Backwell Parish Council
[redacted]

6th July 2026

Dear Sirs,

New electoral arrangements for North Somerset Council – draft recommendations – April 2026

Backwell Parish Council (BPC) write in response to the above draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, specifically in respect of the proposed recommendations for the ward of Backwell.

Context

Backwell Parish Council values its autonomy, the unique characteristics of the current ward and the communities within, and the particular challenges which it faces when compared with neighbouring communities, in particular the impact of Bristol Airport on local residents' amenity, road safety and congestion.

BPC urges the Boundary Commission to reconsider its draft recommendation in light of our comments below which highlight the lack of commonality between Backwell and Wrington and the strong preference for any amendment to the ward to reflect the strong community connections with its hinterlands, i.e. Brockley and Flax Bourton.

Comments on the Draft Recommendations

The report recommends the merger of Backwell and Wrington wards to achieve a ratio of electors to councillors within the acceptable margin of +/- 10%. BPC does not support the proposed merger of the wards. Whilst the Parish has supported the inclusion of Brockley parish (currently within Wrington Ward) in Backwell ward due to the close relationship between these communities and Brockley residents' reliance on Backwell for many facilities, BPC is unable to support the inclusion of the whole of the Wrington ward.

Wrington Parish Council supported no change to its ward and recognised its shared rural character which links it to Brockley, Butcombe, Cleeve and Bristol Airport. An expansion to include Burrington was recognised by Wrington PC as a possibility.

Whilst Wrington and Backwell share some links with Brockley and Cleeve, the two main villages are distinctly separate communities with limited, if any, sharing of facilities, shops and road connections. Having regard to the Boundary Commission's Technical Guidance, paragraph 5.3, this advises that community identity could be defined by the location of public facilities such as doctor's surgeries, hospitals, libraries or schools. It also advises that such facilities should stimulate or provide a focus for community interaction.

In this regard, Backwell residents are served by infant and junior schools in the village, with alternative catchment schools in Nailsea and Flax Bourton. The village has a secondary school which serves Backwell, some of Nailsea and Yatton. At the heart of the village there

are a range of shops, village hall, medical centre and leisure centre which are the community focus for interaction and engagement.

In Wrington, the village is served by a primary school, local shops, village hall and play areas. Similarly to Backwell these facilities, predominantly located at the heart of the village provide the main focus for community interaction. However, secondary age pupils travel to Churchill School to the south of Wrington and residents are most likely to travel to Congresbury, Yatton or Weston-Super-Mare for supermarkets. Residents access primary medical services at Langford, again to the south of the village.

Overall, the villages of Wrington and Backwell have distinctly separate identifies and characteristics. Each village is served by its own local facilities. Where facilities serve a wider area, such as medical centres and schools, there is no overlap between the catchment areas for services serving Wrington or Backwell. Where facilities are not available within the village, residents do not travel to the other village for those services, rather Backwell residents generally travel to Nailsea, whilst Wrington residents would travel to communities to the south and south-west of Wrington.

Major road connections can also be regarded as a strong link between communities, with shared issues around safety, environmental or economic considerations. The A370 serves Backwell, traversing through the centre of the village. Whilst the A370 extends south and provides access a Wrington, via Wrington Road, the village is over 2 miles from the A road and therefore the transport corridor does not present a uniting feature of these two communities. Wrington is more closely related to the A38 to the east and the communities which it serves including Langford and Churchill, together with Bristol Airport.

Alternative Proposal

Backwell Parish Council has resisted radical changes to its boundaries, which it considers are appropriate and reflect the connectivity and identity of local communities within the ward. However, if the Boundary Commission is minded to revise the boundary and extend it to allow for an additional Councillor, there is merit in extending the ward to include Flax Bourton and Brockley.

Paragraph 64 of the draft recommendation dismisses the inclusion of the rural south area of Backwell parish in Wrington ward as this would not contain sufficient electors to secure a good level of electoral equality in Backwell. However, it is unclear whether the Boundary Commission considered the inclusion of part of Winford Ward, namely the community of Flax Bourton, within Backwell ward, in combination with Brockley and potentially Cleeve. There are strong connections between Backwell and these three smaller village communities, all of which rely on Backwell to access local services and facilities, particularly the train station, schools and local shops. Backwell School catchment area covers all four communities and there are consequently strong links between the local primary schools and Backwell School and their communities.

The A370 is a dominant feature in all four communities, with a shared public transport corridor linking the communities and shared community concerns regarding road safety, congestion and the impact of future development on the capacity of the A370 and the wider road network, including the impact on the safety of the rural road network which serves these communities.

Backwell benefits from a wider range of shops and facilities, including the Leisure Centre with swimming pool. These facilities serve the wider hinterlands, with the local communities travelling into Backwell on a regular basis to access day to day facilities and leisure activities. The Parish Councils regularly combine forces and work together to address common issues and challenges, such as road safety, congestion, planned development and flood risk issues. An enlarged Backwell ward encompassing Brockley, Cleeve and Flax Bourton would reflect the established community and Parish Council connections, the shared identity, characteristics and infrastructure which define and link these communities.

In this context, BPC remains firmly committed to the ongoing inclusion of Downside within Backwell ward; local residents have expressed their support and appreciation for the current arrangement of Backwell ward and this should be honoured through any proposed amendment. In this regard, BPC supports the Boundary Commission's retention of Downside within the revised ward.

We would urge the Boundary Commission to revisit its recommendations in light of the above and consider an alternative revision to the boundary of Backwell ward which better reflects the community's identity and its relationship with neighbouring communities.

BPC would welcome the opportunity to discuss options in more detail with the Boundary Commission if this would be helpful to the Commission's ongoing consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Cllr Sarah Ould
Chairman

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Comment text:

Related subject: Backwell

Please see uploaded letter for Backwell Parish Council's views.

Attached Documents:

- bpc-response-to-lgbc-2-ward-recommendation_6-jul-26.pdf