

# Strategic Development Location – Backwell North Somerset

Date of Issue: October 2017



## 1.0 Location characteristics

### 1.1 Site Location

Land to the west of Backwell.

### 1.2 Size

Approx. 30ha (gross), 18ha net residential area.

### 1.3 Relevant planning status and designations

- Backwell has an adopted Neighbourhood Plan
- Green Belt to the south of Chelvey Lane (not within area of search)

### 1.4 Current land use

Predominantly agricultural.

## 2.0 Suitability (Constraints & Opportunities)

### 2.1 Strategic Opportunity

The JSP - Towards the Emerging Spatial Strategy consultation identified Backwell as accommodating up to a further 800 dwellings in the plan period to 2036. The potential identified through this assessment is revised to 700.

### 2.2 Site characteristics

The site predominantly comprises agricultural fields. The area is undulating with higher ground to the east of Grove Farm. Hedgerows and watercourses are extensive across the area reinforcing the rural character of the area. The open aspect immediately to the south west of the village is considered an important feature supporting the West Town Conservation Area and should inform the design and layout of development on this edge. The area to the southwest of the village is also a critical area for horseshoe bat foraging.

### 2.3 Physical & Environmental constraints

**Heritage:** Listed Buildings including The Grove to the west of Backwell and the West Town Conservation Area have the potential to be impacted as a result of new development. However careful design can address this issue. Grove Farm lies just on the periphery of the proposed development area and could be set within an open space to retain its character and identity.

Setting of West Town Conservation Area likely to affect development potential immediately to the north. Further investigation required on the setting of importance and the relationship to new development, including the potential to maintain open space on field parcels north of the Conservation Area.

**Archaeology:** This area is poorly understood archaeologically, but there is the potential for coal mining heritage to exist in the northeast of this area.

**Ecology:** The area is used by horseshoe bats for foraging and commuting and a particularly sensitive foraging area is identified to the southwest of the area including the field parcels at the junction between West Town Rd and Chelvey Rd<sup>1</sup>. This may lead to specific requirements associated with the new development. The suggestion above associated with heritage may provide some safeguarding of the habitat by retaining a margin of open space.

Opportunities to improve ecological linkages between habitats west of Backwell including woodland at Backwell Hill to habitats in the Nailsea SDL should be explored.

The new strategic highway link from the Nailsea SDL to the west of Backwell is likely to interact with this sensitive foraging area at some point so consultation with Natural England will be required and suitable measures taken to address.

Consideration will be given to the protection of nationally significant species and habitats, notably Section 41 habitats and species. Examples of Section 41 habitats include: species rich lowland meadows, wet woodlands, traditional orchards, and reed beds. Examples of Section 41 species that have suffered sharp declines in population and/or distribution, include the Common Toad, Hedgehog, House Sparrow, Brown Hare and Skylark, as well as many insect species. Wildlife corridors and features such as 'stepping stone habitats' and other natural features need to be incorporated into new development to safeguard key habitats identified within Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006).

**Landscape:** The development area sits on higher land and falls into the J5: Land Yeo and Kenn Rolling Valley Farmland Landscape Character Area of moderate character in good condition.

**Flood risk:** Area of search located in flood zone 1. There are areas of flood risk to the northwest of the area close to the railway. Whilst the potential development area is identified outside of the fluvial/tidal flood risk areas, the volume of surface water run-off has the potential to cause problems elsewhere particularly on lower lying ground. In places, water in these areas drains away slowly and the water table is high with potential for inundation. Further work is therefore required to understand the flood risk issues associated with development and supporting infrastructure, notably roads, and to identify possible options to mitigate any impacts. These may include both site-specific measures e.g. sustainable drainage systems, and more strategic solutions to enable the local environment to more effectively manage and provide long-term storage of surface water.

## **2.4 Existing development schemes**

Land at Moor Lane is a proposed residential allocation for 65 units.

## **2.5 Opportunity**

Backwell is a village in North Somerset located close to Nailsea, and is located on the main railway corridor and the A370. The village is therefore on the main transport corridor to both Bristol and WSM although improvements would be required to facilitate sustainable development. The area to the west of Backwell offers an opportunity to create a new extension to the village but would require

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<sup>1</sup> This area is designated as a bat Juvenile Sustenance Zone, see guidance: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/plans/habitat-regulations/>

transport mitigation to avoid further impact upon the Backwell signals junction. A new link road from the A370 west of Backwell would provide a connection to the new Nailsea SDL, connecting to an improved rail and transport interchange, and alleviating Station Road.

## **3.0 Land uses, capacity, availability & viability**

### **3.1 Mix of uses**

At this stage mix of uses is proposed to include residential, potential for small-scale retail, employment and open space. Areas for surface water storage are also envisaged but these could be provided off/near-site.

### **3.2 Employment (type/ha)**

Employment provision and location to be addressed through the local planning process. Assumptions provided here are initial scenarios for testing. North Somerset Council are currently preparing an Employment Land Review that will inform employment planning at the SDLs through the local plan.

Likely to be beneficial to consider employment provision in tandem with the Nailsea SDL including potential to provide a new business site well connected to Nailsea and Backwell station and the new MetroBus route. Initial capacity of 10.5ha across both areas to test further through local planning process.

### **3.3 Housing typology / density**

Medium density village extension. Average 40dph. A relatively higher site coverage is assumed taking into account the size of the potential development area and corresponding reduced requirement for non-residential land uses.

