

APPENDIX

BACKWELL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION – AGM 21 FEBRUARY 2017

OPEN FORUM AND QUESTIONS

Mike Rose opened the Forum with the following Presentation including several slides.

Planning Commentary

I am here to spend a few minutes talking about Town and Country Planning. I'll start off with two questions:

Do you know the difference between a Core Strategy and a Spatial Strategy? – and does it matter if you don't?

Should we be worrying about what is going to happen in 2036 and beyond? After all, to be blunt, many of us here won't be around then!

The answer to the first question is it would be very helpful to understand the difference between two quite different strategies. (and more about these later). The answer to the second question should be a resounding yes! For over 40 years successive groups of residents have worked hard to try and build up and maintain the character and community spirit of the village, and we are currently benefiting from these efforts. It is important we try to maintain these same concepts for the benefit of future generations.

There has been quite a number of important planning issues agreed or put into the public domain in the last 15 months which affect Backwell.

In the last couple of months North Somerset Council has finally adopted their **Core Strategy**. There is a National requirement for all planning authorities to produce a core strategy – which is the document which sets out all planning and development issues in the region – in the case of NSC –for the period **2010 – 2026**.

The main issues in this Core Strategy which affect Backwell are the number of new houses required to be built – i.e. 20985 up to 2026. Backwell is one of 9 service villages required to contribute to this number.

NSC has also produced a **Sites and Policies Plan**, which feeds into the Core Strategy. This identifies specific sites deemed to be suitable for commercial and residential development. The only relevant site in Backwell is in MoorLane, where 65 dwellings are specified.

This Plan also identifies land deemed to be suitable for Local Green Space, Both BRA and the Parish Council put forward recommendations for suitable areas, but the only ones currently proposed are Backwell Lake and its surrounds, and two of the Farleigh Fields – i.e. the ones with footpaths in them. This plan is due to be formally approved and adopted this Summer.

The Core Strategy is also required to demonstrate a 5 year supply of land suitable for and capable of being developed for housing. The Council officially claim this has been done, but it is important to note that this is a rather subjective claim (e.g. how do you prove a piece of land is actually ready to be developed?), and at several recent

local Appeals developers have convinced the Inspectors that NSC has significantly less than 5 years genuine supply. This may be very relevant for the up and coming Farleigh Fields Inquiry.

One other potentially significant issue affecting the immediate period was a Ministerial Statement in December very much in support of those villages which have produced Neighbourhood Plans. This statement reduced the requirement to provide a 5m year land supply to only 3 years where NP's were in place – a Government initiative in support of their Localism policy. This statement is being challenged by a number of developers, but is still a useful defence at the present time against development proposals which are completely contrary to NP policy.

So we have described the **Core Strategy** – the plan up to 2026.

What about the **Joint Spatial Strategy**? When George Osborne was still in power (remember that name!!) he promoted the “Northern Power House” as part of an attempt to create devolved Government in the English regions. Less well publicized were plans for an equivalent in the West of England. This process brought together 4 local authorities – Bristol, South Gloucs, Bath and N E Somerset, and North Somerset – who embarked on a grand strategy for the West of England area. This has led to a **Joint Spatial strategy** – an initial series of ideas – i.e. NOT YET a” Plan” for how the whole region might grow and be developed in the period 2026 – 2036.

The Spatial strategy is accompanied by a **Transport Plan**, which identifies major infrastructure and transport requirements and possibilities – this includes road, rail, cycling etc. The Spatial Strategy puts forward several development scenarios, including development in the centres of Bristol and Weston, or on the edge of the major conurbations, or around a number of accessible smaller communities. This latter scenario includes Nailsea and Backwell –with 2800 and 800 houses respectively.

BRA's view, along with many members here today, is that this would be totally unsustainable without major infrastructure first, which is highly unlikely to be funded. The possibility of funding is further minimized by NSC's decision to withdraw from the other Authorities as they do not want to be ruled by a Metro Mayor – and this decision means they will not benefit from the promised central government funding.

A very large number of people have commented or objected to these initial proposals – many thanks to those here this evening who have done so. We have been promised a further tranche of ideas by about Easter. BRA will do what we can to keep members abreast of these developments and suggest possible responses – we keep our fingers crossed that some of the wilder development proposals for Backwell will be dropped.

