

BRA Bulletin - April 11th 2018
Farleigh Fields Decision and other News

(this bulletin is also attached as a WORD file, if you wish to print it)

Dear Member

We hope that everyone in Backwell knows that the appeal by Charles Church against North Somerset Council's (NSC) decision to refuse the development on Farleigh Fields was dismissed. This bulletin summarises where we are now, and the implications of this decision.

Summary of History

June 2016 North Somerset Council refused planning permission for 220 houses on Farleigh Fields. Charles Church appealed against this decision.

March 2017 An 8-day hearing at Weston-super-Mare was held by a Planning Inspector, including a half-day session at Backwell Parish Hall.

July 2017 The Inspector recommended that the appeal be dismissed.

March 2018 The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, had the final say, which could have overturned the Inspector's decision. He took into account events that had occurred after March 2017, which were the main reason for the delay in this final decision. Thankfully, he concluded that the appeal be dismissed.

Before May 9th 2018 Chas Church can register an appeal to the High Court within a 6-week period, but only on a point of law.

The Full Documents

These can be viewed on the BRA website under "News and Hot Topics". There are 104 pages in the file, which gives the Inspector's deliberations, and the letter from the Sec of State. Much of this is technical material regarding NSC housing numbers, planning frameworks and core strategies. The representations given by residents who went to Weston to address the hearing are given in full, and the rationale from the Inspector and Sec of State for their decisions are both very interesting.

Why was the Appeal dismissed?

We will never know how much weight the Inspector and Sec of State gave to the various considerations, but the reports give a general picture.

- A. Technical matters such as housing numbers in North Somerset land supply and core strategy were fiercely debated at Weston. Thankfully, on balance, it was concluded that they did not require housing on Farleigh Fields.

- B. The Backwell Neighbourhood Plan, suggests moderate numbers of houses (mainly at Moor Lane), but **not** on Farleigh Fields. It was a key document.
- C. The character and setting of the fields were considered significant by the Inspector. These featured in most of the representations by residents at Weston. Additionally, the Inspector was impressed by the number of comments made by residents. There were 929 written comments on the original application (only 6 in favour) and 334 comments on the Appeal (only 2 in favour)

Local Green Space

North Somerset Council has confirmed that part of Farleigh Fields has been designated a Local Green Space. This provides protection against development similar to land that is in the Green Belt. The two fields are the top one below the church, and the middle lower field which drops down towards the Leisure Centre. These are both crossed by the footpath. The recent application did not propose using these fields for housing, but this new designation confirms that these two fields are considered very special. Our popular Backwell Lake area has also been made a Local Green Space.

Thanks

Several organisations including Backwell Parish Council and BRA contributed to the successful outcome, and we worked closely together. North Somerset Council provided the barrister, as they were defending their decision, and their staff worked hard on the case, particularly on the technical issues; Backwell Parish Council led our working party which employed our advisers. The residents who went to Weston to speak at the Inquiry delivered plenty of passion, supported by the hundreds of people who took the trouble to make their views known to the Inspector with their letters, emails etc. Thank you so much to every BRA member. Your subscriptions and donations enabled us to contribute to the “fighting fund” for us to employ highly effective advisers. Finally, all the work that went into the making of the Neighbourhood Plan over four years (chaired by Chris Perry) proved to be time very well spent!

Most BRA communications are sent by email. However, sometimes we think that our newsletters are essential for all the village. We should like therefore to give a big thank you to our band of deliverers who walked the streets popping these through letter boxes. We are sure that these were a big factor in securing so many comments.

Can we relax?

Not for long!! Even if Charles Church does not find a legal point to challenge the Farleigh Fields decision, they still own Farleigh Fields and can submit another application!! They would only do this if they felt that the external factors had changed significantly. Also, our Neighbourhood Plan needs to be updated in the near future.

The other big issues are the Joint Spatial Plan for our region with the 700 houses at Grove Farm suggested for Backwell, along with the proposal by Bristol Airport for further expansion. We are advised that there will be a Public Examination of the JSP later this year, where Backwell will need representation.

Have you paid your BRA subscription for 2018?

At the moment, any submission by BRA can be supported by a statement that “we represent almost 400 households”. We have been delighted by the level of support this year, and by the high number of new members. We will be well over 400 if all of our members from 2017 pay for 2018 in the near future, which will be even more impressive. On the financial side, we have already made a contribution to the early work on the JSP and will use more funds to continue this. It is important to remember that NSC is so far **supporting** the current version of the JSP, so Backwell may be fighting some of the future battles on its own. If you have not sent us your 2018 subscription please do so, by any of the usual routes shown in the membership section of our website. We will be most grateful.

Dates for your Diary

The Annual Parish Council Meeting of Electors will be held on Thursday 26th April at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall, to which all residents are invited. The agenda for the meeting is on the BPC website. This is an opportunity to ask questions and give your views on the Parish Council's performance. Please submit your questions to Mrs J Stone, Clerk, Backwell Parish Council, by 20th April 2018. (43 Rodney Road, Backwell, BS48 3HW. Tel 01275 464653 or email clerk@backwell-pc.gov.uk)

Many of our members have sought clarification of the planning consent details for the proposed development in Moor Lane for 65 houses, particularly with regard to the Section 106 agreement. These matters will be included in the Parish Council's Chairman's report at the meeting.

Bristol Metro This much delayed service will take its first steps on Tuesday 29th May. The M3 service operates from the city centre to Emerson's Green, along the M32, and will be FREE until Wed 6th June. This is a great chance to see what all the fuss and disturbance has all been about! Other lines, M1 and M2, will follow later.

Best wishes

From your BRA Committee

11th April 2018

Visit our website on
Email us at

www.backwellresidents.org.uk
backwellresidents@btinternet.com