

NAILSEA ACTION GROUP 2023 AGM

Location: The Grove Sports Centre and Social Club, St Mary's Grove, Nailsea. BS48 4NQ (with thanks to the Manager for waiving the hire charge if the bar was patronized)

Date: Wednesday, 19th April, 2023

Time: 19:30

Theme: 'Love your green open space'.

In the Chair: Matt Thomas, who welcomed all to the meeting and outlined the agenda.

Present: 54 people signed in (separate list made), and there were a number who did not. Estimated number therefore around 60.

Apologies: Neville Crewdson, Rachel Evans, Tracey Thomas, James Tonkin, Robert & Susan McNaughton

Minutes of the last AGM, 23rd January, 2021: Approved on a proposal from Dave Gray seconded by Ken Marks.

Reports on Activities since the last AGM:

Since the last AGM on 4 April 2022:-

- There have been 11 meetings of the NAG core group,
- 6 Nailsea Town Council meetings have been attended
- Building developers have been met in various parts of Nailsea 4 times
- An onsite meeting was held with a North Somerset Council Environmental Health Officer
- The establishment of a local residents' association in Trendlewood has been facilitated by NAG
- Two organisations concerned about the future of their green space have been visited by NAG with support pledged for them
- NAG has met with the Chair of Backwell Residents' Association with subsequent correspondence.
- Many emails and other communications sent and received to officials and supporters.
- A number of letters to the local media and free papers.
- Much individual work by committee/core group members on preparing for and documenting meetings, maintaining the website, keeping track of planning applications, scrutinising associated and other documents, the Press and media reports etc..
- Maintaining awareness of like-minded groups such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) now known as The Countryside Charity, (NAG is a

member), Tickenham Residents' Action Group (TRAG), Backwell Residents Association (BRA) etc..

Financial Report

There is £377 in the bank thanks to donations of £310 gratefully received during the year.

Money is still technically owed to some of the Officers though they are prepared to write those expenses off.

Expenditure relates to the costs of meetings such as the AGM, subscriptions such as to the CPRE, printing, paper and postage, website costs.

Any serious campaigning is obviously constrained by a small bank balance. As in previous years it was suggested from the floor that supporters should be asked for an annual subscription. The core group agreed to pursue this more vigorously.

Area Reports

Parish Brook (Engine Lane) (Barratts) (Report led by Antony Evans)

Many of the proposed 171 houses are now built and about a third of these occupied. We understand that, due to the recession or near recession, sales have slowed. The replacement practice pitches for the Rugby Club have been carefully tended and now look to the untutored eye, ready for play, but the existing pitches are still in weekly use which means that on the most northerly part of the site, opposite nos. 30 to 48 Engine Lane, not even the groundworks have begun.

Of the c£4m accrued by Nailsea Town Council from the sale of this site, only a small portion has been allocated for spending with no decision made on how to use the rest even though some considerable time has elapsed since the money passed to NTC. It is hoped that the new Council after the imminent May elections will make better progress.

NAG has continued to hold Barratts to account for its many breaches of its own CEMP, (Construction Environment Management Plan), and met with a North Somerset Council Environmental Health Officer (EHO) called in by a resident in the summer. The EHO decreed that many aspects of the build were unacceptable not least the air quality, heavy with dust and diesel fumes, rubble spill on to pavements and roads from the many trucks passing through, builders' litter uncollected and blowing about generally. There have been some improvements since then.

Netherton Grange (Youngwood Lane) (Taylor Wimpey) (Report led by Antony Evans)

Building progress on this site has been swift on this much bigger site since the last NAG AGM, but there are more houses to build in this first phase of some 250 of 450 eventually. Quite a number are already occupied.

As with Barratts on Engine Lane, there have been many infringements of the CEMP, and NAG has raised the issues with the contractors and North Somerset Council.

The Uplands (Stonewood Homes in collaboration with North Somerset Council) (Report led by Antony Evans)

The contentious building of 52 homes on this long and much used piece of public open space was expected to begin at the end of 2022, once the many challenges to this development were exhausted, but so far nothing has happened. It is rumoured that unresolved boundary issues between the developers and the adjacent private properties on the south side of the site are holding up the start.

