

## EVIDENCE BASE M: RECREATION, SPORT, COMMUNITY FACILITIES and HERITAGE ASSETS

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#### NPPF paragraphs 70 and 73:

*Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities....planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities...*

#### Core Strategy policy CS27:

*Existing facilities will be safeguarded from alternative use unless suitable alternative facilities can be made available or the existing facilities are surplus to requirements.*

M.1 The Backwell community enjoys numerous recreational, sporting and spiritual organisations and facilities. The principal facilities are located at:

- The Parish and WI Halls; • Backwell Playhouse;
- Backwell Leisure Centre, • Backwell Village Club;
- Children's play areas at Moor Lane and Downside;
- Churches (3); • Scouts and Guides Hut;
- Backwell Playing Fields Charity:
  - Bowls Club, Tennis Club, Judo Club;
  - Senior Football Club;
  - Junior Girls and Boys Football Club;
  - Children's play areas (2), Youth Club.

M.2 Local facilities assist the sustainability of the community since they minimise transport needs. Adequate investment is needed to replace and upgrade facilities and three notable areas of concern have been identified:

- a) **Backwell Youth Club.** In recent years this was funded by North Somerset and Backwell Parish Councils but North Somerset closed its Youth Service funding in April 2012. The Parish Council considers that the Youth Club is an essential community facility. It has approved funding of £12000 in 2014/15 to sustain the Club and expects to continue funding in future years provided the successful management arrangements continue.



**Backwell Youth Club**

- b) **Backwell Playing Fields Charity.** This not-for-profit organisation is run by local volunteers. Its income derives from voluntary donations, grants and rents paid by the various clubs that use the recreational land, plus local fundraising. Income is sufficient for routine maintenance and to make modest improvements. Major improvements require external funding.

- The Parish Council provided £21,000 for car park surfacing conditional upon the Charity match funding. Match funding was achieved by the playing fields clubs, local businesses and the community and the work proceeded in June 2013.

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- Recently the Charity announced that long standing Trustees were standing down and that its future management arrangements were in doubt. The Parish Council agreed, in principle, to make a donation to cover the first year cost of a part-time management post to safeguard the future of the Charity. The Council will consider future funding when annual budgets are reviewed.
- c) **Backwell Leisure Centre.** The 2010 Backwell Community Plan identified the importance that the community places in these facilities, in particular the swimming pool. It is noted with concern that no major funding for long term upkeep is contained in North Somerset Council's plans.
- M.3 Each year Backwell Parish Council provides grants to local organisations. Total grants budgeted for 2014/15 amount to £42,000 out of an estimated income of £130,000.
- M.4 The Localism Act contains measures to achieve a substantial shift in power away from central government and towards local communities. It should therefore be expected that the Parish Council will receive greater powers and responsibilities within the timescale of *BACKWELL FUTURE*. Therefore real increases in the Parish Precept may be required to deliver the services that the Localism Act requires to be locally managed.
- M.5 Thriving local organisations with adequate facilities are vital to the well-being and sustainability of the community. The Parish Council will help the community by continuing appropriate financial support. The Council will not however take over the management of any existing organisation.
- M.6 **Possible future Community Centre.** Functions are held at many venues in the village notably at the Parish and Women's Institute Halls, West Town Methodist Church, St Andrew's Church, rooms at local schools and the Backwell Playhouse.
- M.7 The existing Backwell halls are well used, well run, have been improved over the years and are much appreciated. They are

however limited in scope by their design and facilities. Their modest size, limited kitchen facilities, lack of committee rooms and inadequate car parking can be problematic. Improvements are planned for the Parish Hall.

- M.8 The 2010 Backwell Community Plan records that 61% of residents, that expressed an opinion, agreed that Backwell should aspire to a multi-purpose Community Centre.
- M.9 Many nearby villages have newer, larger, better equipped halls and are focal points for children, young people and adult groups.



Parish Hall

WI Hall

- M.10 A multi-purpose community centre in Backwell could provide:
- a café possibly with internet facilities, a small library;
  - a large sectionalised hall and modern well equipped kitchen;
  - committee rooms, meeting area for young people, theatre;
  - parking and public conveniences;
  - a more accessible Parish Council office.
- Possible options are:
- M.11 **Option 1: Expansion of existing facilities**
- a) The Parish Hall has served the village well for 100 years and is in constant use. It is a much loved village landmark and occupies possibly the prime location for a community centre. However it was clearly designed for a different era, lacks convenient storage facilities, meeting rooms, partitioning, catering facilities, and most crucially has inadequate parking. An improvement plan has been drawn up by the Trustees.

