



North Somerset Local Plan 2038

Green Belt Review Part 3

Green Belt Extension

January 2022



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1. Introduction

1. The Bristol and Bath Green Belt surrounds the cities of Bath and Bristol and extends into South Gloucestershire, Bath and North Somerset, North Somerset. As well as a small part of Mendip and Wiltshire. Currently approximately 40% (15,490 hectares) of land in North Somerset is designated as Green Belt. This is defined on the Policies Map.
2. This review relates to the proposed extension of the North Somerset section of the Green Belt. This paper considers if there is justification for an additional Green Belt designation and the possible options.

2. National Policy

3. National Policy sets the aims and purposes of the Green Belt and states that New Green Belt should only be established in exceptional circumstances.
4. *The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. (para. 137)*
5. *Green Belt serves five purposes:*
 - a) *To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - b) *To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - c) *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - d) *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - e) *To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. (NPPF paragraph 138).*
6. The NPPF sets out when new Green Belts can be made. Paragraph 139 states: *The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established. New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions. Any proposals for new Green Belts should be set out in strategic policies, which should:*
 - a) *Demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate;*
 - b) *Set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary;*
 - c) *Show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development;*
 - d) *Demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with strategic policies for adjoining areas; and*
 - e) *Show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework.*

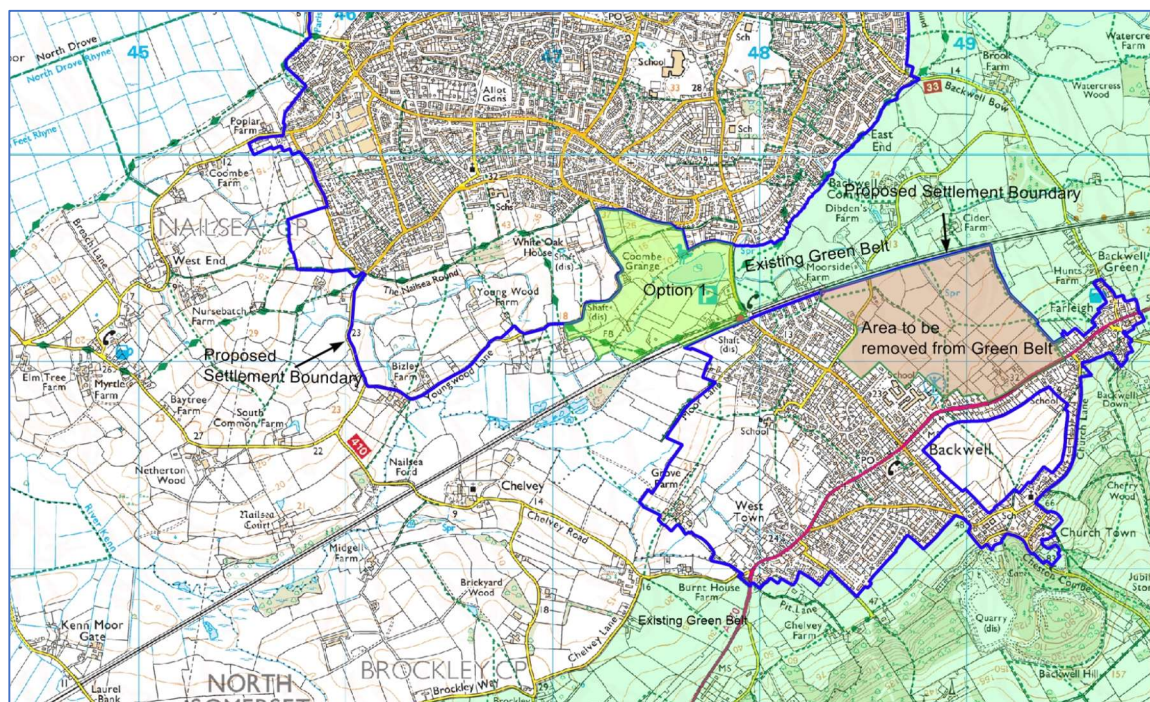
- In order to expand the Green Belt, the Council will need to evidence and justify the exceptional circumstance, set out how it meets points a-e above and have regard to its permanence in the long term, so that it endures beyond the plan period (NPPF paragraph 140).

