

## Press Release – Paulton House Residential Development

The proposal for a change of Paulton House's use from offices to apartments threatens, yet again, the Somer Valley's balance of employment and housing. Although the development falls within Paulton Parish Council's boundary, too many residents in the area already commute out to their places of work and the loss of more potential employment space in order to create more housing will only exacerbate the situation.

Unfortunately, the amendments to planning legislation in May this year allow for this type of change of use as a permitted development – in other words, planning permission is not required. The Town Council is considering how it can make representations to the Planning Authority at B&NES but even if it can make a very strong case, it is unlikely that B&NES will be able to refuse the proposals. Only highways matters, flood risk or land contamination can effectively prevent this type of development.

This makes it even more important that Midsomer Norton people have more say on how they wish to shape the future development of the town. The Town Council was successfully designated as a Neighbourhood Area in November 2013 and is now working on a Neighbourhood Development Plan which, if adopted, will take priority when considering planning applications within the legislation. The recent Community Survey and other extensive consultations in the recent past will enable the development plan to be written over the coming months. The Town Council will consult further throughout the process and will eventually be required to put its proposals to a referendum. Should residents vote to adopt the plan, Midsomer Norton will be better placed to shape development within its town boundaries.