



## Yatton Parish Council

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The Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP,  
House of Commons,  
London,  
SW1A 0AA.

26<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Dear Dr Fox,

We believe that there are grounds for two of the recent planning permissions at North End Yatton to be called in.

**1) 15/P/1488/O Bloor Homes, Land at Arnolds Way, Yatton**

Outline application for up to 200 dwellings including specialist housing units (e.g. extra care), a primary school, open spaces and all associated infrastructure; with access for approval and appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for subsequent approval.

**2) 14/P/2017/O & 15/P/0946/O – Hallam Land Management Ltd, Land off North End Road, east of Arnolds Way roundabout.** Outline planning permission with details of access for erection of up to 170 dwellings, open space and landscaping including a local equipped area for play, access off North End, associated landscaping, parking, engineering works (including ground re-modelling), site reclamation (including demolition) and infrastructure.

**3) 14/P/2406/F – Hallam Land Management Ltd, Land at Arnolds Way and North End (B3133) Yatton.** New access junction with Arnolds Way and North End (B3133).

As you will be aware as our M.P. you are able to make open representations to have planning applications called in and we are requesting that you contact the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on our behalf. The grounds are as follows, first it is our contention that Councillor Elfan Ap Rees, in his role as North Somerset Council's Executive Member for Housing and Strategic Planning has manipulated the planning process in order to bring about the granting of the above

planning permissions; this, for the unlawful reason of gaining funding for North Somerset Council, this reason would bring N.S.C. into disrepute.

Our primary proof that he has acted in this way is a statement made by the Cllr. and reported in the North Somerset Times of Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March, " Three developments have been approved in Yatton which gives us more funding than we would get for just developing one of them". The Cllr. seems to directly link the granting of the two most recent Yatton, North End housing permissions (the subject of our request) with securing funding for N.S.C., and whilst we are not at all suggesting any personal corruption, a responsible Planning Authority cannot ever appear to be sanctioning development in order to increase funding for itself. 'Caesar's wife' is the usual description of the standard that is expected: above suspicion; or people quickly begin to lose faith in the entire planning process.

Cllr. Ap Rees, is widely recognised as the Council's leading voice on all matters relating to planning within North Somerset and in the same N.S.T. article he elaborates on why Yatton, North End, is to get at least 520 new houses, "In some parts of the district the infrastructure is not very good, but if we put some new developments in those areas and talk to the Government about new road infrastructure to meet the requirements it is putting on us, then perhaps we have a better chance of actually getting it." He goes on to explain what kind of infrastructure he has in mind, "One of the things we are talking about at the moment is an additional arm to Junction 20 at Clevedon, which could serve Nailsea and Yatton, but it would require Government investment."

If Yatton was getting all these new houses after a thoroughgoing and impartial investigation into where the best place, or places, in the district were for them, then that would be hard, but acceptable. However, to be told by the man who is in charge of Strategic Planning for N.S.C. that the houses are coming to Yatton, to create the tenuous chance of a new motorway 'spur' road, at some unspecified time in the future, beggars belief. The reason why it would be acceptable if Yatton were to get the houses after a thoroughgoing and impartial investigation, is because such an investigation would be open to interrogation and therefore challengeable. What is not acceptable is an arbitrary decision to impose those houses, for whatever reason.

The second ground for our requesting a call in is that we believe that Cllr. Ap Rees instructed his most senior planning officers to draw up and implement a plan, the Site Allocations Plan for the district as a whole under which Yatton, North End, would receive far more than the 465 extra' houses that N.S.C. is required to provide by central Government.

Further to this it is our belief that the Site Allocations Plan has been arbitrarily tailored not to include any possible sites in the Greenbelt, for the erroneous reason that the Government absolutely forbids any development in the Greenbelt. Our proof for the above is that in that same North Somerset Times article referred to previously Councillor Ap Rees makes the statement that (the Government's) "policy is not to develop in the Greenbelt". This is clearly a very narrow and limited interpretation of the relevant National Planning Policy Framework head No 9 'Protecting Green Belt land'.

Moreover, National Planning Policy Framework head No 8 “Promoting Healthy Communities” appears to have been almost completely ignored in regard to establishing the parameters of North Somerset Council’s Site Allocation Plan; we would draw attention in particular to paragraphs 69 – 72 which deal with the need for planning policies and decisions to enhance existing services and support existing infrastructure, and certainly not to place developments where in Councillor Ap Rees’s phrase “the infrastructure is not very good”. There is no hierarchy in the various National Planning Policy Framework Heads, they are supposed to have all been given equal and appropriate consideration.

A choice has clearly been made that the Greenbelt area in North Somerset was sacrosanct, even though the national planning framework does not absolutely preclude appropriate building in it. A choice has been made, and that the preferred option is to build on the four sites in Yatton, North End.

It is our contention that Councillor Ap Rees’s instructions to his senior planning officers were motivated by his declared strategy to use the placing of development in Yatton, North End, to extract funding for a spur road from M5 Junction 20, to Nailsea and Yatton.

Furthermore it is our view that as the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Housing, Councillor Ap Rees is under a clear duty to behave fairly and even-handedly (quasi-judicially) throughout the decision-making process ; and precluding consideration of other possible site locations within the district, whilst seizing upon Yatton, North End, is not fair or indeed, even-handed.

We believe that the above grounds are of more than local importance, in that they relate to the role of the Executive Member in the system of local governance relevant to planning. Surely Parliament did not intend to allow arbitrary decisions to be made which preclude some options; and therefore pre-determine outcomes in supposed consultative documents?

Our third ground for requesting a ‘call in’ relates specifically to North Somerset Council’s rejection of the need for any holistic and cumulative Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); or indeed any individual EIA for the various sites in Yatton, North End. This, on the apparent justification that the trigger point of size of development in comparison to size of existing settlement is not reached. From this one can deduce, that Yatton as a whole, is regarded as the existing settlement not the small hamlet of Yatton, North End; which as we know has not been relocated and is still a considerable distance from any of the usual services required by people on a day to day basis.

The need for a holistic EIA would seem to be self-evident to everybody except North Somerset Council, the recent resounding parish poll result in Yatton serves to underline this. Our third ground is simply that we would like an objective and informed view on the legitimacy of including Yatton, North End, which until at least 2006 was regarded by North Somerset Council as a separate hamlet, within Yatton as whole.

We believe that third ground is also of more than local importance as there may well

be a number of similar settlement re-definitions, up and down the country. Our final ground, is that as the B3133 is part of the designated alternative route if the M5 is closed, we are extremely concerned that no holistic EIA is contemplated, again we believe this ground to be more than local importance.

The above is the main set of grounds relating to process, as to why we believe the two most recent housing permissions at North End, together with the associated permission relating to the roundabout, should be called in. We shall also be providing you with further grounds mainly relating to incorrect assessment of numbers of vehicle journeys likely to be generated by the developments, in due course. In the mean time we would urge you to press ahead with contacting the Secretary of State forthwith.