However, it is important to note that Taylor Wimpey hold options over a sizeable tranche of all the land on the western edge of the village, and has put forward preliminary proposals for a development of over 600 houses, which would be accessed via a new roundabout on the A370 at the edge of the village. They are clearly offering this as part of the solution to meet the Spatial Strategy. Again, BRA will closely monitor and advise how to comment on what appears to be a wholly unsustainable idea which would have a highly detrimental effect on the character of the village.

So, that has given a brief! overview of the macro situation. Are there any questions?

Bill Lee commented that we should be pressing local and Central Government to fund the infrastructure which is needed in this area. He has long been advocating a major relief road from the Long Ashton by-pass to the M5 at Clevedon with a spur road into Nailsea. He felt that individual pressure groups pretending to represent whole villages were the wrong way to go and that all Parish Councils in the area should be involved.

Mike Rose replied that our concerns were that such a link road would be very expensive and agreed that it would need Central Government funding.

Mark Mallinson asked how does the Neighbourhood Plan fit into the Spatial Joint Strategy and Core Strategy Policy?

Mike Rose said that the Neighbourhood Plan sits beneath the Core Strategy and is purely about Backwell. The Joint Spatial Strategy is a regional structure. The Core Strategy and Neighbourhood Plan have to be reviewed in 2018 and then not again until 2021.

There being no further questions at this point Mike Rose continued:-

We would also now like to comment on some of the local situations which have been active in the last year or so.

Neighbourhood Plan Development Sites

You may recall the Neighbourhood Plan identified 5 sites where residential development would be encouraged. The current position on these is:

Moor Lane – two of the sites are adjoining, and are now controlled by Taylor Wimpey who now have outline consent for a development of 65 dwellings. Mike Veal will talk further about this site in a moment.

Ettrick Garage/Red Cross hall sites – These two adjoining sites now have planning consent for 8 modest sized town houses. The Benedicts car lot has now been cleared, and development is due to start this Summer. We believe this will be a real benefit to the village, introducing small houses very close to the village centre.

Land adjoining Manor Farm/New Inn site – These two sites are now in the same ownership. The NP suggested 4 houses on the manor farm site. In fact, planning permission has been granted for two large houses, and work has already started. We understand an application is imminent to convert the New Inn into two detached houses, and construct a further 5 new houses on the car park and back land. This will mean a total of 9 houses, 5 of which will have vehicular access via The Green, not direct onto West Town Road. BRA is awaiting precise details, but in principle we consider this will tidy up a real eyesore and be a benefit to the village. Whilst it is very sad to see the demise of the New Inn, we understand how it had become completely unviable in the current climate of pub usage.

Fortunately the Rising Sun has had the opposite fortune, and we strongly commend the new owners for their excellent make-over.!

MIKE VEAL then stepped in to give a Presentation about the PROPOSED MOOR LANE DEVELOPMENT including several slides as follows:-

As a resident of Longthorn on the Backwell Vale estate, it falls to me to present the BRA position on this proposed development of up to 65 houses, as I have also been the BRA representative in some of the meetings of Backwell Parish Council with North Somerset Council and the developers Taylor Wimpey.

I am conscious of the fact that BRA opposed the existing Backwell Vale development when in the year 1996 Bryant Homes initially sought permission to build 160 large homes. This was eventually reduced to 88 homes of which 10 small units were designated "affordable housing". Had this development not gone ahead it is unlikely that I and most of my neighbours would now be living in Backwell as when I retired here in 2002 and we downsized from our house in Bristol there was virtually nothing else available here to suit our requirements.

I would say that Backwell Vale has been a successful development and judging from the very low turnover in ownership the residents are very satisfied with life in Backwell. A few of them, however, have voiced opposition to the proposed further development by Taylor Wimpey off Moor Lane. Most of these objections, however, have not, we believe, been against the principle of building houses on this land, for which there is clearly a demand, but on the associated issues of access, traffic congestion and road safety, particularly in the section of Moor Lane between Station Road and "The Briars" which is the proposed entry point to the new estate. More of this later.....

In order to understand BRA's position on this proposed development, it is necessary to look briefly at the history of this land. Part of it was used many years ago for industrial purposes (sewage works, coal mine shaft and later a lorry park) and for a long time has been classified as a "brown field site" and, therefore, an area preferred by the Planning Authorities for future development.

