

Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026



**ABBOTS LEIGH, HAM GREEN,
PILL, EASTON-IN-GORDANO**

The Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Neighbourhood Plan was prepared on behalf of the two Parish Councils of Abbots Leigh and Pill and Easton-in-Gordano by a Steering Group drawn from the parish councils, the local community and Alliance Homes. The Steering Group was representative of all parts of the area and brought a range of knowledge and expertise to the task.

Membership

Sue Adamson

(Pill, Parish Councillor)

Jill Coleman

(Easton-in-Gordano, Board member Pill and District Community Land Trust)

Don Davies

(Pill, North Somerset Councillor for Pill/Abbots Leigh wards)

Lucy Byrne

(Ham Green and Climate Change and Environment Group)

Bob Langton

(Pill, Pill and Easton Parish Councillor)

Rob Harvey

(Pill, Environment)

Lin Matthews

(Pill, Chair Pill and Easton Community Forum)

Peter Milner

(Pill, Community)

Alison Needler

(Ham Green, Community)

Stephen Robertson

(Abbots Leigh, Business West; Abbots Leigh resident)

Simon Talbot-Ponsonby

(Abbots Leigh, Chair Parish Council)

Jo Tuckwell

(Pill; local employer)

Peter Stanley

(Pill, parish councillor)

Murray Stewart

(Abbots Leigh; Parish Councillor, Pill and District Community Land Trust)

Cathryn Vallender

(Alliance Homes)

Martin Walker

(Abbots Leigh: Parish Councillor)

Trevor Wraith

(Easton-in-Gordano, Parish Councillor)

The Steering Group is grateful for the engagement and support of many local individuals and organisations. A full list is included in the Consultation Paper submitted with the Plan.

Special thanks go to Celia Dring our liaison from North Somerset Council who, over three years, has been full of constructive support and advice.

March 2020

The Neighbourhood Plan was available for local consultation from April 6th 2020. As a consequence of COVID-19 the consultation period has been extended to 12th September. Comments should be sent to nhoodplan@btinternet.com

Contents

Volume 1 The Neighbourhood Plan

1	Introduction	4
2	Strategic Planning Framework.....	5
3	The Neighbourhood Area and its History	6
4	Vision, Principles, Objectives and Policies	8
5	Housing.....	10
6	Transport and Movement	19
7	Landscape, Environment and Biodiversity	27
8	Heritage.....	31
9	Economy and Employment.....	34
10	Climate Emergency	37
11	Community Assets and Facilities.....	40

Volume 2 Background Papers

Housing

Transport and Movement (including Peter Evans Partnership Transport Report).

Environment (including WildService Ecology Report)

Heritage

Economy and Employment

Climate Change (including Centre for Sustainable Energy Report)

Community

Copies of Volume 2 are to be found on the Neighbourhood Plan page of the Neighbourhood Plan website www.pilanddistrictplan.org

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is the Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan is prepared in order to guide the long-term development of an area. Set within the broader context of national and local planning policies and housing targets, the Plan reflects the community's wishes about the appropriate location and nature of local development. Underpinning all aspects of the Plan is sustainability, whilst community engagement is crucial to the preparation of the plan. The Plan is only approved after a local referendum.

The Localism Act 2011 encourages local communities to draw up a Neighbourhood Development Plan. In areas where there is a Parish Council it takes the lead in neighbourhood planning. Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano are all distinct settlements, but have a number of important planning and development issues in common, including:

- A fear of urban sprawl from the edge of Bristol down to the M5 motorway should development be allowed to spread along the A369.
- A related fear of the Green Belt at risk and open to change, with valuable open space, together with environmental and heritage assets lost.
- A perception that the A369 was increasingly overloaded with related concerns about speed, safety, noise and pollution.
- Appreciation that the Avon Gorge, the Avon itself and the longshore towards the Severn represented an asset valuable to the whole neighbourhood area.

In July 2016, therefore, The Parish Councils of Abbots Leigh and Pill & Easton-in-Gordano agreed to undertake a joint Neighbourhood Plan with Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council having formal lead responsibility.

1.2 Preparing the Plan

A request to North Somerset Council in May 2016 for a Neighbourhood Area covering the whole of the two parishes was approved in August 2016. Throughout 2017, effort was put into explaining to local communities what the Plan involved, what were the challenges facing the area, and how preparation of the Plan would proceed. Initial consultation revealed the key issues. In 2018 work was moving forward in the collection of data about the main themes of the Plan – housing, transport, environment, heritage, economy, community and climate change. In the autumn of 2018 and again in autumn 2019 grant funding was obtained from Locality, and three consultants were commissioned to provide background analysis on transport, environment and energy.

Through late 2018 and the first half of 2019 Background Papers were finalised and consultation moved ahead with a range of events, meetings, interviews and mini-questionnaires (details in the Consultation Report). A website was created and a Steering Group established.

From spring 2019 the outlines and structure of a plan emerged and in the autumn 2019 exhibitions of findings and proposals to be included in the Plan were presented in three exhibitions across the Neighbourhood Area in Abbots Leigh, Pill, and Easton-in-Gordano. In November the Steering Group brought this material together and a first full draft plan was finalised and agreed in January 2020. The Plan was submitted to North Somerset Council for HRA/SEA screening in March

2020, and local consultation undertaken in the six weeks from April to mid-May.

Background Papers were prepared to assist the community in understanding and responding to the key issues facing the neighbourhood. They provide much of the information and evidence on which the Plan is based but do not address recommendations for policy. The main Plan text draws on, and summarises, these Background Papers but is a complete and free-standing document.

Policy issues are addressed in the main plan and are divided into two categories:

Planning Policies which have a direct impact on plan-making and planning applications (coloured in red).

Community Action Policies which can be taken forward by the parish councils, community organisations or other agencies but are not explicitly planning focussed (coloured in blue).

In order to assist both the six-week local consultation and the subsequent North Somerset Consultation (also six weeks), and also to assure local residents that appropriate policies do exist even if not repeated in the Plan, the sections on policy include a list of those North Somerset Council Core Strategy Policies and Development Management policies which apply, but are not repeated in this Plan.

2 STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

For much of the time while this Neighbourhood Plan was being assembled, the West of England Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) was being prepared, and successive drafts of the JSP provided a policy context for our work. We were also aware of, and took into account, the Issues and Options consultation 2019 by North Somerset Council in relation to their 2036 Local Plan. We responded to the Issues and Options Paper setting out our views on what implications there might be for new settlement boundaries and development in the Green Belt adjacent to existing boundaries.

In August 2019, however, the strategic context changed. Public Examination of the JSP and subsequent letters from the Inspectors indicated that they were minded to conclude that the JSP was unsound. Until a new spatial strategy comes forward to set the housing numbers across the whole of North Somerset up to 2038 the Neighbourhood Plan must therefore work within the current 2017 Core Strategy framework running to 2026.

The implications of this are that our Plan assumes that the Green Belt remains as it is at present, the Pill Settlement boundary remains unchanged and Abbots Leigh remains 'rural'. The submitted Plan, therefore conforms to the Amended Local Plan 2017 and the North Somerset Core Strategy adopted in 2018. The time-scale of our plan and its proposals relates to the period to 2026.

At the same time, however, much of our thinking still relates to the longer term and a number of the issues explored will also be applicable to the fifteen years 2023–38. Nevertheless, the specific development policies and proposals suggested in this Plan relate only to the period up to 2026,

We expect that once a strategic framework has been finalised for North Somerset, hopefully in early 2023, our Plan will need to be updated and/or revised and we are happy to make a commitment that this will be done.¹

¹ In March 2020 North Somerset Council announced a Pre-commencement process for the Local Plan 2038, stressing the importance of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans working in tandem.

3 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA AND ITS HISTORY

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Area

In May 2016 a proposed Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) covering the whole of the two parishes, including Royal Portbury Dock, was put to North Somerset Council. Following community consultation and comments from a number of individuals, agencies and organisations the Council accepted the proposal in autumn 2016.

The NPA covers the two parishes of Pill & Easton-in-Gordano and Abbots Leigh. It stretches from Leigh Woods on the outskirts of Bristol to the River Severn at Royal Portbury Dock. The NPA is bounded on the south-east by the parish of Long Ashton, on the south-west by the parishes of Wraxall and Portbury and at its north-western edge by the River Severn with the River Avon marking the north-eastern boundary.² The area has a population of 5,627 (Census 2011), 80% of whom live within the Pill/Easton/Ham Green settlement boundary.