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- b) Immediately adjacent is another established and well used hall belonging to the Women’s Institute, again with limited facilities but with reasonable parking.
- c) The combined footprint of the halls is about 0.15 hectares which, allowing for parking, is too small and it is therefore considered unsuitable for upgrading to a community centre.

**M.12 Option 2: Backwell Leisure Centre.**

- a) The Backwell Community Plan identifies the importance that the community places in the facilities, with 86% of responding residents supporting the retention of Backwell Pool. Recent user figures are:

Calendar year	Swimmers	Squash, etc.	Total
2009	110748	12328	123076
2010	109017	15068	124085
2011	112006	13148	125154
Source: NSC Leisure Service			

- b) Although usage has risen over the last three years there is no major long-term funding proposed by NSC for the upkeep of the facility. Future funding could become a problem and in order to retain the facility and secure the long-term future of the site, it could be advantageous if available space and usage of all facilities are maximised. The possibility of a multi-use community facility at this venue should therefore be explored providing:-

- 25 m swimming pool
- 12 m teaching pool
- squash courts, health suite - sauna and steam room
- a cafe, possibly with internet facilities
- committee rooms/meeting area
- a community library housing council connect facilities;
- car-parking
- public conveniences

**M.13 Option 3: Constructing a Community Centre on a new site**

- a) Possible locations have been considered. The most promising are within the Backwell Playing Fields complex. The Trustees of the Backwell Playing Fields Charity have expressed interest in the possibility that a community centre might be located there, subject to details.
- b) This option could open up the long-term possibility that the WI Hall and Parish Hall complex could be rationalised. Possibly, one of these halls could be demolished and the land used to help solve the problem of insufficient parking near Backwell crossroads, though only after consulting with and obtaining agreement of the Hall Trustees.

**M.14 Consideration of Community Centre Options.** The Parish Council considers that upgrading Backwell Leisure Centre to provide multi-use facilities is the best option. It proposes to set up a Working Party to prepare a Feasibility Study.



**M.15 St Andrew’s Church.** Backwell St Andrew’s Parochial Church Council proposes to extend the graveyard into the south-eastern corner of the field to the north of the Church. The landowner, Persimmon, has agreed to make the land available.

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M.16 **Heritage assets.** *BACKWELL FUTURE* proposes no change in existing conservation areas and listed buildings. These are retained for the enjoyment of the community present and future. *BACKWELL FUTURE* retains the existing conservation areas as shown on the 2007 Replacement Plan and the Nature Reserves at Jubilee Stone Wood and Badgers Wood managed by Backwell Environment Trust.

M.17 **Community Action Policies:**

Backwell Parish Council will continue to provide financial support for community and recreational facilities when appropriate and within the capacity of residents to pay.

Backwell Parish Council will set up a Working Party to manage a feasibility study of upgrading Backwell Leisure Centre to provide multi-use community facilities.

M.18 **Planning policy**

Planning policy: **COMMUNITY ASSETS.** Existing and future community facilities will be safeguarded from alternative use unless suitable alternative facilities can be made available or the existing facilities are surplus to requirements.

M.19 Examples of facilities that will be safeguarded, some of which are shown on the **Village Map** (next page and at Section 13 of the main Plan document) are:

- the Moor Lane open space and children's play area;
- the Downside children's play area;
- the extension to St Andrew's Church graveyard;
- the Green by Backwell Village Club;
- Local Green Spaces (see Section 12);
- Conservation areas;
- Backwell Lake.

The following areas are also safeguarded:

- a) **Backwell Playing Fields** (shown green on the **Village Map**). These fields are vested in an independent private charity regulated by the Charity Commission. They are extensively used by the community and will be designated as Playing Fields in *BACKWELL FUTURE*.



- b) **Moor Lane Children's Play Area** (shown green on the **Village Map**). This area, owned by Backwell Parish Council, has grass areas, trees and a children's playground. It will be safeguarded as a Play Area.





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