

## BANES Cabinet statement on adoption of VAS 13/7/11

Councillors, before my main statement, I would just like to repeat again a point we at BIGHA have been making, right from the start of this issue, over 4 years ago. BIGHA is not against growth in Bath- in fact, we welcome, sensible, managed, sustained growth in the city accommodation offer, as this brings valuable benefits to all of us as business owners, residents and visitors. However, what we do not support is a violent explosion in growth that only has short term benefits for developers and shareholders outside of Bath, and is to the long term detriment of the city.

You will all be aware that BIGHA have been calling for the VAS to be adopted for nearly 3 years now, ever since the study was born out of the Destination Management Plan for Bath, which essentially called for a quality expansion of Bath's accommodation offer, not a quantity expansion. BIGHA have always supported this. The VAS provides an evidence based blueprint for the future growth of accommodation in the city, up to 2026. This is your document, as BANES councillors, not BIGHA's document. The council commissioned, and paid £37,000 for this independent study, but has still not formally adopted this as planning policy for the last 3 years. The reasons for this were purely political, and self interest, under the previous administration, and we are hoping that you will put this mistake right tonight.

You are our elected representatives, and you are our elected councillors to make policy - not the planning department, or other council officers. It is you that we call on to decide and implement policy, and then for the officers to execute these policies. Officers should not dictate to members what they can and cannot do.

We have secured support for the adoption of the VAS as planning policy from the BTP board on 26th Nov 2010, from the FBP board on 13th December 2010, and also from the Chamber of Commerce in Ian Bell's letter of 29th November 2010. Don Foster has also called for adoption. Support has also been mentioned in letters from BTP as a councillors briefing in April 2011, and in opposition to the inappropriate Premier Inn application on 4th July 2011. The Federation of Small Businesses, Bath Small Business Focus, numerous local councillors, including Paul Crossley, Andy Furse and Doug Nichol have also called for adoption. Residents groups have also voiced support, including FOBRA.

BANES own Economic Development and Regeneration team, The City Centre Management Board, and The Urban Regeneration Panel have also called for the VAS to be adopted. This document has also already had reference made in 3 planning applications, and also in the Draft Core Strategy.

Elected representatives- hopefully you can see the huge mass of support for adoption of this VAS as planning policy as soon as possible from the key business organisations, many of the residents and their representatives, and numerous councillors of the city. Even more hotel rooms are coming forward every day, including the new casinos, and we need to have a viable strategy for the future of our beautiful city. It is because of this that we call on you to do the right thing for our future accommodation offer of our city and adopt this VAS as planning policy as soon as possible.

Many thanks, Leslie Redwood, Co- Chairman, BIGHA