The density selected across the development should respect the existing village character and the rural setting present, particularly taking into account the need to safeguard heritage features, including Grove Farm and West Town Conservation Area.

### **3.4 Capacity**

About 700 units.

### **3.5 Availability**

Development being promoted by a single developer. Additional land likely to be required to deliver strategic transport mitigations.

### **3.6 Viability**

Viability likely to be dependent upon alternative sources of funding. See viability evidence for further information.

## 4.0 Concept Diagram

See Appendix 1 –Concept Diagram

*The Concept Diagrams provide the broad location or area of search for growth in each SDL denoted by the diagonal hatching. The extent of this covers the **gross development area** within which the range of land uses and features necessary to support the new development could potentially be provided, including residential, employment, education, retail, leisure, community uses, green infrastructure, and water storage as required. Development areas to be refined through more detailed work through the local planning process.*

## 5.0 Draft policy expectations for location

### 5.1 Vision

- Opportunity to create an extension of the existing settlement on its western edge, and extend out towards Grove Farm. Development is discouraged beyond Grove Farm to protect the separate identity of Backwell, to prevent coalescence with Chelvey, and to safeguard the setting of the West Town Conservation Area.
- Development is discouraged immediately adjacent to the West End Conservation Area to maintain the open aspect around it that contributes to its character and appearance.

### 5.2 Housing capacity and other land uses

- About 700 units of a range of types and sizes including affordable provision.
- A primary school on 2ha site. Located to be accessible to surrounding neighbourhoods to maximise walking to school opportunities along safe and attractive routes.
- Expansion of existing secondary school.
- Land to be identified to accommodate strategic transport mitigations and other infrastructure including both on-site, near-site and off-site requirements.
- Consider employment provision in association with the Nailsea SDL, in particular scope to provide a new business site well connected to Nailsea station.
- Community uses, to be identified and integrated through masterplanning.

### 5.3 Transport

- The development will contribute to a strategic transport package including a new link to the west of Backwell connecting the A370 to the new strategic highway associated with the Nailsea SDL. Improvements required to Nailsea and Backwell station, MetroBus provision and other local network improvements.
- This is a summary headline of the key transport requirements, is not definitive of the required transport mitigations and further detailed work will be progressed on transport matters. See Joint Transport Study and background papers for further detail.

### 5.4 Green infrastructure

- The approach to green infrastructure should seek to support the rural character of the area for example by creating 'soft' edges to the development blending well into the surrounding countryside and safeguarding heritage features. Multiple roles should be explored for GI including in relation to ecology, recreation, leisure, sustainable drainage and heritage
- Additional strategic green infrastructure to avoid significant impacts to Natura 2000 sites.

## 5.5 Infrastructure requirements

- Suitable drainage infrastructure including to reduce rate of run-off, and provision for long-term storage, and with benefits to water quality. Opportunities to enhance biodiversity should be explored.
- Ecological mitigation including features designed to safeguard habitats and species, retention of key habitats and replacement where necessary.
- Sustainable energy infrastructure including opportunities for heat networks explored early in order that any enabling measures can be secured to enable an efficient and effective delivery. The form and layout of development, and the distribution of land uses is likely to be a key issue in designing the infrastructure. Management of the infrastructure going forward should also be considered.
- Potential requirements for utilities upgrades.

## 5.6 Energy

- Opportunities to secure a zero carbon new settlement will be explored including incorporating a range of sustainable measures, including potential district heating, renewables, energy generation, passivhaus standard homes, homeworking measures and electric car charging facilities etc.

## 6.0 Barriers to delivery - critical interventions

### 6.1 Key identified risks to suitability, availability and achievability

The critical risks are:

- Delivery of strategic **transportation** improvements, to facilitate development, including programming and land assembly.
- Drainage constraints.
- Ecological/ biodiversity impacts.

### 6.2 Key actions needed to reduce risks (e.g. investment in new infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement, or a need to review development plan policy)

- Clear understanding of transport requirements, options, and costs supported by funding strategy and means of delivery. Consensus achieved with development partners on schemes required and means of delivery.
- Review of developer contributions and wider funding strategy as part of selection of appropriate development delivery model.
- Ongoing dialogue between flooding agencies. Further investigations are required to understand the existing drainage conditions of the area, the additional impacts of development including volumes of run-off, and the potential options for mitigation if required.

- It is expected that ecological issues can be addressed through masterplanning and the integration of suitable features/safeguarding on or off site. Further engagement with Natural England required to scope additional evidence required. Ecological issues and mitigation, including on the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC to be addressed at the strategic scale across the Backwell and Nailsea SDLs. Particular attention required for nearby sensitive foraging habitat.

## 7.0 Indicative trajectory

7.1 Indicative lead-in time to initial completions assumed as 11 years, to allow for strategic transportation measures to be funded and programmed. Indicative build-out rate 50-100 dpa, with development completing within JSP plan period. Average annual build rate of 88 dwellings estimated with peak years of 100 units.

Critical dependencies include provision of strategic transport mitigations including schemes associated with Nailsea SDL, and A370 to Nailsea to the west of Backwell; provision of suitable ecological/environmental mitigation.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>Backwell</b>											

2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	Capacity within Plan period
	50	75	100	100	100	100	100	75	700

Post 2036	Total Capacity
0	700

# Appendix 1 – Concept Diagram

