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Backwell Parish Council (BPC) response to North Somerset Council's Draft North Somerset School Place Planning Strategy- 2024 – 2027

Backwell Parish Council's position is submitted without prejudice to our previous Draft Local Plan 2039 Reg 19 submission which expresses a strong objection to a 705 housing allocation for Backwell. Notwithstanding BPC's objection to the Reg 19 draft there is broad support for the principle of strategic planning for school places.

However, there are **major concerns for several aspects around the data underpinning the school placement planning for Backwell**. This therefore brings into **question the reliability of the methodology applied** to achieve the goal of school places for the future generations of Backwell.

Backwell's socio-economic profile is markedly different to North Somerset (NS); therefore, a more accurate set of principles and data should be applied and collated. For example, Backwell's profile of level 4 qualifications is markedly higher than the NS average, there are many other examples, employment & types of employment, house ownership etc.

The 2021 census shows the largest proportion of age group living in Backwell as those with families or young adults living with them rather than the elderly. The housing mix of expected development in Backwell is largely family sized homes. Further analysis should be carried out on projected figures of need alongside the 2021 census and other data sets.

BPC contests the broad figure of 17.5% of the NSC LP population being children when applied to Backwell, this equates to 123 children. This figure can be contested for several reasons: -

- Where is the evidence that 17.5% growth in school places is an accurate assessment of Backwell's need? An accurate assessment of need is required. NSC's own supplementary planning guidance acknowledges that the percentage of children moving into new developments is always significantly higher. Where is the specific modelling or data in relation to Backwell's educational need projections?
- Since the Covid Pandemic the trend of young families moving into the village 'for a better life' and the 'good schools' has intensified to the point that some residents have been unable to immediately access school places in the catchment and have had to wait for the transition to secondary school.
- With 2500 more people expected with 705 houses, homes being built almost exclusively for families it would be more accurate to expect 800 plus children 0-16 years.
- In addition, the aging existing population of Backwell will inevitably release homes for new families, these children are unaccounted for.

- A Local Authority is bound to expect at least a 5% Pupil migration due to various factors for example, changes for in employment etc. Has this been accurately applied to Backwell? Where is the evidence?
- An extra 800 children may well equate to 3 additional forms especially factoring in a legal obligation to include ghost funding as all school numbers are fluid to an extent. Has this been considered?
- Has the provision been factored in for children not yet of school age? Under this development scheme it is possible that children not yet in the school system with siblings at one or more of the Backwell schools could find themselves displaced out of the village for schooling as children on the new development are given priority with placements. How will NSC ensure that that Backwell's existing children are not discriminated against in favour of new residents?
- How has the effect of accumulative 'local' developments outside of Backwell village been factored into the school places projections?

Data and rationale related to 'phases of education.'

Secondary Education

The case for a new secondary school at Yatton should be re-examined.

In their submission for the Reg 19 consultation the Lighthouse Schools Partnership felt strongly that Backwell could absorb some of the expansion as they currently take a proportion of children from outside of catchment. If this is the case, then money could be veered to accommodate local children within Backwell School. It is unclear however what data or work has been done to assess the impact of this on the surrounding area. Out of catchment children would need to be accommodated by Nailsea or Ashton Park. Pupils displaced from Yatton would need a new school in Yatton.

Would Backwell School require funding for expansion as the children expected would be more than the 123 (17.5%) that this scheme suggests? Would the CIL money be better spent in this way?

How would a New Secondary School at Yatton affect Backwell School's catchment area?

The information and rationale attached to the education aspect of the LP seems lacking.

Does this scheme in its current form consider other planning applications currently undetermined? How is NSC monitoring the impact of these issues in Backwell and the surrounding catchment area?

Primary Education – currently served by West Leigh School and Backwell Junior School

The draft Reg 19 suggests a NEW primary School at Land adjacent to West Leigh Infants. Whilst in principle this seems like a good idea we are confused and concerned by several key aspects. 'Land' provided by Taylor Wimpey adjacent to West Leigh Infant School through the planning application 23/2618/OU2 does not achieve a new primary school, the amount of land is insufficient, and no money has been allocated to realise the provision of a new school. Where is the commitment for a new primary school? How will this requirement be funded and delivered?

Investment from CIL needs to be explored in the fullest context. School Places require adequate parking, two access points, separate entrances for pedestrian and cars, playgrounds, sport fields and leisure centre facilities, large enough kitchens, additional plant facilities for additional heating etc, social as well as learning space, nurture rooms and quiet space. Safe routes to school are a legal requirement for new developments. 'Land' provided by Taylor Wimpey adjacent to West Leigh Infant School seems large enough for an extension to the infant school not a primary school.

Whilst in principle the concept of one site for primary education is attractive BPC does have concerns about the size and character of this 'new' or extended school.

The country setting, small is beautiful, small is manageable are key characteristics of a positive experience for the pupils and selling points for parents of children currently educated in Backwell. BPC are concerned about the detrimental impact of a huge primary school with poor access and limited playing ground space to this area. How will NSC envisage that these key characteristics of success will be realised by almost doubling its size?

