**BACKWELL RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATION**

Hon Secretary Mike Veal, 36 Long-thorn, Backwell, BS48 3GY

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Director of Development and Environment

North Somerset Council

Town Hall

Weston-super-Mare BS23 1UJ

Dear Sir

NSC (VARIOUS ROADS, NORTH SOMERSET) (PROHIBITION OF MOTOR VEHICLES) ORDER 2021

I am writing on behalf of Backwell Residents’ Association (BRA), a membership organisation with over 400 paid up households which seeks to protect and promote the interests of local residents within the village of Backwell. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. BRA received notification of your Active Travel Consultation some time ago, and had been expecting an opportunity to comment on proposals relating to Nailsea and the local rural lanes.

The road closure notice and associated documents dated 31 March therefore came as a surprise. The Order proposed in this announcement would have had significant repercussions and we note that the Council has now, quite correctly, withdrawn the Order so that the proposals can be aired through a proper Consultation process.

BRA fully supports the general sentiment of increasing Active Travel for those who are able, have the time and noting weather constraints. If this includes provision of better routes for walking and cycling, (whilst discouraging vehicle use), it could certainly improve physical and mental health, and, be good for the environment.

BRA wishes to raise the following issues and questions, in no particular order, in the hope that the Council will take them into account when designing the format of its Public Consultation on this issue.

1) What traffic surveys have been conducted to establish not only the number of journeys, but also the reasons for journeys along these lanes? Noting the ‘exemptions’, BRA questions just how much the traffic volumes on the lanes would be reduced by these measures.

2) What level of compliance is expected and what enforcement measures are being contemplated? Noting how little capacity the police have for the enforcement of speed limits, it is unrealistic to expect them to enforce these new proposals. It seems likely that many drivers will ’take a chance’ on not being caught.

3) What assessments have been made about the routes that would be used by diverted traffic? These routes are longer, therefore more fuel is used, causing more pollution. These journeys would also take longer, and time is money to businesses. Have these factors been assessed? Many roads in the area such as Station Road, Backwell and the main roads through Tickenham and Yatton are already extremely busy and cause pollution in residential areas, in addition to safety concerns near schools and shops.

4) How did NSC decide on the list of lanes to be included? There are many other narrow lanes which currently take too much traffic; as just five examples, Washing Pound Lane and the Causeway near Tickenham, Cheston Combe, Backwell Hill Road and Hyatts Wood Road.

5) It is interesting that NSC proposed these measures on lanes around Nailsea. BRA strongly believes that the provision of appropriate roads in and out of Nailsea were needed long ago but have never been provided; the situation is getting worse with each new housing development. The majority of vehicular journeys along these lanes are being made because the alternative routes are either too busy or too far off a direct route. The expression ‘Rat Running’ is considered unhelpful and emotive in this context. **The volume of traffic along these lanes is getting worse, and is a painful demonstration of the inadequacy of other routes in and out of Nailsea. This whole situation needs to be addressed in a coherent manner with the new Local Plan and a Joint Local Transport Plan.**

6) As just two examples of unfortunate consequences of the now withdrawn Order, would it be right to prevent folk who cannot walk or cycle any distance from driving to Clevedon from Backwell across the moors, or to prevent someone who cannot walk far who wishes to sit and watch wildlife out in the country?

7) Has NSC taken into account the local effects of temporary, unplanned motorway closures which happen all too often?

8) The current ‘National Speed Limit’ along these lanes seems increasingly inappropriate.

9) Much of this area is blessed with a comprehensive network of footpaths; it would be good to see access for all improved. Perhaps some footpaths could be upgraded to ‘Restricted Access By-ways’/Bridleways with improved surfaces?

10) The Festival Way is very well used, despite its limitations around Long Ashton, and its abrupt western termination. **We need more joined-up routes for cyclists and pedestrians which are free of other traffic.**

11)  If, in due course and after consultation, the Council decides to proceed with similar proposals, BRA suggests that they should be implemented on a phased basis to allow a proper assessment of the consequences. If a ‘first phase’ is to be implemented in the Backwell area, Chapel Hill, Backwell Bow and Backwell Common seem to be the best candidates.

Final Comments

We have tried to include all the comments, queries and suggestions raised by our members. In principle, BRA will continue to support NSC’s Active Travel Initiative, but recommends that the earlier proposals need a major re-think.

Yours sincerely

M J Veal

Hon Secretary, Backwell Residents’ Association

c.c. District Councillors: Bridget Petty and James Tonkin, Sarah Ould, Chair, Backwell PC