

## STATEMENT BY NAILSEA TOWN COUNCIL TO THE PLANNING INSPECTOR HEARING, 25 NOVEMBER 2011

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make this statement.

Nailsea Town Council broadly supports the Core Strategy as drafted and does not believe that Nailsea should be the focus for strategic levels of growth but that the town should continue to perform its role as a local service centre, as well as improving its self sufficiency.

Nailsea Town Council and its consultants have conducted extensive research over the last 5 years into the current and future needs of the town. This has included a consultation which formed the basis of our parish plan and produced responses from 35% of the households in the town. A key conclusion of the parish plan was that the Town Council supports a policy of **limited growth**, to balance local housing needs and employment.

Contrary to what is implied in HD/14, the Town Council is not seeking to retain a young age profile. The concern is to avoid the consequences of a declining population and an age profile which is rapidly becoming unbalanced, as partly evidenced by the scale and rate of decline in school rolls.

The Town Council is in the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan to review the right levels of growth for the town and we will do this in conjunction with neighbouring Parish Councils given the parish boundaries around the town.

In preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (and in promoting sites to the Sites and Policies DPD) the Town Council must be able to consider the most sustainable locations for development within and around the whole town.

Therefore the Town Council's main concern relates to policy CS6 as was discussed at the session this morning.

The Core Strategy says that "Nailsea in particular has suffered from being planned as a dormitory town in the 1960s and would benefit from development which would

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enable a more balanced community to take shape.” Since the green belt boundaries were set the population of Nailsea has increased many times, and the settlement boundary has changed significantly, now pushing up against the Green Belt boundary to the north of the town. It is therefore **essential** that the boundaries are reviewed in order to assess whether they are appropriate to the actual needs of our town. In 2006, in his final report into North Somerset’s Replacement Local Plan the planning inspector supported the view that a review of the Green Belt should be undertaken “in order that sustainability criteria can be assessed.”

The exclusion of consideration of Green Belt boundaries in Policy CS6 will restrict the search for sustainable locations for locally derived growth and potentially result in perverse outcomes for the town. The District Council is claiming in HD/11 that its policy on green belt is in effect a plan to protect the green belt from development. However, by not considering green belt boundaries at all, the effect in Nailsea is both to constrain limited development in what we believe to be the most sustainable location and to make vulnerable a piece of land which should be in the green belt.

This piece of land, to the south of the town and vital in maintaining the physical separation of Nailsea and Backwell, has been under development pressure for more than 25 years and indeed is the subject of representations before you today. The District Council implies that normal planning and development control policies are adequate protection. But such protection can be overturned by decision of the Planning Authority or inspector.

The community demands the greater security of Green Belt status.

The Town Council wants to see the original wording of policy CS6 reinstated in order to allow all land to be considered in the search for sustainable locations for limited growth, in accordance with the principles of the Localism Act.

Without a proactive and ‘managed’ approach to residential development and reconsideration of the Green Belt boundaries the overarching strategic goals of the

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Core Strategy in relation to Nailsea are unachievable. The real risk is that rather than Nailsea prospering during the period covered by the Core Strategy, it will in fact decline.

**Cllr Rod Lees**