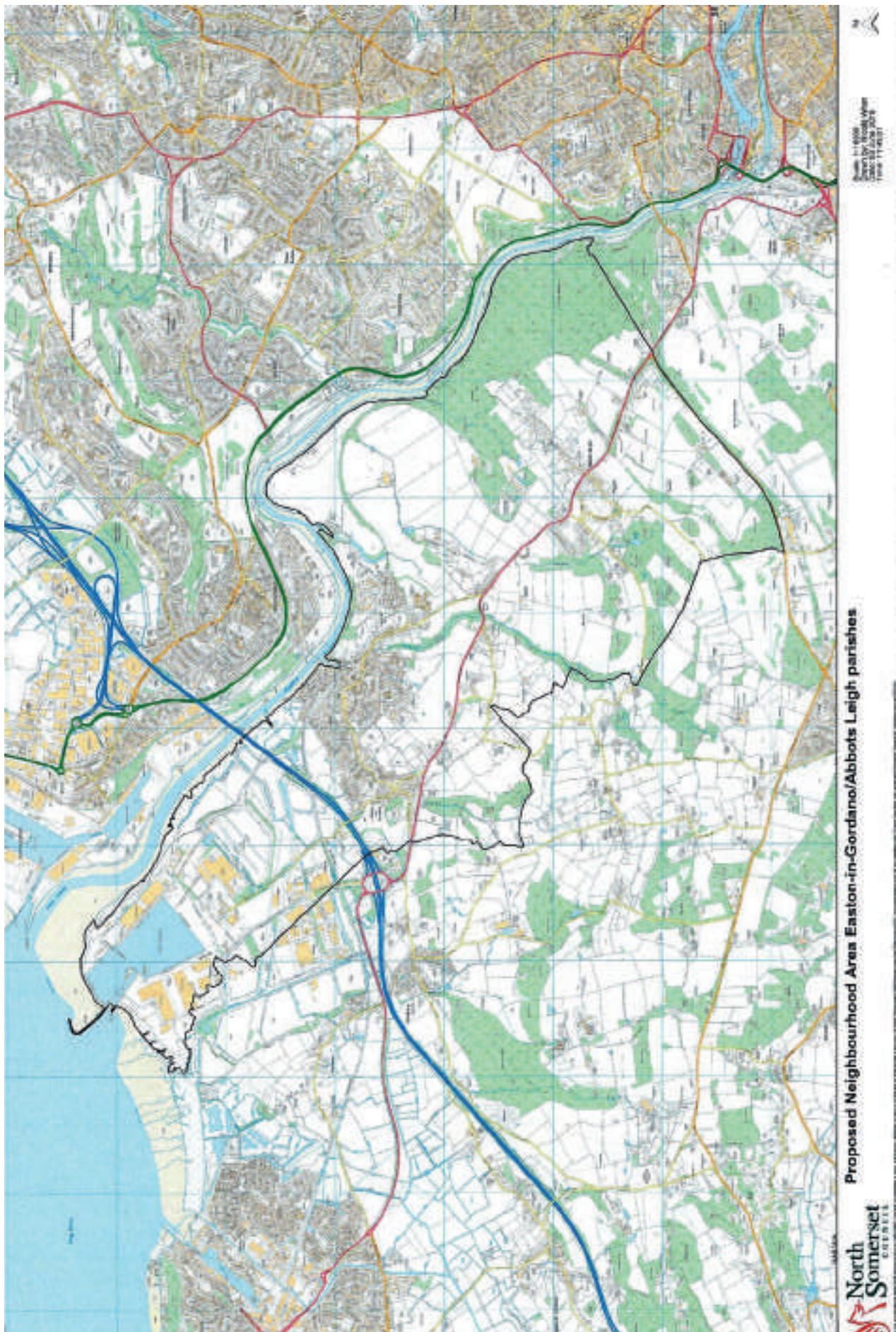
Encompassing most of the Leigh Woods woodland (including some Forestry England and National Trust owned land) down to, but not including, the towpath along the Avon Gorge the NPA includes the village of Abbots Leigh and assorted woodland and farmland past Leigh Court to Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano and as far as the M5 excluding the Gordano Motorway Services Area. Beyond the M5, but still within the parish of Pill & Easton-in-Gordano, lies Royal Portbury Dock, owned and operated by the Bristol Port Company. The Dock benefits from specific regulation

in terms of development activity.³ The Plan, therefore, cannot and does not, address strategic or operational issues relating to the Dock. Nonetheless the dock area makes an important contribution to land-based and marine conservation. In addition, it offers public access walking and cycling for both leisure and travel to work. The employment opportunities offered by the Dock and the traffic implications of its operations have consequences for the rest of the NPA as does an ongoing review of air quality.

In terms of traffic and movement the NPA is dominated by the busy and often overloaded east/west Bristol to Portishead A369 road. The Ham Green/Pill/Easton settlement is accessed by a separate loop running from the Haberfield junction and re-joining the A369 close to the M5 at St. George's Hill. The north/south M5 itself runs through the NPA with the Junction 19 Service Area immediately adjoining. Along the length of the A369 feeder and connecting roads and lanes link the main road to local residential development. The advent of the Portishead to Bristol passenger line will impact Pill in particular. Within the area lie the Avon Trail, the Gordano Round and a network of Public Rights of Way footpaths & bridleways and on and off-road cycle routes criss-crossing the whole of the NPA. The NPA has important heritage assets (a Historic Gardens site at Leigh Court and twenty-seven Historic England listed buildings and monuments) plus a range of protected environmental areas (SSSI, RAMSAR, Protection Areas) as well as flood defences.

2 The River Avon towpath remains owned by Bristol City Council and is thus technically outside the NPA

3 The role of the Bristol Port Company arises from primary legislation to establish the dock project, and exemptions provided via elements of the General Permitted Development Order 1995.



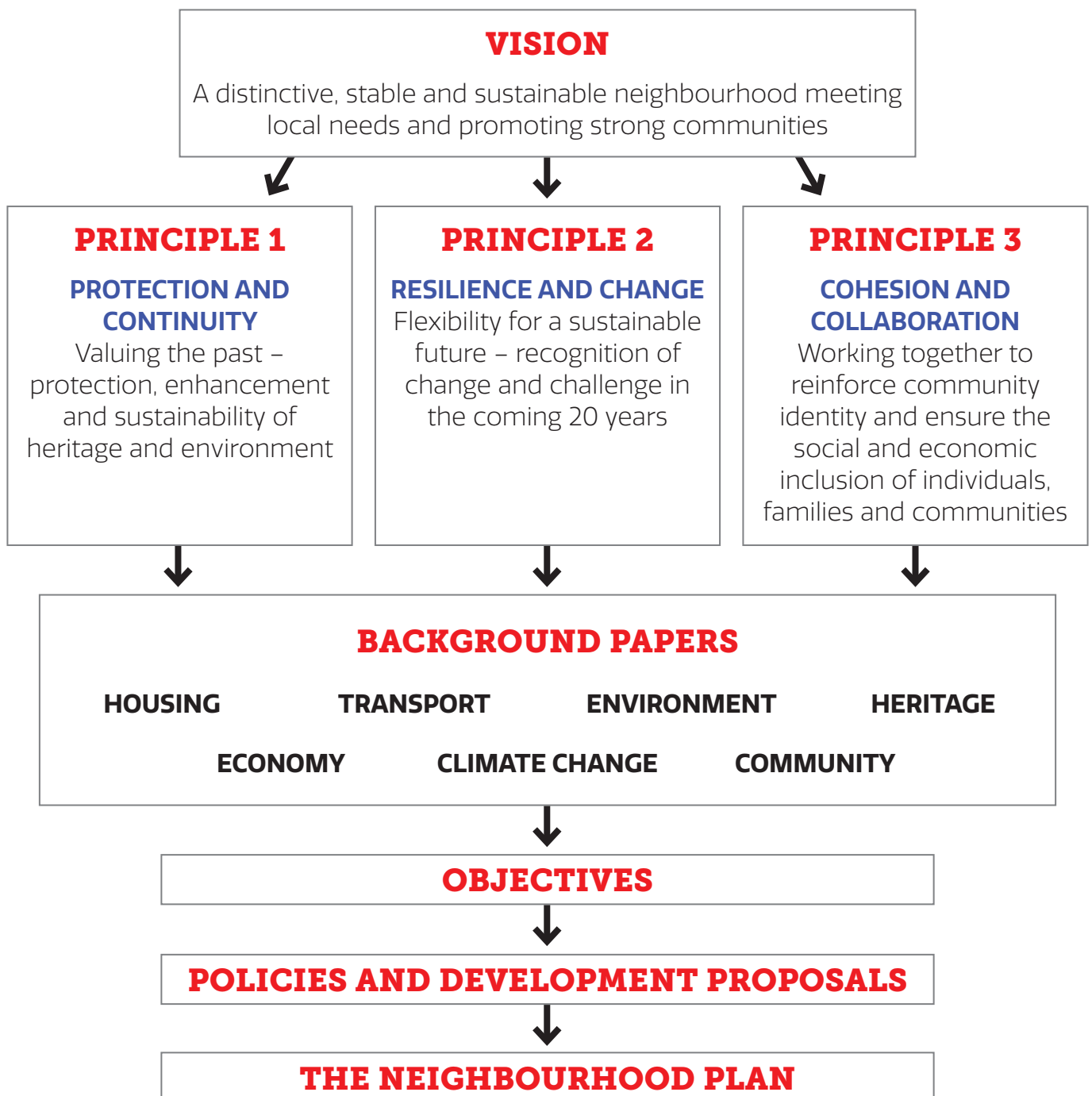
Map 1 Neighbourhood Plan Area

4 VISION, PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

4.1 Organisation of the Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan is based on a simple **Vision** behind which lie a set of three **Principles** which acknowledge that the Plan must reflect and respond to the past, the present and the future. Detailed description and analysis of the issues facing

the community are covered in a set of **Background Papers**. These papers inform a set of **Objectives followed by Policies and Development Proposals** which are the key component of the final Plan.



