**BRA Bulletin Sept 18th 2017**

We hope that everyone is refreshed after the summer, and will enjoy any late sunshine. This is our first autumn bulletin, which will be followed by a printed newsletter in November.

**Farleigh Fields** **(15/P/0315/O)** **A decision on the appeal regarding 220 houses has been promised for October 17th**–  By that time the Inspector will have made his recommendation, and the Secretary of State, Savid Javid, will have endorsed it or overturned it. Despite rumours and speculation, we have no indication of the way the final decision will go. If the housing is allowed, it will go against the wishes of the village, as so recently articulated in our Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

**Moor Lane (15/P/1916/O)** – The planning application for 65 houses has been approved in principle, but will not be finally granted until all conditions are agreed. The likelihood is that final negotiations have been delayed pending talks on Taylor Wimpey’s plans for a major development on adjoining land to the west (Grove Farm) much of which is already controlled by them.

**Housing on Land to the West of Backwell** **at** **Grove Farm** –  The perceived need for housing in North Somerset is continuing to grow. It is likely that, whatever happens on Farleigh Fields, there will be pressure for this area to be developed.

It is worth reflecting on some of the planning history. This area, on the edge of Backwell has been considered a possibility for major housing for some 20 years. It is agricultural land, and is not in the Green Belt, though it is well outside the settlement boundary. Some of the proposals have been very general, others more specific. It is useful to review some key events in the history of the Grove Farm proposal:

**1998** –the North Somerset Council (NSC) Joint Replacement Structure Plan suggested major housing here – 515 objections were received by Backwell Parish Council (BPC).

**2005** – The Replacement Plan again suggested housing on this site – with Taylor Wimpey (then trading as Taylor Woodrow) proposing up to 1,000 houses. BRA organised a petition against this, with 1631 out of 3485 on the electoral roll opposing it.

**2016** – The Joint Spatial Plan for the W of England has a housing “blob” in this area – and suggests up to 3600 houses for a combined Nailsea/Backwell – generally felt to be broadly 2800/800 respectively. (Their rationale being that it is in a "sustainable community, outside the Green Belt, and avoids flood zone areas)

In contrast to much of the general material, Taylor Wimpey produced a more specific proposal in Jan 2016 which can be seen on:

[**http://www.backwellresidents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Grove\_Farm\_Issue\_and\_Options\_Promotion\_v1-4.pdf**](http://www.backwellresidents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Grove_Farm_Issue_and_Options_Promotion_v1-4.pdf)

It is recognised by NSC (and known only too well by those who live in Backwell) that despite the A370 and a railway station, our current infrastructure is not capable of handling a large traffic increase. This fact has been pushed into the long grass in some reports. Other reports have suggested a new link to the A370 close to Chelvey Batch, and/or a link to a Nailsea ring road to the North, linking up to the M5 at Clevedon.

It may be necessary for BRA to seek the views of its members in choosing some “least worst” options if we are forced to have large housing increases. If the consensus opposes the large development, it is important that we make that case at the right time, so that the concept of major housing here is not hard-wired into the next long-term plan. BRA has been encouraged by the number of households who come forward when asked to make their case, and we will no doubt be calling on members in the next year or so.

We will work closely with the BPC through their Working Party, which might also lead to an updated  Backwell Neighbourhood Plan in 2018, influenced by the outcome of the Farleigh Fields inquiry.

**BIFFA Household Waste / Recycling Contract** –A few members have reported satisfactory experiences when visiting the Backwell Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC). However, the overwhelming majority of comments reflect badly on recent NSC budget cuts and the way BIFFA is operating the site. The reduced opening hours, cages around the skips, positioning of the skips and many other changes have resulted in congestion, inconvenience and serious safety concerns. In a recent article in the North Somerset Times it was reported that NSC has agreed actions with BIFFA to address concerns.

Before the school summer holidays there were frequent breaches of the contractual requirement for skip lorries to avoid Dark Lane and Church Town at school in/out times. Not surprisingly, the reduced HWRC opening hours have led to increasing instances of fly-tipping, especially along Backwell Common.

BIFFA's roadside collection service has been mostly satisfactory, though not without some reported problems. The particular issue of recycling and skip lorries in Dark Lane at school in/out times is being closely monitored by a number of parents. It is very disappointing that so early in the new school term, there has already been a breach which resulted in serious congestion and consequent hazards.

The Parish Council and BRA have made frequent representations to NSC and will continue to seek improvements.

In light of all these issues, it is interesting that BIFFA plc has reported recently that,  " .... its underlying earnings and profits had been driven by a strong operational performance and cost control ...". Given its financial resources, BRA is not impressed with BIFFA's "operational performance"

**Road Safety in Station Road** – The Parish Council's Working Party (WP) met on 23 August to consider NSC's views on a number of possible measures to improve road safety, including improvements to the hazardous bus stop opposite Backwell Motors. Several statements were made by members of the public at the Parish Council meeting 7 Sep, including one by Mike Veal on behalf of BRA. The WP is now awaiting revised proposals and costings which will hopefully be put before the full council on 5 October. BRA is very concerned that the ever-increasing traffic density in Station Road is totally incompatible with a narrow road and inadequate pavements, especially as it serves such large numbers of young people going to all 3 of our schools. It should be noted that current proposals in the Joint Spatial Plan would inevitably lead to a huge increase in Station Road traffic.

**New Inn and Ettrick Garage/Red Cross** –Preparation work continues at these sites for 7 and 8 dwellings respectively; building work has yet to begin.

**Land near the end of Moor Lane 17/P/1933/O** – An application has been made to North Somerset for the building of 10 houses on land behind “Summervale” the penultimate house in Moor Lane. The proposal is for 6 two- bed semi-detached houses, and 4 three- bed detached houses. The emphasis on smaller dwellings is welcomed, but BRA has objected as the size of the development is too high for this location. Moor Lane is very narrow at this point, and the additional traffic movements will only exacerbate the existing congestion and road blockages created at the Moor Lane/Station road junction. Backwell Parish Council has also objected.

**Tesco Bags of Help** – Tesco is giving grants to community schemes, funded by the 5p per bag charge. Any interested group can see further details on:

[**http://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/tescocommunityscheme**](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/tescocommunityscheme)

***Hot off the Press***

*North Somerset Council is preparing its Site Allocations Plan. This is a detailed local plan which identifies the residential, employment and other allocations needed within North Somerset to deliver the Core Strategy over the plan period to 2026.*

*Over the summer NSC has modified this plan and the Proposed Modifications have just been announced, with consultation taking place over six weeks from Monday 18 September to Monday 30 October 2017. Any North Somerset resident is entitled to comment.*

*Details can be found on*[***http://consult-ldf.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/SiteAllocMainMods/consultationHome***](http://consult-ldf.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/SiteAllocMainMods/consultationHome)

*The BRA committee will be looking at the detail of this, and will advise members if there are any specific comments that would be helpful to make prior to 30 October.*

Best wishes

From your BRA Committee                                                 18th September 2017

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