

EVIDENCE BASE C: LIVING WITHIN ENVIRONMENTAL LIMITS: Sustainability, Green Belt, Strategic Gap

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NPPF Introduction:

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy 'Securing the Future' sets out five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development: living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

Core Strategy policy CS1:

North Somerset Council (NSC) is committed to reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change, mitigating further impacts and supporting adaptation to its effects.....:

C.1. NSC's environmentally focused objectives, at paragraph 3.8 of the Core Strategy, are:

- reducing unsustainable carbon emissions;
- making all buildings more sustainable;
- encouraging sustainable transport patterns; and
- planning for a sustainable distribution of land uses.

C.2. **Reducing unsustainable carbon emissions.** There is growing evidence that the climate is warming due to increasing amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. *'Because of its long lifespan, as we emit more CO₂ from burning fossil fuels and other activities, the amount of CO₂ will continue to rise. This means the extra CO₂ will trap more and more of the sun's heat, and this will warm our climate.'* <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate-change/guide/what-is-it/why>

C.3. The government is committed to a target that 15%* of our energy demand will be met by renewable energy, in the most cost effective way, by 2020. * National Renewable Energy Action Plan.

PLANNING POLICY: SUSTAINABILITY 1. Proposals for the generation of renewable energy will be supported provided the adverse impacts are satisfactorily addressed. Appropriate community led renewable energy schemes will be encouraged.

C.4. **Making buildings more sustainable.** The Government plans to move towards zero carbon for all new homes by 2016 and all non-domestic buildings by 2019 through a 10 year programme of change to the Building Regulations. There are indications however that Government may change the approach to Code levels requiring that policies in CS2 will need to be modified.



C.5. The Core Strategy Policy CS2 for new development requires:

- a) designs that are energy efficient and designed to reduce their energy demands;
- b) the use of on-site renewable energy sources or by linking with/contributing to available local off-site renewable energy sources to meet a minimum of 10% of energy use;
- c) a minimum of Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 for all new dwellings from October 2010, Level 4 from 2013, rising to Level 6 (zero carbon) by 2016;
- d) developments of 10 or more new homes to be constructed to the Lifetime Homes standard from 2013.

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PLANNING POLICY: SUSTAINABILITY 2. New dwellings will be required to meet the requirements of CS2, and new standards, as these are introduced by the Building Regulations.

C.6. *BACKWELL FUTURE* notes the Government's Green Deal initiative to reduce energy use in existing properties.

PLANNING POLICY: SUSTAINABILITY 3. Proposals that make existing properties more sustainable will be supported provided the aesthetic impact, noise and emissions are environmentally and socially acceptable.



The A370 near the New Inn July 2012

C.7. **Drainage.** Climate change and other factors present an increasing risk of intense rainfall. Some areas of the village, mainly highways, already experience flash flooding and it is

vital that run-off from new development does not exacerbate the situation. Core Strategy CS3 refers.

PLANNING POLICY: SUSTAINABILITY 4. New development should include sustainable drainage systems to reduce or eliminate surface water run-off to ensure that the development does not increase the flood risk. Environmental infrastructure should be integrated into the design of building and landscaping features, and be easily maintained.



A370 Farleigh Road closed 21st November 2012

C.8. Recent flooding appears to have been caused either by inadequate maintenance of the drainage system or by a lack of capacity. North Somerset Council cleared parts of the system in January 2013. The Parish Council will monitor the situation and keep North Somerset Council informed of priority needs.

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C.9. Encouraging sustainable transport. The Core Strategy at CS10 is supported viz:

CS10: Transportation and movement

Travel management policies and development proposals that encourage an improved and integrated transport network and allow for a wide choice of modes of transport as a means of access to jobs, homes, services and facilities will be encouraged and supported. Transport schemes should:

- *enhance the facilities for pedestrians, including those with reduced mobility, and other users such as cyclists;*
- *deliver better local bus, rail and rapid transit services in partnership with operators;*
- *develop innovative and adaptable approaches to public transport in the rural areas of the district*

C.10. A more frequent X1 bus service has been recently introduced but it is notable that no significant improvements are proposed to the major highways through Backwell. Problems of congestion in Backwell are described in the Highways and Transport section of *BACKWELL FUTURE*.

C.11. To a large extent Backwell is unable to influence ‘through commuting’ that occurs through the centre of the village. *BACKWELL FUTURE* therefore focuses on sustainable transport relating to the everyday journeys made by residents, within the village, as an exemplar which, if replicated elsewhere, might ease congestion on the A370 and Station Road as well as improving the sustainability of local travel and the quality of life for residents. EVIDENCE BASE D refers.