4.2 Primary Objectives

The primary objectives of the Plan are

- Contribute to meeting local housing need through a mix of tenure, size and affordability.
- Minimise the impact of road traffic on congestion, parking, safety, and pollution.
- Encourage walking and cycling and ensure the accessibility, convenience and safety of cycle and walking routes.
- Sustain and enhance the landscape, ecology and bio-diversity of the area whilst protecting its environmental assets.
- Respect, preserve and protect the history and the heritage of the built environment.
- Support the generation of local jobs for local people.
- Respond to climate change and move towards a carbon neutral neighbourhood.
- Protect, maintain and enhance Open Spaces, Rights of Way and pathways for walking and cycling.
- Celebrate and sustain the strengths, cohesion and inclusion of the diverse communities of the area.

5 HOUSING *(See also Background Paper 1)*

Primary Objective

Contribute to meeting local housing need through a mix of tenure, size and affordability.

5.1 Background⁴

In 2017 the **population** of the Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) was 5,698 of whom 88% lived in Pill and Easton-in-Gordano parish and 12% in Abbots Leigh parish. The population of Pill and Easton-in-Gordano had grown slightly since 2001 whilst that of Abbots Leigh had declined slightly. Abbots Leigh had a greater number of women and older people. There were similar proportions

of male and female residents in each parish and similar age distributions. The whole area was predominantly ethnically white with a population largely born in the UK.

In 2011 there were 2,416 **households** in occupied dwellings, occupying 96.8% of the total dwelling stock. 80 dwellings were unoccupied (3.2%). 63 dwellings were over-occupied. In Abbots Leigh 93% of dwellings were in detached or semi-detached houses, by comparison with Pill and Easton-in-Gordano where 67.5% were in houses and 29.6% in flats or terraces. Ownership was the dominant tenure throughout (89% in Abbots Leigh, 76% in Pill and Easton-in-Gordano) with some private rented throughout the area. Social renting was at 7% in Pill and Easton-in-Gordano (and zero in Abbots Leigh).

5.2 Household Growth

Excluding the 1,200 sq.km. of Royal Portbury Dock the 2,900 sq.km. of Pill and Easton-in-Gordano parish are geographically constrained and concentrated. 96.7% of the

parish population (4,478 residents) and 92.4% of the households (1,947 households) lived within the Pill Settlement boundary. (see Map 2 below).



Map 2 Pill Settlement Area

⁴ This section draws on the National Statistics Office 2011 Census and 2017 population estimates.

Neither the Pill Settlement nor the Royal Portbury Dock lie within the Green Belt. At the same time the Pill Settlement boundary is now out-dated as it does not include the hundred and twenty houses which have since been built in the Green Belt at St. Katherine's Park on the former Ham Green Hospital site.

Within the Green Belt itself growth has been heavily constrained. Abbots Leigh, lying entirely within the Green Belt, has no formal settlement boundary and is a much larger, more rural parish than Pill and Easton-in-Gordano with a number of outlying areas beyond the village – Home Farm Road, Ashbourne Avenue, Blackmoor

Road, parts of the Pill Road and a few houses in Ham Green. The proportion of parish population living within the settlement boundary (the former Village Fence) is 55% (households 61%).

Between 2007 and 2017 completed development sites within the Settlement Area of Pill and Easton-in-Gordano produced only 60 new dwellings.⁵ In Abbots Leigh the figure was 5 new dwellings within the village.⁶ Residential expansion outside, but adjacent to the Pill and Abbots Leigh settlements produced only a further five dwellings across the whole Neighbourhood Area – a reflection of the stringent application of Green Belt policy.

5.3 Housing Demand and Provision

Nevertheless there is strong housing demand throughout the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Developers believe that housing supply in North Somerset may be insufficient to meet current housing targets and there have been speculative proposals both for major (1,000 dwellings) development projects at Chapel Pill and Martcombe and at other smaller sites where landowners/developers hold land with hope value. It is also the case that existing owners tend to extend rather than sell property and many local planning applications seek improvements and extensions – sideways or upwards.

Interviews with Portishead estate agents confirm there is an active housing market

and the attractiveness of Pill, traditionally a less appealing location, has risen sharply in the last couple of years. Pill was described to us as 'on the up'. Abbots Leigh has the strongest links to Bristol, and housing at Ham Green sells quickly. In part this level of housing market buoyancy in the NPA is because there is relatively little movement out – Pill has a strong sense of identity and community with many families keen to remain there even if not in the same property. There is nevertheless movement in from Bristol and Portishead. The proposed Portishead rail line, with a station at Pill, moving ahead, with a planning Development Consent Order submitted to Government in late 2019. Already this is thought to be giving impetus to the housing market.

5.4 Affordability and Housing Need

There have long been concerns about the availability of **affordable housing** for local people in Pill and Easton. There is some over-occupation as measured by number

of rooms (63 rooms amounting to 2.9% of all dwellings) and number of bedrooms (945 dwellings amounting to 2.1% of dwellings). There are significant numbers of households

5 North Somerset Council: Parish Profiles:2017 Pill and Easton-in -Gordano

6 North Somerset Council: Parish Profiles:2017 Abbots Leigh

with dependent children and children under 4. Pill West is the 35th most deprived LSOA⁷ in North Somerset, being the only area in North Somerset outside Weston-super-Mare lying within most deprived 40% in England. On more detailed deprivation indicators – low income, employment, education and skills, health and disability – Pill West scores relatively highly as it does on income deprivation focussing explicitly on children and on older people.

Alliance Homes are the main providers of affordable housing, providing mainly social rented accommodation (former local authority stock). They hold 297 properties many in the neighbourhood around Victoria Park and the Creek in Pill. Curo, LiveWest (formerly Knightstone Housing) and Sovereign Housing are also registered providers who hold small developments in Pill.

In order to provide more evidence on housing need Pill and District Community Development Trust,⁸ in conjunction with North Somerset Council, conducted a housing survey in autumn 2016. The aims of the survey were to give an indication of the affordable housing need in terms of tenure and house size for people with a local connection in the two parishes, to investigate the housing need and aspirations of older residents in the parishes, and to establish the general level of support for a small development of

affordable housing for local people with housing needs.

2521 questionnaires were distributed to all households in both parishes. 724 were returned (28.4% response rate).

Key findings were:

- 29 respondents were able to buy or rent in the open market
- 10 additional respondents could not afford to buy a shared ownership property
- 2 respondents over the age of 55 could not afford to buy/rent in the open market
- A further 10 households could afford to meet their need in the open market
- 50 of the above respondents met the local connection criteria
- 71% of all respondents were in favour of a small development of affordable housing for local people.

Of the 29 households identified as being in housing need 9 would have a need within twelve months, 12 within 2–3 years and 8 within 3–5 years. 15 homes would be needed for single people or couples. 9 two bedroom homes were needed for families and 5 three bedroom homes were needed also for families.

The Survey Report is available in full on the Neighbourhood Plan website at www.pillanddistrictplan.org

5.5 Housing Strategy

The new North Somerset Local Plan is likely to cover the period 2023–2038. Pending the agreement to this the time period for this Neighbourhood Plan is 2020–2026, aligning with the NSC Core Strategy housing period and with Core Strategy policies for the scale and distribution of new housing (CS 13 and CS 14). In relation to the

distribution of new housing, a target of 2,100 dwellings for service villages and 985 for other settlements and countryside were set, although specific targets for individual parishes are not specified.

