**NORTH SOMERSET NEW HOUSING ALLOCATION**

**REQUEST TO DR LIAM FOX FROM BACKWELL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION. (BRA)**

This note is a request to you to urgently address the issue of the Gov’t’s current new housing criteria.

During the last 2 or 3 years the Government pursued a policy of identifying new housing requirements by way of an algorithm. This led to some strange and in some cases difficult to achieve targets – leading to a number of challenges by opponents of this policy. Some analysts felt it would increase the calculated housing need in “Tory held suburbs and shires.” Other analysts felt there was a greater need for concentrations of new homes in urban areas – towns and cities. Others felt the priority was for housing to follow employment.

 In April of this year the Gov’t decided to abandon the algorithm approach, or at least “tweak the system”. This month, the current minister – Michael Gove – has proposed a new planning formula - more development in the North and Midlands, and less in the south - all part of the Gov’t’s levelling up policy.

However - our understanding is that, unless and until formally changed, the Gov’t stance for North Somerset is an allocation of 20000+ new homes. In common with other local organizations, BRA considers this algorithmic figure is just too high. We fully accept the need for new development (including in Backwell) but in the District as a whole - with substantial areas unavailable for development – Green Belt, AONB, flood plain etc, the current allocation is unsustainable. Our District has a limited infrastructure with only marginal improvements to cope with the level of traffic. In addition, there is just not enough local employment, or suitable, accessible land for new employment, to justify these housing numbers, and historic build rates don’t justify this level.

Many local residents feel that North Somerset has already lost many acres of green field to recent development, and an extra 20000+ houses seems unrealistic and unsustainable – not wise given our topography and lack of employment sites.

Our immediate concern is that North Somerset Council (NSC) is poised to issue its draft Local Plan 2038, with a major priority assumption that it needs to find sites for 20000+ homes.

It may well be that this is now an out-of-date assumption. There is an urgent need for the Gov’t. to issue its revised guidelines - to enable NSC to make any necessary changes to its draft strategy.

**BRA therefore asks you, as a matter of priority, to use your influence to get the Minister to issue more definitive guidance on new housing targets – which would, ideally, enable NSC to update and reduce to a more appropriate and sustainable level - its new homes target allocation in its forthcoming Local Plan.**

MLR/27/11/21