This bulletin is intended to answer the question " How did the Farleigh Inquiry go?".

The Inquiry concluded at Weston-s-Mare Town Hall at lunch time yesterday, after 8 days. We have no idea which way the Inspector will decide, as he was in listening mode, and naturally gave no indication of his views. There were strong submissions, backed up by endless statistics, from both sides. The decision will depend, broadly, on the Inspector's views on 2 major issues:

1. The validity and strength of the NS Core Strategy (mainly in relation to housing numbers), and the Backwell Neighbourhood Plan.
2. Whether the proposed development would enhance or diminish the character of the site, and the village of Backwell.

**Well done Backwell!** No one at the Inquiry could fail to realise that Farleigh Fields are held in high esteem by local residents. Previous judgements over the decades have rejected housing. In the last couple of years, we have sent in over 1,000 objections. At the Inquiry, we had 20 excellent witness statements from a very varied group of Backwell residents as a cross section of the village - each with their own special reasons for enjoying the fields. We have had a good attendance from the public each day at Weston. At Backwell Parish Hall, last week for the afternoon session, we were at the capacity of 100 people or so for most of the time, with a total attendance of some 150 as people came and went. The Parish Council Working Party, (chaired by Bob Taylor), has worked on the project for several weeks, with a few key players putting in a huge amount of time in the build up to, and during the Inquiry- in particular, Polly Reynolds, our solicitor; Chris Perry and Mike Rose, who were all aggressively cross-examined at length by the Charles Church QC. We are very grateful for their efforts, and everyone from Backwell who helped in any way; as well as for those from North Somerset Council - Tim Leader, their lawyer and Michael Reep, David Tate and Mrs Richardson from their Planning Department.

**What was discussed?** Most subjects were considered along the lines of " I would like my learned friend (one lawyer to another!) to now turn to section 43.2 of the Core Strategy document, and turn to Table 4". The room was full of overflowing box files, and support staff buried under files!!

Among the major topics were: -

* The Backwell Neighbourhood Plan which was given much air time, with "our" side saying that it was produced after 4 years of consultation and hard work. The developer attempted to find flaws in its process and outcome;
* The North Somerset Housing Land Supply which was discussed in great detail;
* Hours spent on the meaning of words, such as “landscape", "appearance" and "beauty", and the views from various stiles and landmarks on Farleigh Fields;
* The proposed development, in two blocks of houses, with a road joining them running across the field. This road will cut across the footpath that leads up to the Church. The impact of the road was debated at length.
* The effect of the development on Backwell's infrastructure, schools, traffic etc.

**The site visit** The Inspector did a site visit, on his own, last Monday. He parked at the Station car park in deluging rain, and walked from there to Church Town, in sunshine, following an agreed route to include key viewpoints once he reached Farleigh Fields. Apparently, his route along Station Road was in mid-afternoon at school leaving time, so he would have seen at first hand the reasons for many of the objections, on having a further 220 houses in the village.

**Secretary of State** The Working Party had asked that the Inquiry decision be "recovered", and this has been agreed. This is the technical term used for an Inquiry not having the final word. The Inspector will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will make the final decision. It was felt that he might give more weight to the localism aspect of the views of residents, as shown in the Neighbourhood Plan. He has the power to overturn the recommendation of the Inspector. We probably will not know the final outcome for 3 months or more.

Best wishes- enjoy Farleigh Fields while the sun is shining!!

From your BRA Committee 24th March 2017