In the longer term to 2038 in the context of a new North Somerset Local Plan it may be

7 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are the smallest area for which deprivation information is calculated

8 The Pill and District Community Land Trust (PDCLT) was set up in 2017 under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.

necessary to consider the appropriateness of, for example:

- Introduction of a settlement boundary for Abbots Leigh
- Updating of the Pill Settlement boundary to include the housing built on and around the former Ham Green Hospital site.
- Reconsideration of the Green Belt boundary and assessment of potential of sites adjacent to existing settlements.
- A response to a new housing target for the new strategic Local Plan (1,369 dwellings a year).

Whilst the 2017 Core strategy does not set a housing target for each parish, in order to underpin their long-term strategic thinking about the possible scale and location of future growth the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group assessed a range of housing scenarios. Three scenarios were tested:

- **Minimal growth** – retaining tight control of new development, maintaining the Green Belt and accepting only 'exceptional' new projects.
- **Medium growth** – allowing limited growth of up to 150 new dwellings – mainly in clusters of dwellings around the edges of Pill and Abbots Leigh with minor adjustments to Green Belt boundaries.⁹
- **Major growth** – development of up to 1000 dwellings making a major contribution to North Somerset housing supply. The proposed development known as 'Pill Green' was used to test this scenario.¹⁰

An analysis of these scenarios is provided in Background Paper 1. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, in consultation with

the two parish councils and the local community, considered that:

Scenario 1 made a minimal contribution to meeting North Somerset housing need and would rely exclusively on 'exceptional' sites.

Scenario 2 – the development of up to 150 dwellings in small clusters of housing of around 15–20 dwellings adjacent to existing settlements for both the period to 2026 and prospectively for the longer term to 2036 was the preferred strategy. This Scenario assumes the continuity of most of the Green Belt but offers a modest contribution to the 3,000 dwellings needed in service villages and other settlements.

Scenario 3 not only runs counter to Green Belt and Landscape Quality policies,¹¹ but would threaten biodiversity and the ecological framework of the Area, could exacerbate peak hour traffic congestion and overload on both the A369 and the Pill Loop and would further damage air quality. Whilst the Joint Spatial Plan is now redundant it concluded that the Easton in Gordano/Pill corridor was '*a very constrained location in terms of transport, Green Belt, heritage, landscape and ecology.*'¹²

Community opinion on the options was tested at public consultation exhibitions in autumn 2019.¹³ 35% of those attending favoured Scenario 1 – minimal new development. 61% favoured Scenario 2 – medium growth. Only 4% welcomed Scenario 3 – major growth. Together with the Housing Survey evidence showing 71% in favour of a small development of affordable housing, these views confirmed the Steering Group's conclusion that Scenario 2 was the most appropriate longer-term view. It is

9 The 150 dwelling scenario assumes the continuity of most of the Green Belt but reflects a modest contribution to the 3,000 dwellings needed in service villages and other settlements.

10 Consultation Comment 15796321/2 submitted to the West of England Joint Spatial Plan Examination by Barton Willmore on behalf of Gallagher Estates.

11 North Somerset Council. Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, 2018 pp 45–47

12 Joint Spatial Plan: Towards an Emerging Spatial Strategy, October 2016, Table 2.

13 The Exhibitions are described in the separate Consultation Statement.

important to note that this scenario building was undertaken during the period when the Joint Spatial Plan was still under active consideration and aimed only to assess

differing long-term possibilities for growth. The scenario building remains important background material but does not have immediate application to the 2026 Plan.

5.6 Proposals 2020–2026

In the period to 2026, housing possibilities in the Neighbourhood Area are largely constrained by the Green Belt (CS 6), and the status of Abbots Leigh as a 'rural' parish. (CS16, 32). Nevertheless, the Neighbourhood Plan offers a planned increase in the supply of housing units of fifty-two (52) by 2026.

There is some limited scope for infill residential development within the Pill Settlement boundary together with the possibility of residential gain in Abbots Leigh through the adaptation or conversion of agricultural buildings.¹⁴ Together with windfall sites across the Neighbourhood Area this might produce up to a dozen (12) new dwellings by 2026.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, advised by the Pill and District Community Land Trust, identified a number of potential sites that could meet the need for a cluster of affordable housing. These sites lay on the edge of both the Pill Settlement boundary and the notional Abbots Leigh Village Fence. Ten sites were considered. Two – the Pill Baptist Church and land off the main road at Ham Green – lay within the Pill Settlement boundary but were severely constrained in terms of access, size, legal and construction obstacles, and feasible housing type. Six other sites on the edge of Pill/Easton – a field at the top of St. George's Hill, a field off Marsh Lane, a field off Cross lanes, a field adjacent to St. Catherine's Mead, a field off the A369 beyond St Katherine's School, and land off Chapel Pill Lane – were all discussed with the relevant landowner. Two further possible sites were identified in Abbots Leigh. All lay within the Green Belt and all but one

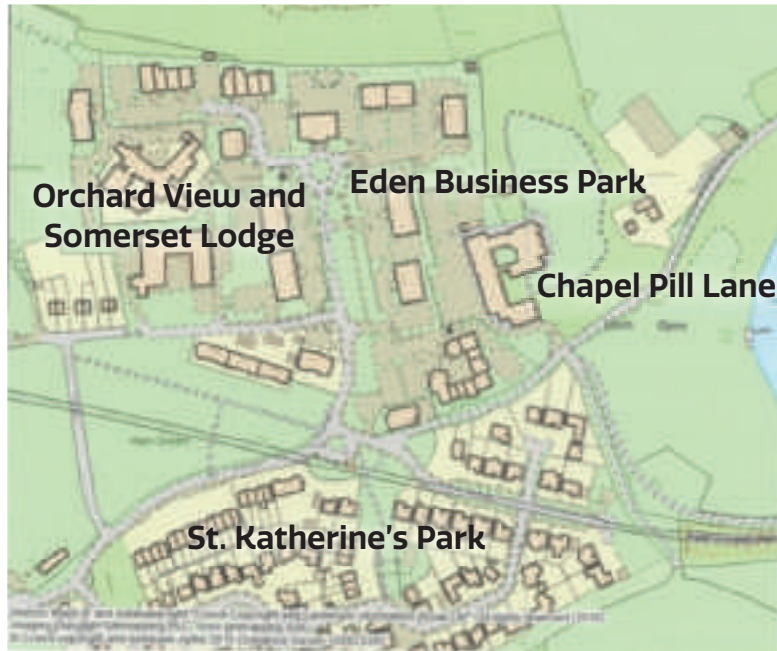
landowner held strong 'hope value' views and were unwilling to sell to the Land Trust.

Chapel Pill Lane was the only remaining site where the landowner was willing to engage and sign terms of agreement. In addition, a brown field site was identified with the potential for redevelopment within the plan period. For the period to 2026 the Plan, therefore, allocates two new development sites which would offer a further forty (40) new dwellings in the Plan Area by 2026:

- **Orchard View:** a 3-acre brownfield site at Perrett Way in Ham Green for a mixed development of around twenty-four (24) mixed tenure housing comprising both market and affordable housing. There would also be a sixty-bed care home (possibly incorporating a further six dwelling spaces integrated as staff accommodation). The development would provide up to sixty jobs, many for local residents in the Neighbourhood Area. The site is the final undeveloped part of the former Ham Green Hospital Complex.
- **Affordable Housing:** An exception scheme of up to sixteen (16) affordable housing units to rent on Chapel Pill Lane in the Green Belt (proposed by the Pill and District Community Land Trust).

Both these sites lie within Ham Green (see Map 3 opposite). The former Ham Green Hospital site has been redeveloped to become the Eden Business Park, the St Katherine's Housing Estate and the Penny Brohn Centre. The majority of Ham Green remains outside the Pill Settlement boundary and within the Green Belt.

14 NSC Development Management Policies DM 45



Map 3 Ham Green

Improvement Area 1 Orchard View

Formerly an NHS Intermediate Care Unit (Orchard View) and a 35-bed care home (Somerset Lodge) this is a three-acre brown-field site in Ham Green, Pill. (see Map 4 below) In addition to the two main buildings there are some outbuildings. The site is now in single ownership and the owner is keen to redevelop the whole site into a mixed-use site – a new and up to

date care home with sixty beds and a staff of sixty, plus housing (some explicitly for care home staff) together with additional rental housing (including an affordable housing element) and some for market sale. The intention would be to build smaller units including some apartments at a range of size and cost. New housing provision might be up to twenty-four (24) dwellings incorporating some affordable housing.



Map 4 Orchard View

Adjoining the Watchhouse Hill Apple Orchard and local sports pitches, the site is all that is as yet undeveloped of the former Ham Green Hospital site, the remainder of which has been developed into housing, a business park and the Penny Brohn Centre. The site is in the Green Belt and beyond the (now outdated) Pill Settlement boundary. It is within walking distance of Pill Precinct and there is a bus stop and pub at the end of Macrae Road. It has easy access to St. Katherine's School. There are no immediate local services to support existing residential and business properties. The site is unoccupied (other than resident security staff) and the buildings are run-down and dilapidated (see below).