The Perrings (Paddock Rise) (Woodstock Homes) (Report led by Antony Evans)

The construction of 14 homes on this site is well under way after a significant effort by many, including local residents and the Town Council, to challenge and stop the plan considered by many only to have been made possible by North Somerset Council's dubious sleight of hand. The build was held up for a short period by the discovery of a very deep mine shaft in the middle of the site remediated by many tons of concrete. The residents of the five long established bungalows adjacent to the site whose rural outlook south and east over Backwell would have been totally lost have been relieved to learn that the ground level of the houses has been significantly dropped which will still give them an albeit only partial view of the countryside they have enjoyed for so long.

Weston College (Clevedon Walk/Somerset Square) (Report led by Antony Evans)

Plans for this development appear to have stalled with the prospective developer, Paul O'Brien, believed to be likely to withdraw on account of the planning permission for proposed height of the building refused, and an expectation of the Precinct's owners, Praxis, for a non-returnable development enabling fee.

Buckland's Place, Trendlewood (Report led by Reis Braganza)

Building has now commenced on this site off Trendlewood Way. It's been 10 years of NSC Planning process, going through many planning process options. Dwellings reduced from an original of 42 homes, reduced to 30 and finally ending up with 24.

This is much more in keeping with the surrounding area, and retains the woodland area together with ecology corridors for wildlife.

Land between Bibury Close and Birdlip Close (Report led by Reis Braganza)

Nailsea is littered with small green plots left by the estate developers in the 60's, 70's and 80's, many still owned by the original building companies. Many of these are established play areas for children as well as walks for pets and are breaks in built-up areas. A trend we are experiencing in parts of Nailsea, is the sale of these small parcels of land to speculators, who then try to sell these to developers.

The land between Bibury Close and Birdlip Close is one of these. It was acquired by auction a few months ago for about £29K. Subsequently, the current owner has divided it into 12 plots and is trying to sell each for about £10k. The local residents have formed a Residents' Association to try and preserve this play area and associated footpath. They have about 300 signatories and supporters. We are awaiting the next stage of this process.

The theme of this AGM is 'Love your green space'. Nailsea has 11 green spaces which are larger than 1 hectare and 7 green spaces less than 1 hectare some of which could be subject to speculation. However there are some very small greens which could also come under threat, and example is a very small triangle of land on Trendlewood Way right next to Bucklands Place where a developer is currently claiming that 2 bungalows could be built.

NAG will monitor (as far as is possible) these green spaces and will try to provide help and support to neighbours and other parties affected by potential speculative developers.

North Nailsea (Report led by Dave Gray)

On a site bordering and immediately north of Greenfield Crescent and between Jacklands to the west and the industrial Estate to the east, LVA propose a substantial development of some 400 dwellings, employment opportunities, recreational facilities, open space and a through road bypassing the Clevedon Road/Stockway North traffic lit junction for those travelling between Tickenham and Wraxall (Clevedon to Bristol). Much of the area is low lying if not in the flood plain and on the map of those areas likely to be flooded in the foreseeable future with respect to climate change. Jane Evans is keen to form a core group of activists to champion the green space in this part of Nailsea and to promote it over and above any building.

South Nailsea (Report led by Antony Evans and informed by Keith Riches)

On an irregularly shaped site bordering and immediately north of the railway line up to Youngwood Lane and Sedgemoor Close and approximately between Station Road and Youngwood Farm, Gleasons propose a development of 400 dwellings, which

could grow to 600 on the site (or more if adjacent land is annexed) with a single access point on Station Road between the entrance to Backwell Lake and Nailsea and Backwell Station. The traffic generated would put an intolerable burden on the surrounding roads especially the long recognised as unmitigatable traffic lit junction of the A370 and Station Road in Backwell. The site represents almost the last significant swathe of beautiful south facing agricultural land in Nailsea, much and long used for farming and recreation, and would, with other local developments nearby, complete the enclosure of south Nailsea in an urban sprawl with no easy access to open space.

Local Plan Update [the following is an expansion of the actual words used in the meeting thanks to an extract from the NSC website as collated by Dave Gray.]