3. The Options

- The outer extent of the Green Belt in North Somerset extends from Clevedon around the north of Nailsea skirting Backwell, Claverham, and Wrington before joining the Bath and North East Somerset authority area. The only area where significant growth is proposed is adjacent to this boundary is in the Nailsea/ Backwell area. The current Local Plan designates a strategic gap between Nailsea and Backwell. The new local plan proposes residential growth both to the south of Nailsea and west of Backwell. The proposed allocation south of Nailsea extends into part of the strategic gap leaving a core area which abuts the existing Green Belt. This change has prompted a review of the boundary in this vicinity providing an opportunity to extend the Green Belt to secure the long-term protection of the area.
- Three possible options are considered to the south and south west of Nailsea between Nailsea and Backwell.

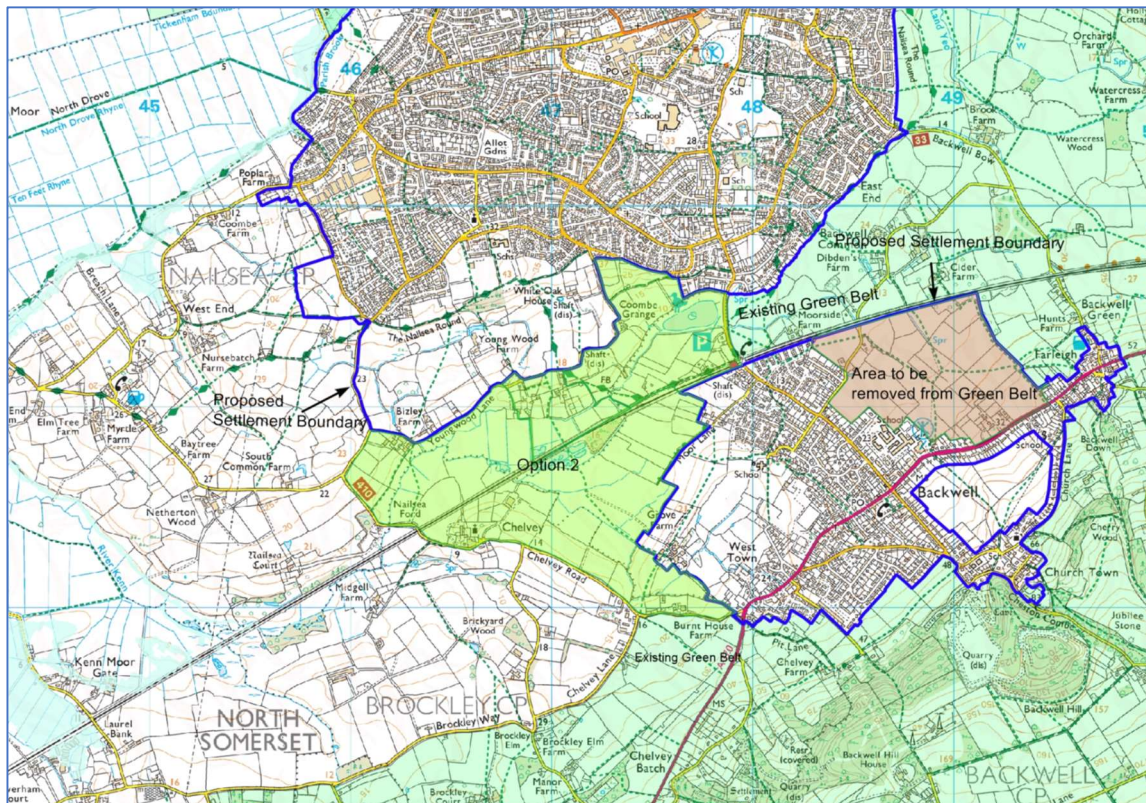
Option 1

- This option would designate the remaining strategic gap between Nailsea and Backwell as Green Belt. It would be the smallest extension to the Green Belt of the options proposed. The western boundary would follow Youngwood Lane then use less clearly defined field boundaries before meeting the railway line.