There could be a small café/shop for residents, visitors to the home, local residents and employees on Eden Business Park for whom there are no local facilities. There is a walk past the community orchard on Watchhouse Hill down to Pill centre (a section of the River Avon Walkway). The hill is a hugely

popular leisure/recreation site and a small café would attract a number of walkers.

As yet there are no design plans and only informal discussions with the planning authority but since this is a proposal on an existing developed site there is potential for improvements which would address health and social care and employment as well as housing objectives.

The Pill Settlement Area currently excludes much of Ham Green and may be reviewed as part of the North Somerset 2023-38 Local Plan. This site would be amongst those considered for inclusion within a redefined Pill Settlement boundary.

Part of this site (adjoining the apple orchard) was earlier considered by the Community Land Trust for affordable housing but was rejected as being too small and premature given the uncertainty at the time over land ownership and future uses. This part is now, however, incorporated into Improvement Area 1.



Improvement Area 2 Affordable Housing

Recognising the need for affordable housing, the PDCLT Board has, between 2017–2019, been seeking sites for affordable housing and engaging in discussion with landowners about their willingness to collaborate with a PDCLT project. Subject to final agreement with the new owner, local consultation and planning approval, a site of two acres

has been identified lying between Chapel Pill Lane, Hayes Mayes Lane and the Ham Green Lakes. (see Map 5 below) The site is on sloping ground falling down towards Ham Green Lake and offers an outlook over open ground and across to Leigh Court. The development will make joint use of a MetroWest road to be constructed to give access to the Portishead rail tunnel which will run beneath St. Katherine's estate.



Map 5 Chapel Pill Lane

Although there is some existing housing on Chapel Pill Lane and Hart Close, the proposed development is well screened by trees and cannot be seen from such nearby housing. Penny Brohn UK, a national cancer care centre, lies on the opposite side of Chapel Pill Lane and again is screened by trees on both sides of the lane.

The one and half acre development consists of between 12 and 16 dwellings offering a mix of one, two and three bedroom units. The precise number will depend on final negotiations on land purchase, timing of the MetroWest access road, and available grant for housing and consequent affordable rents. The housing will be provided (built

and managed) through a partnership of PDCLT and Alliance Homes and will offer affordable housing to households with a local connection. A local allocation process has been developed to ensure that the new development will meet these requirements.

There is a path past the community orchard on Watchhouse Hill down to Pill centre and there is a bus stop at the end of Macrae Road. Traffic on Chapel Pill Lane amounts to around 450 motor vehicles on a weekday (200 on weekend days) with the heaviest traffic at morning and evening peaks. Traffic serves Chapel Pill Farm and Rock Cottages on the lane as well as Penny Brohn where car parking for 80 cars is full throughout the

day. The lane is also well used by cyclists and walkers. The development site is within reach of local services at Pill Precinct and is also close to St. Katherine's School. Pedestrians

would access services either through Chapel Pill Lane or a dedicated pathway from the bottom of the site and up Hart Close and thence via Watchhouse Hill to the Precinct

5.7 Housing Design

Whilst the volume and location of new development is important, so also is the quality of new housing in terms of energy efficiency, building design, safety and local environment. The National Planning Policy Framework stresses the importance of well-designed places and we endorse its recommendations.¹⁵ North Somerset Council Core Strategy also emphasises both that 'quality design must be accorded priority if places are to be shaped as sustainable, and socially, economically and environmentally responsive.'¹⁶ 'New development both residential (including conversions) and non-residential should demonstrate a commitment to sustainable

design and construction. In relation to climate change, increasing energy efficiency through design, and prioritising the use of sustainable low or zero-carbon forms of renewable energy generation are all important objectives.¹⁷

The Core Strategy is reinforced in NSC Development Management Policies which highlight the importance of place making, accessibility, housing mix and density.¹⁸ Design of the built environment should be sympathetic to local settings and landscapes. Where there is historic or heritage value in, for example, traditional buildings, conversion may be inappropriate.

5.8 Policies

Existing North Somerset Core Strategy and Development Management Policies already in place address the Green Belt (CS 60), High Quality Design and Place making (CS12), Affordable Housing (CS16), Rural Exception Schemes CS 17), Healthy Living (CS 26), Quality Design (DM 32) and Care homes (DM 41), Conversion of rural buildings to residential use (DM 45).

Planning Policies: Housing

HO 1 Site A (Orchard View as shown on Map 4) is allocated for a Care Home and twenty-four (24) houses.

HO 2 Site B (Chapel Pill Lane as shown on Map 5) is allocated as an exception site of sixteen affordable housing units.

HO 3 (also CC 03) New development should be conditional on an energy assessment which minimises carbon footprint and energy requirements.

HO 4 Infill development in keeping with local scale and character will be acceptable within the Pill Settlement boundary.

Community Action

CA/HO 1 The Parish Councils should encourage and stimulate improvement of the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock.

15 National Planning Policy Framework. Section 12, paras 124-127.

16 North Somerset Council, Core Strategy CS 32.

17 North Somerset Council, Core Strategy CS 2.

18 North Somerset Council, Development Management Policies DM 32, 33,34, and 36.

6 TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT *(See also Background Paper 2 Transport and Movement including PEP Transport Consultancy Report)*

Primary Objectives

Minimise the impact of road traffic on congestion, parking, safety, and pollution.

Encourage walking and cycling and ensure the accessibility, convenience and safety of cycle and walking routes.

This Chapter was informed by a consultancy study commissioned from the Peter Evans Partnership, Bristol, whose full report is included as an appendix to Background Paper 2.

6.1 Background

Movement within the Neighbourhood Plan Area is dominated by the A369 bisecting the area from the edge of Bristol to the M5. There are major community concerns about the traffic associated with this busy and trunk road – volume, speed, pollution and safety. Also important is the Pill Loop, running from the Haberfield junction on the A369 and rejoining at St. George's Hill close to the M5. Within Pill itself there

are concerns about the volume of traffic through the village, as well as anxieties about parking and safety. Feeding into both the A369 and the Pill Loop run a number of side roads and lanes, many narrow and twisting. Motorised traffic is the largest worry for residents, but there is growing commitment to walking and cycling and there are high hopes for the re-opening of the Portishead rail link.

6.2 Traffic Volumes

The A369 is heavily loaded. A local resident led survey in October 2018 showed total daytime traffic flow into and out of Bristol amounting to around 17,000 motorised vehicles (excluding bicycles). Flow in off-peak day-time hours varied, but on average amounted to 71% of peak hour flow. Both the daily flow and the peak and off-peak split figures are broadly consistent with North Somerset Council figures which suggest a typical split of 60% off-peak). Peak-hour traffic into Bristol accounted for 22.2% of all daytime traffic. 12-hour daytime traffic is estimated to have made up 81 % of all 24-hour traffic.

Cars dominated traffic volumes, amounting to over 80% both through the day and at peak hours. Heavy Goods vehicles

flowed throughout the day – around 220 in each direction but making up only 2.5% of all traffic. By contrast vans – 1440 a day towards Bristol and 1210 outwards – comprised 15.5% of all traffic.

On the Pill Loop over two thousand (2,105) vehicles per day passed St. Katherine's School towards Bristol with around 30% then taking a right turn to Martcombe and the remainder joining the A369 traffic towards Bristol. Roughly the same number (2,190) leave the A369 to go into Pill past St. Katherine's School. Cars are dominant throughout the day (84%) and even more so at peak hours – 77% towards Bristol, 88% towards Pill, a balance in part explained by the school run in the morning to St Katherine's School.

At St George's Hill 2,356 vehicles a day leave Easton-in-Gordano to join the M5 whereas a slightly larger number (2,539) leave the A369 to enter Pill. (the disparity caused

probably by the one way exit from Pill onto the A 369 via Rectory Road). By contrast with the main A369, the volume of traffic is spread more evenly throughout the day.

6.3 Traffic Growth

Not only are the current levels of traffic causing some congestion at peak hours, but further growth is inevitable. The latest Draft Joint Transport Plan¹⁹ suggests that without major change the most likely local outcomes by 2036 are vehicle trips up 26%, CO2 emissions up 22%, and congestion costs running at £800m a year. Whilst no increased traffic flows have as yet been noted as a consequence of the

removal of tolls on the Severn Bridges and/or the opening of the South Bristol Link, these, together with Royal Portbury Dock – a strategic economic growth area which will grow further – may influence traffic movement in and around the Neighbourhood Plan Area over the next seven years.²⁰ Further increases in peak-hour congestion should be avoided.