There are additional issues which require exploring at this early stage.

Data is required to clarify the form of entry. Based on our calculations this may be as much as an additional 3 form entry? How can this be accommodated?

What are the hectare calculations for a new primary school of a size to accommodate the existing and expected Backwell school children? Can this be fully realised alongside all the other government standards for schools at the area adjacent to West Leigh? BPC do not think it feasible for the reasons outlined in this document.

Active travel and routes to school are problematic from Grove Farm to the West Leigh site. There is a long and circuitous access proposed via Longthorn, too far for children of infant school age to walk. The Grove Farm site is landlocked and car dependent, the alternative and quicker walking or cycling route will be along a narrow pavement on the busy A370 which has experienced fatalities in recent times. Whilst BPC support the location of the site next to West Leigh the addition of the Grove Farm development will exacerbate the traffic issues at peak times rather than resolve them.

Additional traffic and access to the current Backwell Junior School (BJS) is also along a narrow busy road with one pavement beset by HGVs going to the Civic Amenity and the Coles Quarry industrial site.

Finally, reference the issue of combining the two schools to create one primary school, we are keen to know what work NSC has undertaken with The Diocesan Board of Education to realise this part of the plan for school places. BJS is sited near the church in a conservation area. This Church school status is valued by parents and the village. It is highly successful in its Christian ethos, SMSC as well as education. How will two separate schools be established as one primary school when one is a 'faith' school with Church of England VC status whilst the other, West Leigh Infants a secular academy? The foundation of these two educational establishments is on a different legal basis than the current federation which maintains each school's distinctiveness. Notwithstanding that there would not be room for both schools on this newly available land, these issues have not been appropriately aired with the village; proposals are being presented in isolation. What is NSC's plan for primary education in Backwell?

Early Years Provision (EYP) is currently limited and at capacity in Backwell. This does not seem to have been considered in the planning. This is a major flaw in the Reg 19 LP and Planning for School Places. Using the formula set out in NSC's Development Contributions Supplementary Planning Document date 2016, 235 pre-school children would be identified through the draft LP; of these 127 children aged 2-4 years. The Government is quite clear that educational provision and the responsibility of working with developers covers EYP which is calculated at Primary school funding levels. The Government is also extending its support to parents for Nursey care from 9 months. We note that EYP is not mentioned in relation to Backwell's needs. How will this be addressed?

Without a cohesive plan for ALL tiers of education in Backwell, parents could find that their children may not be able to join their siblings as part of the usual admission process and/or be educationally disadvantaged.

Future proofing – No additional planning is evident beyond this LP or for demographic changes within it which creates additional vulnerability within this model. Further projections and data are required with advance working with parish councils & schools to achieve a common aim. Any strategic planning now should allow for future expansion of the new primary school.

BPC recognises that SEND places and associated services are a priority within the new LP.

NSC is legally obliged to ensure that children's education and public services are not compromised but fully met by any new development. Financially NSC is not able to be joint funding school extensions or new school builds. Therefore, NSC MUST ensure that any mitigation through CIL is secured for educational and indeed health before the Draft Local Plan goes to Inspectors. Indeed, Developers must commit to a time scale which does not allow market forces to compromise education or exacerbate traffic issues by displacing village children to other centres. Early delivery is 'open fairer greener' otherwise children with siblings already in the Backwell School System may not be able to join their siblings.

Not to do so would be irresponsible.

IF this development of 515 homes is approved the developer/s MUST pay for the primary and secondary school places in a manner that is fit for the intended purpose. Construction will need to include infrastructure and access suitable for vehicular traffic including a 52-seater bus. Any building must not compromise the education of the current pupils. Construction MUST be completed in a timely manner to ensure that village children are not displaced or disadvantaged.

Backwell Parish Council is concerned with the current strategic school places plan. It isn't cohesive or comprehensive. It makes many assumptions and plans to spend a significant amount of the Backwell development CIL money which we expect to be in excess to £14 000 000 elsewhere and not on the young people of Backwell.

Backwell Parish Council looks forward to hearing from you on this matter. We are committed to further work on this important aspect of strategic planning.

Backwell Parish Council
15th March 2024



Backwell Parish Clerk <clerk@backwell-pc.gov.uk>

Backwell Parish Council's response to the Draft North Somerset School Place Planning Strategy 2024–27

1 message

Backwell Parish Clerk <clerk@backwell-pc.gov.uk>

15 March 2024 at 11:38

To: school.organisation@n-somerset.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached Backwell Parish Council's response to the Draft North Somerset School Place Planning Strategy 2024–27.

I would be grateful if you could please reply to this email to acknowledge receipt.

Kind Regards,

Clare Melton
Backwell Parish Council Temporary Clerk
clerk@backwell-pc.gov.uk
01275 464653
<https://www.backwell-pc.gov.uk/>

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