In formulating the Backwell Neighbourhood Plan, Backwell Parish Council recognised this designation and nominated the site for mixed light industrial and residential use. They recognised that it would be unrealistic to formulate a Neighbourhood Plan which did not provide for a reasonable amount of new housing, as such a plan would have stood no chance of being approved by Local and Central Government. Some opponents of this proposal have said that Moor Lane was "sacrificed" for the sake of preserving Farleigh Fields but this is to put a warped interpretation on the facts. Residents from all over the Parish of Backwell have demonstrated enormous resistance to the proposed development of Farleigh Fields thereby illustrating the perceived value of that land and fear of the consequences of building a far greater number of houses in that location.

The Backwell Neighbourhood Plan received overwhelming support from the village with 98% of the 60% turnout at the Referendum voting in favour.

Although the proposal for entirely residential development, rather than mixed industrial and residential is not strictly in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan, it is felt that many residents would prefer this option rather than having commercial activity on this site.

Furthermore, since the agreement of the Neighbourhood Plan, planning consent has been given for a limited amount of light industrial development in Coles Quarry which it is felt will adequately fulfil the demand for commercial property in Backwell.

Backwell Parish Council and Backwell Residents' Association both took the view that it would be unrealistic to oppose the Moor Lane development outright as it was clear that North Somerset Council was very likely to approve it. Field 'A' was already owned by Taylor Wimpey and NSC which owns field 'B' had reached an agreement to sell it to Taylor Wimpey. NSC must clearly have given some indication to the developer as to their likely approval of the Scheme.

We, therefore, liaised with BPC to present a united front in attempting to ensure that any Planning Consent had adequate conditions attached to it to ensure the best possible result in minimising the adverse effects of further development and several meetings were held involving BPC, NSC, BRA and the developer. Our concerns majored on traffic congestion and the proposed mix of property types.

Congestion

This is already a problem in Moor Lane. When we came to live in Long-thorn in 2002 there was no congestion and this remained the case for a number of years. The problems first arose when NSC introduced car parking charges at Yatton Station which resulted in commuters driving to Backwell to avail themselves of the free car parking at Backwell Station. This resulted in an overflow in Backwell and commuters started parking in roads adjacent to the Station, notably Moor Lane, being the closest. NSC then increased the size of Backwell Station Car Park but simultaneously introduced a daily parking charge of £1.50 which many commuters have chosen not to pay by continuing to park in Moor Lane. The section between Station Road and "The Briars" is effectively a single track carriageway during the day causing all manner of problems with entry and exit on the junction of Station Road. It is worth mentioning that NSC have recently announced that from the 3 April this year the daily charge at Backwell Station will be increased to £2.40 which clearly will not help the situation.

In June 2016, I represented BRA at a meeting with an NSC Highways Officer in their Offices at Clevedon. BPC Chairman Bob Taylor and our NSC District Councillor Karen Barclay were also present. We put forward proposals for extension of double-yellow lines in the section of Moor Lane between Station Road and "The Briars" and also into the "The Briars". All 8 of the properties in that section of Moor Lane have very

adequate off road parking facilities and the residents do not generally park in the road. The problems continue to be caused by commuters. Although the response from the NSC Officer at that time fell well short of what we had hoped (he commented that some congestion was a good thing as it slowed the traffic down), it seems that our representations have been given further consideration. I learned recently from BPC Chairman Bob Taylor that further dialogue had taken place and he is optimistic that more satisfactory measures will be introduced to alleviate the situation.

Mix of Properties

Taylor Wimpey initially indicated their wish to build up to 65 three or four bedroom houses on the site. Developers can make more profit on these larger properties. Backwell Parish Council, however, and ourselves perceive a demand for a mix of properties in order to satisfy the needs of downsizers, first time buyers and older people who require bungalows. Although BRA is not now actively involved in negotiations with the developer and NSC we understand that BPC are still awaiting a further meeting with NSC and we are liaising regularly with BPC in order to be appraised of any further proposals from the developer and we are monitoring the position carefully.