6.4 Method of Travel

Throughout the Neighbourhood Plan Area over seventy per cent of journeys to work are by car or van either as driver or passenger, 7% by foot or bicycle, 3% by bus with 10% working at or from home. Travel to work is dominated by use of car or van. Around a fifth of residents work within the

Neighbourhood Area and probably have work journeys of less than 2 kilometres.²¹ Some Pill residents also make long journeys, although half of the journeys to work from Pill/Easton residents in employment are to Portishead, nearby villages and Avonmouth.

6.6 Safety and Parking

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is not a high accident area,²² but despite the relatively small numbers of accidents reported there are fears in the community about speeds on the A369 and the risk of accidents. These fears are most severe at junctions, where the majority of accidents occur, notably junctions on the A369 between the George Inn and Pill Road.²³ There are also concerns about the risk to cyclists as they join the main road from side roads and/or cycle paths.

In Pill there have been concerns about a number of danger points on narrow streets/lanes and/or where visibility is poor. In the 2006-16 Parish Plan for Easton-in-Gordano, Pill and Ham Green there was support for a one-way priority system and for a safety rail on the raised footpath at Lodway. A more recent local transport survey (late 2019) demonstrated that there was continuing support for a 20 mph. speed limit within the Pill and Easton-in-Gordano parish (a wish that has recently been agreed).

19 West of England Combined Authority. Joint Transport Plan. January 2020.

20 See Chapter 9 below.

21 Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 2, Para 2.6-2.7.

22 Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 2, Para 2.8.

23 Police accident data provided by North Somerset Council.

Parking is also one of the issues which has emerged in discussions about the Pill Precinct and potential improvements to parking arrangements e.g. on Pill Street and around Victoria Park) will be an important element in planning the future of the Precinct. The local transport survey endorsed tighter parking policies in Pill – double yellow lines (64% in favour), time limited parking (56%), more enforcement (69%). There was mixed support for a residents parking scheme in some areas (40% for, 33% against).

In Abbots Leigh current parking concerns have arisen in Church Road and Manor Road as a consequence of the combination of the re-opening of the George Inn, the opening of a Fitness Gym behind the Village Hall, and the more frequent presence of delivery vans. Improvements to traffic management and parking arrangements in the village need to be considered as a distinct issue – closely related to, but distinct from, the possibilities of a Conservation Area (see Chapter 8 Heritage).

6.7 Capacity, Overload and Congestion

Through Abbots Leigh at the George Inn, the A369 is congested and traffic flow constrained at peak hours and to a lesser extent through the day. The road has frontage access, side roads, bus stops, and an at-grade pedestrian crossing. The speed limit is now 20 mph. Heavy vehicles/buses are often unable to pass. Up the Pill Road and towards Martcombe the road is heavily used and at St. George's Hill traffic flow is limited by the provision of the three signal-controlled junctions.

The Pill Loop creates resident concern at the Precinct and the narrow part of the Loop

at Lodway has been a concern for years.²⁴ Technically the road width allows a car and lorry to pass, but with walls on one side and a pedestrian walkway (without railings) on the other only two cars can pass and on-site observation provides evidence that the road is on occasions in practice one way.²⁵

There is much pedestrian and cycle movement both on the A 369 and within Pill on the Pill Loop. Residents are hindered by the frequency of the traffic both within Pill, and especially at the Precinct and in Abbots Leigh where crossing from Manor Road to Church Road and vice versa is hazardous.

6.8 Pollution

The main pollutant measured by NSC locally is nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) originating primarily from road traffic emissions. There are two monitoring sites in the Neighbourhood Area – in Pill at the end of Avon Road (the Railway Line) and at the junction of the A369 and the Pill Road (the A369). At the A369 site the mean annual

level was 28.0 – the third highest annual level in North Somerset. From November to April inclusive, however, the level of air quality was above 30.0 and reached 45.1, again the third highest level for any month across the whole district.²⁶ Increases in road traffic emissions should be avoided.²⁷

24 The 2006–26 Parish Plan for Easton-in-Gordano, Pill and Ham Green highlighted major traffic concerns, and a recent 2019 local survey called for a 20 mph speed limit in the parish.

25 PEP consultants observed traffic flows as part of their work for us.

26 North Somerset Council, 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report, June 2018.

27 A reduction in emissions is one of several possible actions being considered in the current Bristol Port Company Air Quality Strategy consultation, February 2020. See also para 10.6 following.

6.9 Conclusion

The main conclusion from this analysis of traffic is that any major development which provided traffic access direct onto the A 369 might well require signalisation and would certainly add to existing peak-hour overload

and delay to both private, goods and public transport. It will be important to mitigate these effects both by the application of development planning and by the encouragement of public transport and cycling.

Cycling and Walking

6.10 Cycle Networks

A traffic free cycle route runs alongside the A369 from Bridge Road in Leigh Woods all the way to the road into Pill at Ham Green. The section to the George in Abbots Leigh has been designated as **National Cycle Route 334** and following Manor Road, past Abbots Pool and then Sandy Lane this continues to Lower Failand and Portbury. This cycle path attracts both commuter rides to Bristol but also recreational cycling, accessing for example Leigh Woods, Abbots Pool, Snake's Well. There are several side entrances and 'give way' markings which slow down and deter even hardened cyclists. As a result, as many people choose to cycle on the main road as on the cycle path because it is quicker even if it slows down traffic flow.

The cycling and walking **National Cycle Route 41** (using part of the Avon Trail) runs along the towpath beside the River Avon through the Avon Gorge to Chapel Pill, through Watchhouse Hill and Pill and then connects to the cycle route on the Avonmouth Bridge across the river. One section of this route lies within the boundary of Bristol City Council, having been historically the towpath up the river through the Avon Gorge leading to the Port of Bristol. The route is unsurfaced and unlit and is very poorly maintained so that in wet conditions it has become almost impassable in places. This offers a level access into Bristol and was popular as both a commuting and

recreational route, but its condition has now caused its use to decline and sections of it have now become so poor that sections of it may need rebuilding. **National Cycle Route 26** branches off Route 41 before the Avonmouth Bridge and goes through Royal Portbury Dock to Sheepway and Portishead.

The 2011 Census shows that only 7.4% of Neighbourhood Area residents in employment travelled to work by bicycle (199 cyclists). Since then the numbers choosing the bicycle as a means of travel – to work and elsewhere – has risen significantly. Cycling has become more popular, cycling has become safer, the cycle path beside the A369 has made travel to and from Bristol more acceptable.

Cycling numbers measured at the four cycling census points within the Neighbourhood Area suggest that some cyclists use the path from Pill to Sheepway – possibly making travel to work journeys to Royal Portbury Dock. Secondly up to two thirds of the cyclists on the A369 use the carriageway rather than the cycle path, reinforcing the point made earlier that many cyclists avoid the cycle path.²⁸ Finally travel by bicycle to school runs at only 4% of pupils at St. Katherine's School. The proposed reduction in speed limits in Pill to 20mph will have a positive effect both on safety and in encouraging more cycling both to school and elsewhere within the neighbourhood.

28 Details of cycling numbers are given in Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 2, Para 3.2

6.11 Walking: Rights of Way and Footpaths

There is an extensive network of walking routes (some shared with cyclists) into, out of and across the Neighbourhood Area. 61% of respondents to a local 2019 survey used local footpaths on a daily basis with 62% walking between one and five miles. 22% feel unsafe.

Walking to Work. Travel to work on foot (and doing so over a distance of less than 2 kilometres) accounts for around fifteen per cent of work journeys.²⁹ Walking to work is most likely for those employed locally – in shops in the Precinct or elsewhere, at the schools, at the Heywood Health Centre, in pubs. A few will also walk to work at the

two business parks at Eden Park and the Old Brewery or at Penny Brohn, but information collected from such organisations suggests the numbers are low – Eden Park has over 320 parking places, Penny Brohn 80 and both are regularly full.

Walking to Access Services Within Pill there are several walks and lanes which cut down from Westward Drive, Cross Lanes and Crockerne Drive to give access to the retail outlets of the Precinct as well as to the Post Office, the Resource Centre and Victoria Park whilst other lanes provide access upwards to what will be the new rail station.

Recreational Walking



Map 6 Rights of Way in the Neighbourhood Area

There are two major trails relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan Area – the River Avon Trail and the Gordano Round. The River Avon Trail (see also Cycling para 6.10 above) runs alongside the river from below the Clifton Suspension Bridge to Pill. The Gordano Round is a circular walk much of it

within the Neighbourhood Plan Area whilst the long-distance Monarch's Way passes through Abbots Leigh.