The main features of the Local Plan remain in place as reported in the SAGM minutes of 2022.

Since then, Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, announced that the Government would consult on the guidance that local authorities have to follow when preparing their local plans. The planning system would be changed to allow local authorities more flexibility to set the number of homes to be built. The implication of this is that the requirement for a local authority to demonstrate that it had a five year land supply for housing may be lifted. Inspectors would therefore no longer be able to use this as an overriding and almost automatic reason for permitting any and all developments in an authority like North Somerset, which will never be able to demonstrate the five year supply owing to the constraints of the established green belt, extensive flood plain and low lying areas, protected agricultural and heritage land and huge developments in recent decades taking up much available land.

In December, North Somerset Council welcomed the announcement as councillors had previously voiced their concerns about the impact that current government housing targets would have on North Somerset

Following publication of a draft plan earlier this year and the feedback received from local consultation on that plan, the council had already started to revise its proposals for delivering the needed housing, employment and infrastructure while taking into account what should be protected in the local area.

The Council now need to respond to Mr Gove's consultation and consider his response. Consequently, to ensure that that the eventual plan is robust, responsive and fully supported, the next consultation on the local plan will be delayed. The Council believe that this will be later this or next year.

Guest Speaker: Keith Riches, Chair of Backwell Residents' Association (BRA)

Keith spoke to the AGM's theme of 'Love your open green space', initially with reference to the Gleasons' proposals some of which lie within the Backwell boundary.

BRA was formed in the 1950s as Backwell Ratepayers Association, changing its name when rates became the council tax. Of the 1900 households in Backwell more than 400 pay an annual subscription to BRA of £10 which yields a significant income of some £4000 p.a.. BRA liaises with Backwell Parish Council as closely as it can. BRA is fortunate is having in its membership a number of experts such as a planning consultant.

Among its successes BRA was centrally instrumental in the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan in 2015, and in the production of an extensive piece of work on its local open green space including 21 fields, two of which and the Backwell Lake were recognised and approved by North Somerset Council. BRA contributed to the opposition to the Joint Spatial Plan which was abandoned in 2019.

Among its failures, Keith listed the loss after a forty-year battle of a field to the developer Persimmon, and another soon after on the back of that to Taylor Wimpey.

Keith went on to signify the many different categories of open green space eg agricultural, allotment, park, sports ground, woodland etc., for which North Somerset Council has aspirational plans for improvement and extension. Unfortunately the 'real' world too often intervenes such as by inspectors overruling such factors on the grounds of the need to build houses especially in an area that cannot find a five year land supply for development.

The North Somerset resources map charts in some detail these sorts of areas including those for wildlife flora and fauna, sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) etc.. Local green space as such is not marked, but is vigorously defended by such organisations as the Open Spaces Society founded in 1965.

Keith was warmly thanked and applauded for his observations.

Election of Officers.

Chair: Matt Thomas, proposed by Dave Gray, seconded by Beth Connock
Vice-Chair: Antony Evans, proposed by Reis Braganza, seconded by Gill Gray
Secretary: The holder, Tracey Thomas, declared her wish not to stand. There were no nominations. The post remains unfilled at the moment.
Treasurer: There were no nominations for this vacant position. However Tracey Thomas expressed her availability to carry out the work if desired.

Questions and discussion then followed:-

Chris Ambrose, trustee of Avon CPRE called for additional members via his email address: chrisambrose@btinternet.com . He averred that LVA were not telling the truth about their proposed development in North Nailsea, much of which lies with the Wraxall boundary anyway.

Discussion from other members of the public ranged widely around the issues of the increasing loss of green spaces and the perceived inertia of councils and councillors in working hard enough to defend them.

It was suggested that NAG form a Nailsea Residents' Association which the core group agreed it would consider again.

There was general concurrence with the view that developers ticked boxes just enough to get their plans through and did not really care about the impact their proposals would have short and long term on the community.

Conclusion of meeting.

At 21.18 the Chair Matt Thomas thanked Keith Riches and all present for their contributions and support and closed the meeting with advice that the bar was still open.