This application has been a very protracted process and NSC have still not posted a definitive formal Consent in their web site but they have made public their intention to approve development on the site. We suspect that Taylor Wimpey have not been progressing this application urgently as they have another much larger “iron in the fire” relating to land to the west of Backwell on which we understand they have an option to purchase and which presents a potentially much greater threat to the Backwell environment with proposals to build 800 plus houses. Are there any questions?

Jack Griffiths said that when Amberlands was built the Planning Application indicated the road curving around with a second railway bridge so that there would have been no need for traffic lights.

Elizabeth Griffiths said that when Bryant Homes built the Backwell Vale development they promised road widening on Station Road to create a passing lane which would have eased the traffic congestion on the junction with Moor Lane but this never happened.

Bill Lee said that when the Backwell Station car park was free to commuters Yatton Station car park charged for parking hence the number of commuters who travel to Backwell for free parking and cheaper train fares.

Mike Rose replied that when NSC extended the car park they introduced a charge to cover the cost of the extension but it remained cheaper than Yatton so commuters still travelled to Backwell.

Malcolm Chamberlain said that all the cars parked in Moor Lane are not commuters but many are residents' cars. Charges at the Station car park are very low and the car park is mostly full. You do not want to push people onto the roads to park but the charges must be filling some basic purpose. It is a well planned car park and will

cost money to maintain. We do not want Council tax to go up and land which is a resource has to be paid for.

Mike Rose then continued his Presentation:-

Coles Quarry – The saga of the development of this important site rolls on! You will recall the owners obtained consent for 15 industrial units in early 2015. They subsequently submitted a further application for a revised layout and a somewhat larger scheme. This has been stalled in the Planning system for over a year now, and despite statement from the developers that they are making progress, there is little evidence.

In the meantime, they have slowly but surely re-furbished the old weighbridge house and adjoining outbuildings – which they were able to do under development rights. The appearance is much improved, but it would be good to see the building completed and occupied. BRA continues to monitor activities and keep in touch with the developers agent.

We know of many residents ongoing concern about the effect on traffic in Dark Lane created by this development, but, in reality, nothing can be done until development of the main site is underway.

We regularly monitor new development applications, but usually only comment if we think there are important general principles which need addressing. We can quote two examples:

- a) A renewed application to build 4 large houses on the site of the old BT Research station on the top of Backwell Hill. The applicants are using the justification that this is a brownfield site. BRA believes this is a historical anomaly in what is otherwise Green Belt, and the location is highly inaccessible and unsustainable, and should therefore be rejected – as indeed a similar application was last year.

KEITH RICHES then stepped in to speak on the following:-

- b) Chorleys yard

And Dark lane traffic issues

Chorley's Yard – Planning Application

Since MICA closed down, an application has been submitted to NSC to build 4 houses in Chorley's Yard. Our view is that this is a mixed blessing. Assuming the retail premises could still function without the yard, it would be an excellent site for an appropriate housing development. However, we think the proposal is a classic case of over development and would not necessarily comply with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan relating to Backwell Local Centre. BRA has registered an objection on this basis.

Traffic Issues

Backwell's traffic issues were mentioned in the Neighbourhood Plan but are worsening and remain a serious worry to many residents. The main road gets ever

busier at peak times, with both through traffic and local traffic. However, Station Road and Dark Lane give rise to more dangerous hazards, particularly at school in/out times.

Dark Lane – when the original planning application for Coles Quarry was being considered by NSC, BRA lobbied hard for a 20 mph limit down Dark Lane to the cross roads. A condition requiring the developer to contribute to the cost of this was included when the application was granted and that condition has been complied with. NSC has done a number of investigations and spent a day monitoring traffic speed. The upshot of all this is a view by the NSC Highways Department that traffic speeds are not widely exceeding the 30mph limit and the imposition of a 20 limit would have little effect without further traffic calming measures such as speed bumps and road narrowing, which most folk think would be undesirable. This situation is being kept under review by our Parish Council and may be re-considered when Coles Quarry traffic increases. I have no doubt there are many residents, especially parents of children at the Junior school, who are still worried about the situation. The one brighter spot to report is that, again after much lobbying by BRA, the new contract with Biffa from 1st March stipulates that Heavy Goods Vehicles shall not enter or leave the Recycling Centre during school in/out times. Obviously this situation will be closely monitored.