There are numerous rights of way and footpaths on the Leigh Court Estate as well as some footpaths which lead

29 See Section 2.8 above.

down through the Bottoms across Priors Fields towards Pill. Elsewhere within the Neighbourhood Area there are several shorter footpaths/bridle paths running both through and across the two parishes, as well as a number of lanes and passages within the Pill Settlement boundary which serve to link streets together and/or provide

short cuts to the Pill Precinct.³⁰ Such routes are important for walkers in general but are crucial in providing safe access for older people, young children and people with disabilities. Some would benefit from improvement either as public footpaths or permissive paths and all would benefit from regular maintenance.³¹

6.12 Active Travel

The availability of Rights of Way and footpaths does not in itself bring about active travel. There are a range of initiatives initiated by Travel West and the NSC Cycling Forum which discourage the use of cars and encourage cycling – the loan scheme to try out cycling, for example and efforts to encourage electric bikes. Car sharing is one obvious measure especially appropriate for the many commuters into and out of the Neighbourhood Area. There are

also initiatives targetted on children – the National School Training Awards (STARS) which has been adopted by Crockerne Primary School. Elsewhere businesses encourage travel to work by bicycle with Travel Champions as well as car sharing. There is already considerable car sharing and cycling to Royal Portbury Dock and other business at Eden Park and the Old Brewery will be encouraged to give greater visibility to Active Travel.

6.13 Public Transport

Buses The Neighbourhood Area is currently served by two bus services. The X4 serves Abbots Leigh, Pill, and Easton-in-Gordano whilst the X3 keeps to the A369 bypassing Pill and Easton-in-Gordano. The services have been regarded by the community as being acceptable (subject to occasional irregularity and unreliability) and the recent change to a double decker service was evidence of the commitment of the bus company to a good service. A new Express service to Bristol from Portishead via the Portway will add to available services and may divert some of the load from services using the A369. Nevertheless, the reductions announced (April 2020) are a severe discouragement to the use of the bus from Easton, Pill and Abbots Leigh and may well bring some transfer of traffic from public transport to private vehicle use. This

adds to the concerns, set out in Chapter 5, of the impact of any major development likely to affect traffic load on the A369. New development which adds to congestion should be avoided.

Rail A Bristol Temple Meads to Portishead rail service is scheduled to open in 2023. Services will call at Pill, where a restored station will be created (see Map 7). The new service is welcome, will attract some traffic off the roads and will provide faster journeys to Bristol and to Portishead. At the same time the infrastructure required to install and manage the service will create some inconvenience and care needs to be taken in relation to sensitive points. First there is a threat to environment along the line at Chapel Pill and particularly at Lodway where the ponds and wetland provide an important

30 Policies towards the protection, maintenance and enhancement of Rights of Way are set out in NSC Development Management Policy DM 25.

31 The cover of this Plan shows a number of 'Views from the Footpaths' a 2019 community project.

habitat. Wherever possible there should be avoidance of threat to wildlife and restitution of any damage to the ecology of the area.

Secondly there may also be impacts within Pill itself. In particular with the establishment of the Pill rail station and the growth of travel by rail, the area around the station

(see Map 7 below) will experience change – potentially more drop off and pick up traffic, parking congestion, more business for local shops, possible residential development proposals. It will be important over the coming years for planning decisions in the immediate area to recognise and take account of such changes.



Map 7 Pill Railway Station



Pill Station 1910

6.14 Policies

Existing North Somerset Core Strategy and Development Management Policies already in place address Transportation and Movement (CS10), Parking (CS11), Safety, Traffic and Infrastructure (DM 24), Public Rights of Way, pedestrian and cycle access (DM 25), Parking Standards Car Parks (DM 29).

Planning Policies

T 1 New development should be located so as to encourage walking and cycling to work and to access local retail and public services in Pill.

T 2 Public bus transport provision to and from the Neighbourhood Area should not be further reduced.

T 3 Traffic congestion and air pollution impacts of new development are to be minimised.

T 4 Rights of Way and pathways within the Neighbourhood Area and (and around The Bottoms, Martcombe, Chapel Pill and Ham Green in particular) should be protected, maintained and enhanced.

T 5 The impact of the growth of electric vehicle use (e.g. the need for charging points) should be fully taken into account in assessing domestic, commercial or industrial planning applications.

T 6 Improvement Areas 3 (Abbots Leigh) and 4 (Pill Precinct) should incorporate proposals for the protection and safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

T 7 The implications of the re-opening of the Portishead rail link (especially its impact around Pill Railway Station) should be taken into account.

Community Actions

CA/T 1 Improvements to infrastructure (e.g. dropped kerbs and disabled parking) for older people and people with a disability should be made where appropriate.

CA/T 2 Parish Councils will explore the means of prevention of pavement parking where it is considered to be a hazard.

CA/T 3 (see also Her 1) A review of parking restrictions (including double yellow lines), should be conducted in relation to both Church Road/Manor Road in Abbots Leigh and the Precinct in Pill.

CA/T 4 Bicycle stands should be provided at appropriate locations (shops, school, health centre, public houses, bus stops).

CA/T 5 The Parish Councils will pursue Active Travel initiatives.

CA/T 6 The Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council will re-investigate the provision of a safety rail on the raised Lodway footway to ensure pedestrian safety.

7 LANDSCAPE, ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

(See also Background Paper 3)

Primary Objective

Sustain and enhance the landscape, ecology and bio-diversity of the area whilst protecting its environmental assets.

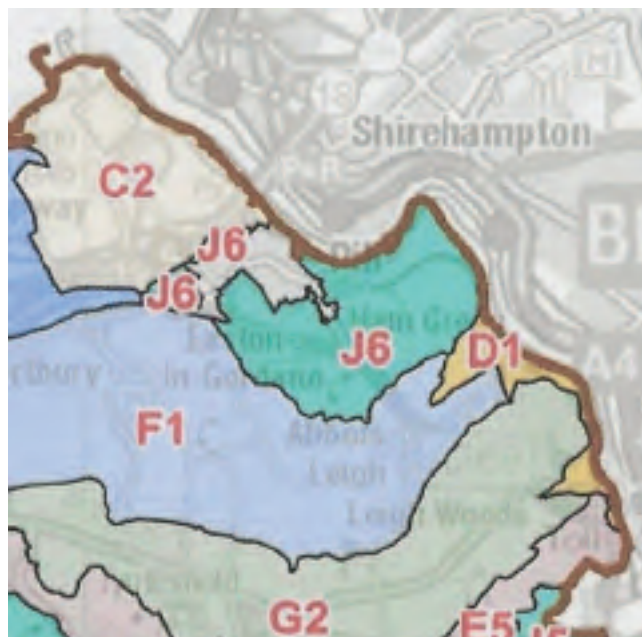
A summary of the recommendations of an independent WildService Ecology Report confirming and reinforcing the findings of this chapter is attached as Appendix 1 to Background Paper 3.

Other than the Pill Settlement and Royal Portbury Dock, all of the Neighbourhood Plan Area lies within the Green Belt, and we fully endorse both the National Planning Policy Framework and the NSC Core Strategy that restate the importance of retention of the Green Belt which is not simply a break between town and countryside but a fundamental feature of the overall character of landscape and environment.

7.1 Topography, Landscape and Ecology

The Neighbourhood Plan Area offers a varied topography from the Avon Gorge and the Abbots Leigh ridge downwards through woodland and pasture to the River Avon and the Severn Estuary³² (see Map 8). This

topography provides important landscape features and a combination of vegetation types. The range of habitats in close proximity one to another contributes to the sustainability of the ecological framework.



Map 8 Neighbourhood Plan Area Landscape Features

32 The Area includes Landscape Areas D1 (Avon Gorge), F1 (Abbots Leigh Sandstone Uplands), J6 (Avon Rolling Farmland) and C2 (Portbury Settled Coastal Edge). North Somerset Landscape Assessment 2018.

7.2 The ecological features of the area differ from one end to the other. Abbots Leigh (over 9 square kilometres in size) has a diverse ecology. This comprises major parcels of woodland, permanent pastureland, native hedges, old orchards, mature open field trees, meadowland and roadside verges, some farmland with agricultural grass, and a significant volume of fresh water at Abbots Pool and the Pill Lakes. By contrast the Pill and Easton-in-Gordano areas have more farmland and small areas of pasture and open field surrounding the built-up settlement area whilst the Royal Portbury Dock with its estuarial and wetland areas stretches to the Severn Estuary. However, it is the combination of woodland, field trees, semi improved grassland, meadow, open farmland, hedgerow, orchards, ponds and streams that is crucial in providing shelter, feeding and breeding sites vital to the survival of many wildlife species.

