, education)
 - The Masterplan for this site has just been approved, subject to conditions.

Response

- **The Parish Council, representing the vast majority of people living in the village, must make it unconditionally clear that having just had the size of the village already increased by c 50%, the existing boundaries of the Green Belt MUST NOT be affected by the JSP, and we do not want any further housing. We have taken more than our fair share, we want to retain our village status & culture and do not want to be part of an urban expansion to Bristol. We are fiercely protective of our existing Green Belt & the current boundaries.**
- We are very concerned that the document ‘West of England’ – Building our future – Have your say – shows a potential Urban Extension – apparently over Whitchurch Village.

**Please see the attached Appendix A, with our detailed and considered comments on the JSP Initial Sustainability Report, Urban Extension, Ref Whitchurch Village B&NES.
(Not Whitchurch which falls in the Bristol City boundary)**

The text describes this as 'a planned expansion of the Urban area into adjacent countryside'. This can only be construed as an urban expansion of Bristol towards Whitchurch Village.

- We are very aware that developers own or have options on land in & around Whitchurch, which is very threatening. If this democratically elected Government & the Unitary bodies putting this plan together truly believes & supports the ethos of Localism & the associated election manifesto statement, our views will be upheld.
- In a wider context, we understand & recognize the need for more housing & in general terms we would make the following comments:
 - **Housing**
 - ❖ There is a need for affordable housing & bungalows, & possibly this could be achieved by usage of small parcels of land / infill, using any Brown Belt land & unused or empty premises.
 - ❖ New starter homes for first time buyers are needed. These MUST be inexpensive & affordable matched to local demographics - salaries / job types.
 - **Transport**
 - ❖ Public transport remains lacking – the Metro Bus needs to be extended from Hengrove and there is need for dedicated bus lanes & increased services at peak times. Many inbound buses are already full when they reach Whitchurch.
 - ❖ South Bristol Ring Road completion – from Hicks Gate to Hengrove. Should the authorities impose further housing in our area, improved infrastructure may at least improve the horrible congestion & HGV problems on the A37 & other local roads.
 - ❖ Create a new motorway junction at Emersons Green to the M4. This would reduce traffic having to get onto the M32 to get to the M4.
 - ❖ Create a park & ride somewhere along the A37, but outside of Whitchurch otherwise congestion will simply increase.
 - ❖ Improve the public transport options to commuters so that there are efficient, effective & affordable alternatives to the private car.
 - ❖ Open up disused railway lines to provide further alternatives to the car. This may provide opportunities for new builds / businesses needing these rail links.

Conclusion

Whitchurch Village wants to retain its' village identity & culture and does not want further housing imposed on the Green Belt. We do not want the Green Belt boundaries changed at all. We will have to live with the developments recently imposed and we feel enough is enough.

Appendix A

Comments to the JSP Initial SA Report: Appendix B: Urban Extension

1a. Achieve reasonable access to public open space

There are already limited accessible open spaces within the Whitchurch Village boundary.

1b. Minimise impacts on air quality and local sensitive development away from areas of poor air quality

Readings taken along the Wells Road A37 (the period of Dec2015/Jan2016) are extremely worrying.

‘During December, the safe level for Human Health was exceeded during 51hours. On one day this exceedance lasted 5 hours. The maximum yearly allowance is 18 hours.’

However, to build more dwellings generating more traffic on the A37 would push the level of pollution even higher.

1c. Achieve reasonable access to healthcare facilities

No National Health healthcare facilities exist within Whitchurch Village, B&NES and no public transport facilities between Whitchurch Village and the facilities offered within south Bristol, outside the B&NES boundary.

2a. Deliver a suitable quantum of high quality housing for the West of England sub-region

Whitchurch Village has no local employment facilities, so further development in the village would lead to further congestion for residents seeking employment within Bristol and Bath. There are no rail links within the area.

2b. Deliver a suitable mix of high quality housing types and tenures

The present and proposed housing developments (which have already taken a large part of the surrounding Green Belt in our Village and increased the village by 50%) offer affordable housing at strategic level.

2c. Achieve reasonable access to community facilities

Whitchurch Village has no access to community facilities (post office, youth centre, local shop etc) and none are within a reasonable walking distance.

2d. Achieve reasonable access to educational facilities

The local primary school is already at full capacity and the proposed development of in excess of 200 dwellings planned for the village will see an increase in demand for school places. There is no secondary education available in Whitchurch Village with the nearest secondary school in B&NES over three miles away.

2e. Achieve reasonable access to town centre services and facilities

Facilities are available within the Bristol boundary, achieving reasonable access to these facilities is totally dependent on securing good and reliable public transport, which at present are very limited.

3a. Deliver a reasonable quantum of employment

Unfortunately there is little or no opportunity to increase sustainable employment within Whitchurch Village.

3b Achieve reasonable access to major employment areas

Improved public transport will give access to employment areas in Bristol, however our recent investigations/surveys show that in general most of the local working population rely on their cars.

We also feel that reference to Bristol must not be in isolation and that Bath should be considered as an employment destination from Whitchurch Village, so therefore appropriate public transport routes should be available.

4a Impact on historic environment, heritage assets

We agree that the sensitive areas suggested must be protected at all costs.

4b. Minimise impact on habitats and species

We agree that these must be protected at all costs.

4c. Minimise impact on and where appropriate enhance valued landscapes

We agree that the local landscapes suggested should be valued and protected for future generations.

4d Promote the conservation and wise use of land, maximising the re-use of previously developed land

We agree with the general remark that development of greenfield does not contribute to promoting the conservation and wise use of land.

4f & 4g regarding flooding issues

We would expect all areas to be fully investigated.

5a Achieve reasonable access to sustainable transportation

We agree with the comment that Whitchurch Village does not have access to any rail links or will not be included in the metro bus service routes. This leads to limited transport options and reliance on private vehicles.

General Comment

Our points and comments above reflect our researched and detailed knowledge of our village and its residents and we feel it is important that these comments are noted as part of this consultation document. Our concern is that many of the comments made in this document refer to a general area of Whitchurch, Bristol and not Whitchurch Village in Bath and North East Somerset and therefore some assumptions have been made about our village.