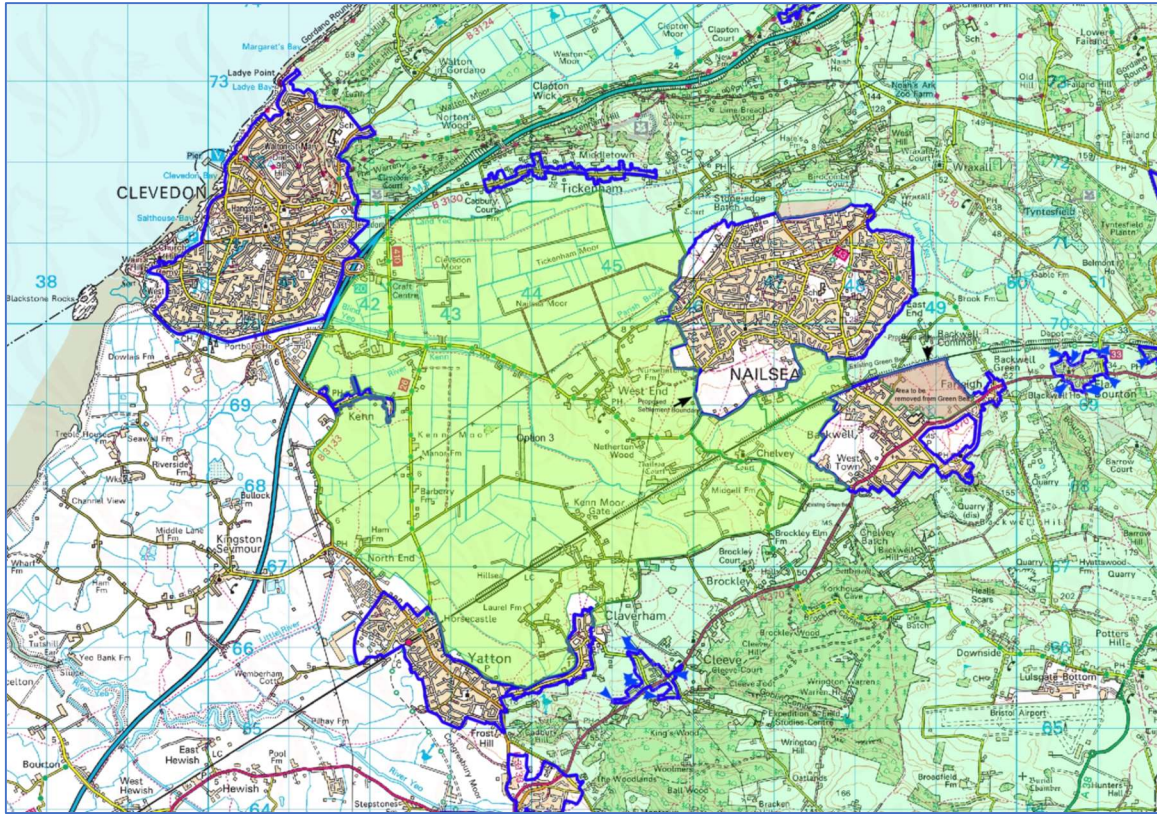
Option 2

- This option creates a new area of Green Belt between the two proposed strategic residential allocations at Nailsea and Backwell. It would extend the Green Belt over the full extent of the gap between the two settlements, and across the railway. It would link to the Green Belt south of Backwell – which becomes inset within the Green Belt. The boundary would follow Youngwood Land and Chelvey Road to meet the existing Green Belt boundary. The inner settlement boundary would mainly be created by the new development.



Option 3

11. This option creates a major new Green Belt area to the east of Clevedon and north of Yatton. This extends over a much larger amount of land than the other options. The boundary would follow the motorway and B3133, exclude existing or proposed development at Kenn, Yatton and Claverham before joining the existing boundary. Suitable boundaries would need to be created at Yatton and Claverham.