Station Road – a very busy road with local traffic and folk going to and from Nailsea. Again, the situation is worst at school in/out times and there have been at least three incidents over the last year, thankfully without serious injury. A number of residents have expressed concern directly to the Parish Council. A small working party has been set up and NSC Highways department has been out to take a look. They are currently considering several proposals including a pedestrian crossing close to Waverley Road. Meanwhile the Parish Council is trying to encourage residents to trim back hedges and banks to increase the width of the wholly inadequate pavement.

At a more general level, you will all be aware that Bristol has imposed 20mph limits widely throughout the city – these may have reduced traffic speeds a little, but I do not think they are not routinely enforced.

Here in Backwell, one of our committee members has pursued the idea of re-introducing a Community Speedwatch scheme. We have mentioned this in a newsletter and asked for volunteers but none have been forthcoming as yet. These schemes are in use elsewhere and have been tried in Backwell in the past. They can help to reduce speeds but the volunteers have often reported unpleasant interactions with motorists.

Of one thing we can be sure, traffic density is set to continue its remorseless increase. This has to be one of the main reasons for us to resist large, inappropriate development here and across North Somerset. Just to mention two local examples – the Taylor Wimpey development off Moor Lane will clearly give rise to more traffic along Station Road. Charles Church's proposals for nearly 4 times as many houses on

Farleigh Fields are seen by a few folk to be a better plan because they would have direct access onto the larger A370. However, it must also be taken into consideration that those new residents would also use Station Road.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are no easy answers to our traffic issues but we do look forward to hearing your views.

David Radcliffe said that there is a lay by for buses but not there anymore. BPC were going to investigate and it is being looked into at the moment with the Bus Company.

Ted Smallbone said that in other areas where there is a School nearby traffic beacon comes up to restrict to 20 mph. There are signs around the Junior School. There is a yellow box by the School entrance leading onto Station Road. Hit on the shoulder twice by bus wing mirrors. Jean Knight said there was a 20 mph traffic beacon in Station Road.

Keith Riches said that we have not come up with a solution as yet.

Bill Lee said that Karen Barclay produced a transport strategy and looked at 20 mph speed limits. National criteria is that they will not work without additional physical calming measures.

Malcolm Reed, Farleigh Road suggested introducing a single lane with traffic lights to enable wider pavements to be installed.

Keith Riches said that traffic density would be intense.

Bill Lee reiterated that we need to build more infrastructure. Loads of money was spent on the link road near Bristol. We should be pressing the Government for more money.

Brenda Dobson said she had spoken to Backwell School about pupils walking three or four abreast on the pavement and on the road. It is very dangerous for drivers as well as pedestrians at that time because of the School children. BPC have mentioned this to the School and the Headmaster has spoken to the children but it does not seem to work.

Paul Fricker, Church Town said that all vehicle movement should be restricted in relation to the recycling.

Keith Riches said that it was never put into the contract with Kier but is now in the new contract with the Recycling Company Biffa. Karen Barclay on behalf of NSC is looking at road lay out modifications as proposed by the Coles Quarry developer. The tip will be closed a couple of days a week but not at weekends. He confirmed that BRA did not oppose the initial Coles Quarry Planning Application but concentrated on trying to get the best conditions we could as it was clear that NSC were minded to give their consent. We did not support the revised Application for a greater number of units.

GEOFF WELLS stepped in here and first of all thanked Keith Riches for saying what a good job the Committee does but forgot to thank himself. Keith does a great deal as Chairman. He then went on to talk about the history of **PLANNING APPLICATIONS ON FARLEIGH FIELDS** and gave the following Presentation illustrated with slides.

He started off by saying that Farleigh Fields is something special and should not be built on. He lives near the playing fields and said he is not a nimby. It is agricultural land – arable, cattle grazing and sheep. The land that would be left after building would not be viable for farming. There is 30 years of history and BPC, BRA and the residents of Backwell have fought against development quite a few times during that period. This evening, I am going to talk about the last couple of years. The first application was in 2015 for 340 houses. There were 460 objections. BRA is a fantastic organisation for e-mailing our members and organising leaflet drops around the village. Having local people on the Working Party was so useful. Charles Church listened to those 460 comments and reduced their application to 220 houses. 450 residents formally objected. NSC then refused the application and Charles Church decided to take it to Appeal. In October last year 353 people took the trouble to formally oppose the Appeal. He and Val spent a couple of evenings going through the comments on the web site and did a list of names and addresses of those people and read all of their comments. They decided to see where in the village the comments came from. The breakdown was that 82 people whose houses abut Farleigh Fields left comments. There were 161 comments from people living in the wider area around the village centre, 21 comments in Rushmoor Road and 40 in the area near the Station. Chapel Hill and Backwell Road had 6. This proved a point that Farleigh Fields is loved by the whole village. The Inquiry will be chaired by one Inspector. Supporting the Appeal will be Charles Church and their Legal Team and on the other side against the Appeal will be NSC, BPC, BRA and 350 residents and our Legal Team.