C.12. The 2010 Backwell Community Plan reported that 10% of Backwellians commute by bus or rail, 79% by motorised private transport whilst 11% commute by walking or cycling. A local cyclist reports:

‘the existing road network in Backwell is an overwhelmingly hostile environment for cyclists and not suitable for less confident cyclists and children’

C.13. Greater use of public transport, and increased walking and cycling would improve transport sustainability and help reduce highway congestion. The Parish Council will therefore set up a Working Party, as proposed in the Highways and Transport section, to develop a plan to encourage residents to reduce reliance on private motorised vehicles by supporting initiatives to increase the use of public transport, cycling, walking, car sharing and other sustainable transport modes. The Working Party will develop plans that:

- a) Work towards the development of an integrated network of safe walking and cycling routes linking the different areas of the village, and including safe routes to and between the schools;
- b) Ensure that proposals for new developments include where feasible provision for pedestrians and cyclists to access, or provide part of, an integrated network;
- c) Provide cycle racks/stands and child buggy parks at Local Centre and public buildings in the village;
- d) Investigate the creation of a mountain bike track on Backwell Hill to encourage interest in cycling;
- e) Lobby the transport utilities to introduce a smart (oyster) card scheme with discounted ticket rates for travel from Backwell by train and bus;
- f) Support schemes promoting Car Share (2+ commuting) and a Car Club (car hire only when needed);
- g) Help promote NSC’s sustainable travel grant scheme.

C.14. All proposals will be subject to consultation with residents.

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Part of the Festival Way that now extends from Backwell Chapel Hill to Bristol

In May 2013 the Festival Way, a largely traffic-free safe cycle route, was completed linking Bristol to Ashton Court, Long Ashton, Flax Bourton and Nailsea. The route is signed at the junction of Station Road and Backwell Common and Backwell cyclists gain access to it at the bottom of Chapel Hill. But there is no direct connection with the main village area of Backwell. There is a need to work with North Somerset Council and local landowners to bring forward proposals to provide a link into Backwell. See EVIDENCE BASE Q.

- C.15. The Parish Council will consult the community about the development of local initiatives, with the emphasis on providing safe travel, other than by car, for pedestrians, young families with prams, electric wheel chairs and cycling.
- C.16. The Parish Council will encourage other sustainability initiatives when appropriate. Examples are:

- a) The use of battery driven cars and the provision of high speed charging points at designated locations;
- b) The creation of a local trader / supplier directory, equivalent to that now provided in the Chew Valley, to reduce 'food miles';
- c) Encouraging the community to grow more food at home;
- d) The provision of allotments, additional to those available at Fairfield Road, when the waiting list justifies this;
- e) The provision of community orchards subject to land availability;

C.17. 'Sustainable Backwell' is a group of residents taking action to deal with issues of climate change and increasing energy costs. Volunteers are working on energy, local food and transport sustainability issues. The Parish Council envisages a partnership with *Sustainable Backwell*, other organisations and the community in promoting sustainability initiatives.

C.18. 'Sustainable Backwell' have proposals for a community wind turbine. Backwell Parish Council will support suitable proposals that accord with Policy SUSTAINABILITY 1.

C.19. **Planning for a sustainable distribution of land uses.**

- a) **Green Belt.** Core Strategy policy CS6 prescribes no change in the Green Belt and is supported by *BACKWELL FUTURE*.

PLANNING POLICY: SUSTAINABILITY 5. Development that would harm the purposes of the Green Belt will not be permitted.

- b) **Local Green Space.** Section 12 of *BACKWELL FUTURE* designates two areas of sustainable Local Green Space to safeguard areas special to the community.
- c) **Agricultural Land.** EVIDENCE BASE T explains that, in considering proposals for development on agricultural land, priority will be given to keeping the best and most versatile land. The Evidence Base identifies these areas.

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d) **Strategic Gap.** Core Strategy policy CS19 protects strategic gaps to help retain the separate identity of settlements. It identifies the area between Backwell and Nailsea but does not specify the boundary. *BACKWELL FUTURE* defines the boundary of the strategic gap within Backwell Parish as shown on the map opposite.

PLANNING POLICY: SUSTAINABILITY 6.
Development that would harm the purposes of the designated Strategic Gap will not be permitted.

The map shows the Green Belt (hatched green) and the designated Strategic Gap (solid green). Nailsea Town Council has yet to decide the extent of the Gap on the Nailsea side of the parish boundary.

The Strategic Gap excludes the Station car park and proposed extension. The Gap would not preclude the construction of a new pedestrian and cycling route between Backwell and Nailsea.



Backwell Lake is within the Strategic Gap

The Strategic Gap (between Backwell and Nailsea) on the Backwell side of the Backwell/Nailsea parish boundary