Area of land covered

12. The table below gives an approximation of the area of land proposed to be released from the Green Belt for major development in the Preferred Options Consultation Draft (February 2022) and the size of the proposed options for new Green Belt. Total land released does not include land excluded from the Green Belt because of inseting villages or minor adjustments.

Land released from the GB*		Land added to the Green Belt	
Edge of Bristol	133 ha	Option 1 Strategic gap	39 ha
East Backwell	52 ha	Option 2 between Nailsea and Backwell	164 ha
Portishead	8 ha	Option 3 Clevedon-Yatton	2,430 ha
Total	193 ha		

* Approximation subject to detailed boundaries

Purpose of the Green Belt

13. The following table assesses the three different options against the national purposes of Green Belt

Purpose	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	X Outer edge of Green Belt and not adjacent to Bristol.	X Outer edge of Green Belt and not adjacent to Bristol.	X Outer edge of Green Belt and not adjacent to Bristol.
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.	√ Between Nailsea and Backwell	√ Between Nailsea and Backwell	√ Between Nailsea and Backwell and also Nailsea and Clevedon – although the plan is not proposing development which threatens merger in this respect
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.	√	√	√
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	X	X	X
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	All Green Belt land does this	All Green Belt land does this	All Green Belt land does this

Tests for proposing New Green Belt

14. The following assesses the options against the tests for new Green Belt set out in the NPPF paragraph 139.

Why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate (NPPF paragraph 139a).

15. The area around Nailsea and Backwell is under pressure for development and it is proposed that part of the currently designated strategic gap is developed. The Youngwood Lane development was allowed at appeal. The call for sites demonstrates the pressure for development in this area. There is a need to demonstrate the limit of development in this area in the current plan and in the

longer term and to secure the physical and visual open gap between the settlements. Option 2 best meets this objective. The greater extent of option 3 means that normal planning policies would protect a significant portion of this land. Much is unsuitable for development with the majority is in the flood risk area and covered by designated wildlife areas. This provides protection for the area especially land to the east. Elsewhere most of the land is open rural countryside with countryside policies controlling development.

Whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary (NPPF paragraph 139b).

17. The strategic gap is will be reduced as a result of proposed development. Two major housing allocations are proposed to the south of Nailsea and west of Backwell. These allocations reduce the gap between the settlements risking the merger of settlements. Option 1 would not be so effective in terms of securing the openness of the wider land between Nailsea and Backwell for the longer-term. Major change is not being proposed throughout the whole area of option 3.

What the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development (NPPF paragraph 139c).

18. The options would support the delivery of sustainable development by ensuring development is concentrated at the proposed allocations which are properly planned with appropriate infrastructure, facilities and services.

The necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with strategic policies for adjoining areas (NPPF paragraph 139d).

19. Options 2 and 3 would best ensure the open nature of the area and prevent the merger of Nailsea and Backwell specifically between the two allocations. The new Green Belt would surround Backwell making it an inset but which has room to expand through the proposed allocations. The proposed extension to the Green Belt is in the North Somerset authority area and does not impact upon adjacent authorities.

How the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework (NPPF paragraph 139e).

20. All options would encourage sustainable development at the towns and larger villages and support landscape and ecological objectives.

Preferred option

21. The need to consider options to extend the Green Belt in this area has been established. The exceptional circumstances include the scale of development at Nailsea and Backwell which risks the merger of settlements, the need to secure the longer-term planning for the area and preserve openness, and the need for a stronger more permanent designation than the strategic gap to properly protect the openness of the area. Of the three options, option 2 best meets the requirements set out in the NPPF. Option 1 is too limited in its extent to provide effective protection, while option 3 is more difficult to justify particularly as much of the land is in the flood risk area or has wildlife or other designations making it unsuitable for development and which protects it from development. Option 2 is

therefore the preferred approach and will be subject to consultation through the Preferred Options document.