MIKE ROSE then stepped back in to talk about the **FARLEIGH FIELDS PUBLIC INQUIRY** as follows:-

Geoff has explained the village's input into this saga so far. I am now going to give a brief summary of what the Inquiry is about.

Charles Church submitted an application for 340 houses which they subsequently reduced to 220. This application was refused by North Somerset Council, and CC have chosen to appeal against this refusal – leading to a formal Public Inquiry in front of an Inspector.

This Inquiry commences on Tuesday 14 March and is listed to last 8 days –although we think this will be shortened by at least one day. The inquiry is to be held at Weston Town Hall – 10.00 – 4.00 each day. However the exception to this is Thursday 16 March, when the Inquiry is at Backwell Parish Hall – from 1.00 – 4.00 p.m.

North Somerset are defending the Appeal. Backwell Parish Council has also chosen to be a co-defendant. After a lot of discussion the Residents Association has decided to join forces with the Parish Council. A joint working party has been set up to deal with

the matter, with representatives from both the Parish Council and BRA. We have been formally accepted as what is known as a "Rule 6 Party", which means we are entitled to see all the papers prepared by the other parties, and this is reciprocated.

At a late stage, Taylor Wimpey also applied to be a Rule 6 party. It is quite unusual for a rival developer to get involved in this way, but TW has chosen to prepare a Statement effectively seeking to rubbish CC's case, and suggesting an alternative for development might be land at the western edge of Backwell – what a surprise!! However, again rather strangely, TW has now withdrawn somewhat, and has chosen not to be represented at the Inquiry.

We have been strongly advised that a continued show of support by residents **IS** important. **Anyone** is entitled to speak at the Inquiry. If anyone here feels they would like to do so – please speak to me afterwards.

In addition, we have already prepared a list of about 20 people who have agreed to speak. Ideally you would raise just one or perhaps two reasons why you believe Backwell would be diminished if any part of Farleigh Fields was to be developed, and why you enjoy these fields.

You would be able to select the approximate date and time when you spoke, and it is highly unlikely you would be cross-examined.

So, again anyone who feels they would like to speak – please let me know.

Remember - **everyone is entitled to attend** any part of the Inquiry. If anyone wants details of how to get to Weston Town Hall, or would like a lift –again please speak afterwards – the more the merrier please!!

Mike Timms had a question about the cost.

Mike Rose replied that NSC are quite independently funding this Appeal and employing a very expensive Barrister. They are investing quite a lot of money in this. A Solicitor Advocate not a Barrister is acting on behalf of BPC and BRA and this is considerably cheaper.

Martin Powell, Farleigh Road asked if Charles Church win does it mean that this application as it stands goes through?

Mike Rose replied that NSC and BPC have asked that whatever the decision of the Inspector the final decision will be called into the Secretary of State. He may like to favour localism. With regard to the Section 106 Agreement which accompanies Planning Consent, Charles Church would have to make a series of contributions. We would need to see those proposals in detail and there would be quite a few planning conditions.

Martin Powell asked if any local politician is going to help.

Mike Rose replied that our NSC Councillor Karen Barclay is very supportive to do what she can. She attends meetings with Liam Fox who is on very friendly terms with the Minister. He said it might be something we could take up further with Karen Barclay.

Brian Lights asked whether, if Charles Church lose, they will be disallowed from coming back for a number of years.

Mike Rose replied “No” but they would probably await the introduction of even more houses having to be built in Backwell.

There being no further questions Keith Riches declared the Meeting closed.

Stuart Williams stood up and thanked the Committee for their hard work on behalf of all those attending the meeting.