**THE FUTURE OF BACKWELL**

**Dear Resident,**

This letter to the whole village is sent for and on behalf of **Backwell Parish Council (BPC), Backwell Residents Association (BRA) and Backwell Resistance (BR)**. It is available on the Facebook (fb) pages of the 3 organisations.

**It encourages all residents to comment on the proposals to build 700 houses on Grove Farm.**

**Our village faces a huge and imminent threat to its future**

**Background** By now many of you will be aware that Grove Farm (see map) has been earmarked by the draft West of England Joint Spatial Plan **(JSP)** to deliver 700 new homes west of Backwell.

The JSP also includes at least 2,500 homes southwest of Nailsea.

The proposals at Nailsea and Backwell are **both** reliant on construction of:

* A new strategic road link from Flax Bourton to the M5 at Clevedon passing through the gap between Backwell and Nailsea;
* An additional road link connecting the A370 near Chelvey to south west Nailsea.

BRA’s comments on the previous draft JSP and several relevant documents are on the BRA website.

Many residents have become aware of the plans through the excellent publicity by Backwell Resistance following Taylor Wimpey’s Grove Farm consultation event in the Parish Hall 9th November. BR held a public meeting on the 23rd November attended by almost 400 residents. BRA and BPC were represented at that meeting. Last week North Somerset Council **(NSC)** held an event explaining the JSP and the new Local Plan **(LP)**.

It is evident that there is huge opposition to the JSP strategy.

**Is there an alternative strategy?** When commenting on the JSP,you are entitled to suggest an alternative to the proposals for Backwell and Nailsea. There is a widespread view that land adjacent to the new south Bristol link road near Long Ashton known as **“The Vale”** would be more sustainable.

Taylor Wimpey is promoting a comprehensive proposal for at least 4,500 new houses, schools and other facilities at The Vale. It already has the new ‘Link Road’ and Metrobus, and is on the edge of Bristol, the main centre of employment. This site would require far less new road infrastructure and should therefore be capable of delivering the housing needed by 2036. It is a much more sustainable site for large-scale development and should be more suitable for affordable housing. However, the land is Green Belt and **North Somerset Council has confirmed it will not review the Green Belt as part of the JSP.**

We are sensitive to the need to preserve Green Belt wherever possible, but this should not be at the expense of rural communities, protected landscapes and habitats.

**Government policy** requires Councils, when reviewing Green Belt boundaries, to take account of the need to **promote sustainable patterns of development** and consider the consequences of channelling development to locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.

**North Somerset is the only Council** in the West of England which has **NOT** committed to a Green Belt Review. 50%of the major development locations in the JSPwill require land to be taken out of the Green Belt.

**Objections to the JSP must be made by 10th January 2018.**

**All objections must be based on the 4 tests of soundness. Here is some suggested wording for objecting to the JSP.**

The JSP is **not sound** for the following reasons (highlighted words represent the soundness tests):

* It is **not positively prepared** to meet the housing needs of North Somerset in a sustainable manner. It would result in significant adverse impacts on protected landscapes and habitats, require substantial new roads to accommodate increased traffic flows and fail to integrate with existing communities to create support for existing shops and businesses (particularly in Nailsea).
* It is **not** **justified** because the strategy has not been tested against “all reasonable alternatives”, including ‘The Vale’ which would be a far more sustainable site, closely associated with Bristol. It would avoid the loss of good quality agricultural land and require substantially less Government funding. (Also see comments above).
* It is **not effective** because it is not deliverable by 2036. The road infrastructure required to serve Backwell and Nailsea has not been costed, has no certainty of Government funding, is technically complex to deliver (building over unstable moor land) and would result in significant adverse impacts on the rural and built environment, including the loss or the potential for harm to listed buildings, including Tyntesfield Estate. The Plan relies upon the construction of 900 homes per year across the latter years of the plan period to meet housing needs by 2036. Such build rates far exceed those achieved within North Somerset since the 2008 recession and are therefore unrealistic.
* It is **not consistent with national planning policy**. It fails to recognise the need to review the Green Belt to provide long-term capacity for growth in a sustainable manner (see comments above). Accordingly, it does not represent sustainable development which is the fundamental objective of national planning policy.

You are also entitled to comment that increasing the size of Backwell by about 40% would totally change the character and integrity of our village.

Please use your own words, as this will carry more weight.

**The JSP is the most important document for your comments. This is the last opportunity to comment** and these comments will go to an Independent Inspector who will examine the plan in public to determine whether the plan is sound.

**Emerging North Somerset Local Plan (LP)** NSC is also conducting its own consultation on its LP which will replace the ‘Core Strategy’ as early as 2019. **This date is important because the Backwell Neighbourhood Plan would then carry less weight.** Unfortunately, the LP consultation has not been widely publicised until very recently. The LP is in its very early stages of drafting and **must conform to the JSP**. It is the LP which will allocate development sites such as Grove Farm. It is therefore important to comment on the LP and make suggestions to NSC. However, if you disagree with **the principle** of development to the west of Backwell and Nailsea then **comment must be made on the JSP, rather than the LP** where it will have no effect. If the JSP can be defeated then the LP will automatically fail as a result.

**How do I find the information?**

The BRA website has 3 relevant tabs where you will find:

* Joint Spatial Plan (400 pages) and those on Backwell (2 pages and 10 pages)
* NS Local Plan
* Taylor Wimpey Grove Farm Proposal

**What should I do?**

1. **Comment on the JSP by 10th January 2018**

by email comment@jointplanningwofe.org.uk

or via the website <https://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/consult.ti>

or by post to West of England Joint Spatial Plan, c/o South Glos Council, Planning, PO Box 1954, Bristol BS37 0DD, or hand your comment to the BPC, 43 Rodney Road.

1. **Comment on the NSC Local Plan** **by 10th January 2018**

by email planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk

or via [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/localplan2036](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/localplan2036)

or by post to Planning policy team, NSC, Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare BS23 1UJ

 **We believe that our only chance of defeating these proposals in the JSP is for an overwhelming number of Backwell residents to register their opinion on the JSP before 10th January 2018.**

**Act now or the opportunity to have any influence on the JSP proposals for our village will be lost forever.**

Best wishes from BRA, BPC and BR 5th December 2017

Visit BRA website on [www.backwellresidents.org.uk](http://www.backwellresidents.org.uk/)

Email BRA at backwellresidents@btinternet.com

Visit BPC website on <http://www.backwell-pc.gov.uk/>

Email BPC at clerk@backwell-pc.gov.uk

Contact BPC at 43 Rodney Road, 01275 464653

BR via their Facebook page