The Plan area has much grassland on both farmed and public open spaces, offering important environmental benefit in addition to woodlands of which a significant part are ancient woods. There are half a dozen working farms within the area and a number of ponds in the woods and on the Avon River edge. There is a well-used and cared-for allotment in Pill. There are road and lane

verges throughout the area. There are Local Nature Reserves at Abbots Pool and at St. George's Flower Bank. There are numerous valuable small meadows and flower banks, and in addition to several formally registered/unregistered gardens, there are many private gardens which fulfil an ecological role and function. NSC Nature Conservation and Landscape Policies (CS4 and CS5) emphasise the importance of landscape and the 2018 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment³³ 'identifies the open land stretching between the back of Crockerne Drive and Brookside to the A369 as of high landscape sensitivity.

The Neighbourhood Area supports a diverse range of habitats and wildlife, including a number of rare plant and protected species that are regarded as vulnerable nationally.³⁴ The species of local conservation concern include dormice, water voles, white-clawed crayfish, otters, barn owls, horseshoe bats and a significant number of butterfly species including brown hairstreak, chalkhill blue and various species of fritillary. In the Avon Gorge Woodlands rare plant species include round-headed leek (Bristol onion), Bristol rock-cress, the endemic Bristol whitebeam and nationally notable plants such as lizard orchid, and adder's-tongue spearwort (found in only two sites in the UK).

7.3 Environmental Assets

Extensive **Woodland** supports a wide range of flora and fauna such as, fungi, lichens, bryophytes and flowering plants, also invertebrates, insects, amphibians, birds and mammals. Significant parts of the woodland in Abbots Leigh are ancient with a rich and diverse ecosystem. Individual veteran trees are common in open fields supporting rich ecosystems as well as roosts for birds and bats. Many of the characteristics of the Abbots Leigh woodlands such as those of Markham Brook and Vowles Bottom are

replicated through Old Park, Happerton and towards Summerhouse Wood.

Grassland, both species-rich and semi-improved grassland is valuable for wildlife of all kinds. Owls will hawk across it for small mammals like voles and wood mice and at night bats will hunt for insects. Deer as well as hares and stoats are regularly sighted. Some of these grasslands are flowering meadows, cut for hay after the flowers have set their seeds and the vegetation dried and

33 North Somerset Council. Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, 2018 pp 45-47.

34 Details of wildlife, flora and fauna are set out in Background Paper 3 and in the WildService Ecology Report.

removed. This grassland adds enormously to the landscape and rural character of the area.



Improved agricultural land exists in small quantities with some ploughed and re-seeded and offering grazing for sheep, cattle and horses. Such land can be valuable for foraging horseshoe bats because the dung left by animals may contain dung beetles and other invertebrates. There are also several small areas of arable land which are farmed organically to grow crops like wheat, oats or barley which can support skylarks, pipits and lapwing, all of whose declining numbers are now of concern.

Orchards add hugely to biodiversity. At Watchhouse Hill (a national Green Flag site) there is a 1.2 hectare orchard containing a range of traditional apple, pear and plum varieties with the occasional English oak and silver birch. There are also twenty acres of over fifty-year old, mixed variety cider apple orchards along Manor Road in Abbots Leigh that produce commercial fruit.

Grassland Verges are now one of the last refuges of many wildflowers. Verges are vital food corridors for wildlife, especially pollinators. The most striking verge within the Neighbourhood Area is St George's flower bank (designated Local Green Space) but elsewhere a number of verges – are mown annually in the autumn, offering greater diversity of native floral species.

Streams and Ponds across the area form a network of freshwater environments. Markham Brook runs from Tanpits into Pill and thence into the Avon. Abbots Pool (a second national Green Flag site) feeds a stream running, part underground, into the Ham Green Lakes and is an important spawning site for toads, frogs and newts with regular monitoring counting up to 1000 toads migrating to the pool annually. Elsewhere Lodway Farm ponds, close to the M5 Motorway bridge, are a further habitat for toads, with estimated annual migration numbers towards 1000.

The **Ham Green Lakes** support heron, kingfisher, moorhen, mallard, fish (eel, pike, carp) and great crested newts, whilst at St Katherine's School great crested newts are found in a small pond in the school ground. Glebe Pond in Pill, managed by a volunteer group, is a small freshwater pool and home for frogs and newts, with the surrounding area home to tits, robins, herons, woodland flora, and fungi.

At the **Estuary and Longshore** end of the Neighbourhood Area, the intertidal and coastal habitats in the vicinity of the mouth of the River Avon (the Avon longshore) comprise mudflats, saltmarshes, marshy grassland and meadows with rhynes, ditches and ponds. These intertidal mudflats and saltmarshes around Royal Portbury Docks and the associated coastal wetlands support waders and wildfowl such as redshank, dunlin, curlew, shelduck, teal, mallard, common sandpiper and little grebe.

7.4 Protected Areas

Within the Neighbourhood Area there are key areas of international, national and local significance designated for protection – RAMSAR wetlands, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Sites of Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Registered and Unregistered Parks

and Gardens, and North Somerset Council recognised Wildlife Sites or Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. The Avon Gorge Woodlands and the Severn Estuary are designated under the EC Habitats Directive. To this list of protected areas must be added the Green Belt.

7.5 Environmental management

There are many Open Spaces with wider community and social uses³⁵ which also have implications for the management and sustainability of the natural environment – walking and cycle paths, running routes, sports pitches, play areas, fishing lakes, churchyards, cemeteries. There is a diversity of land ownership and management including that of the National Trust, Forest England, the Crown Estate, the Bristol Port Company³⁶ and the District and Parish Councils, a number

of agricultural, business and development landowners, and individual landowners. Across the several areas of farmland there is mixed, often absent, landlord ownership, but management of many of the environmental assets of the area is carried out by voluntary/ community individuals or groups, in some instances in collaboration with North Somerset Council. It is up to all landowners to engage with the protection and enhancement of environment and biodiversity.

7.6 Policies

Existing NSC Core Strategy and Development Management Policies address Landscape (CS5) The Green Belt (CS6), Green Infrastructure (CS9), High Quality Design (CS12), (DM 41), Nature Conservation (DM8), Trees and Woodlands (DM9), Green Belt (DM12).

Planning Policies

Env 1 (also HO 1) Development which adversely affects the high sensitivity landscape land above Crockerne Drive and Brookside will not be supported.

Env 2 Open spaces, species rich grassland and grass verges should remain as opportunities to stimulate wildlife habitats.

Env 3 The environment and wildlife (especially the salt marshes and the inter-tidal shore) of Royal Portbury Dock should continue to be protected and enhanced.

Community Action

CA/ENV 1 (and CA/CC 2) Landowners – individual, public and corporate – are encouraged to protect landscape, woodlands, parklands, grassland and ponds to increase resilience to climate change.

CA/ENV 2 Landowners should plant native trees, shrubs, margins and flowering plants, to protect the diversity of hedges and verges, and to allow grasslands to develop as wild flower meadows.

35 Open Spaces are discussed in Chapter 11

36 Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan has no jurisdiction on development within the dock area, the Bristol Port Company has an important role in environmental management.

8 HERITAGE *(See also Background Paper 4)*

Primary Objective

Respect, preserve and protect the history and heritage of the built environment.

8.1 History

The Area has a known Palaeolithic pre-history and Roman and Anglo-Saxon roots, with a mention of Portberie (Portbury) and Lega (Leigh) in the Domesday Book. Through the Middle Ages much of the area passed in turn from the Crown through a succession of religious and secular baronial and manorial ownerships (Fitzharding, Berkeley, Norton, Trenchard, Miles) until the diverse pattern of current land and property ownership was established in the early twentieth century.

In terms of economic activity, the River Avon has been a focal point dating from the export of the renowned Ham Green pottery of the 12th century (hence Crockerne Pill). From the sixteenth century Pill was a bustling town providing a host of waterborne work associated with the development of maritime Bristol. This included boat building and repair, a busy quay, hobbler and pilots (as well as pirates). Much of this activity was generated by the loading and discharging functions of shipping held at the 'Hung Road'. Further upstream, the dock at Paradise Bottom supported the transport of celestine mined on the Leigh Court Estate. Today the Royal Portbury Dock provides the setting for a modernised maritime function on the Avon/Severn estuaries.

Away from the river, the land has historically been woodland together with agricultural

crop or pasture land. Abbots Leigh was once devoted to the production of supplies for St Augustine's Abbey in Bristol, and across the area (outside Pill) there remain a few longstanding farms.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the building of larger houses – for example the Manor House, Leigh Lodge, Abbots Leigh House and The Chantry in Abbots Leigh and Ham Green House in Ham Green. The construction of the Portishead Railway and the Clifton Suspension Bridge in the 1860s opened up the area to the wealth and ambitions of Bristol professionals. Further growth occurred across the area in the first half of the twentieth century but National Trust and Forestry Commission land ownership in Leigh Woods constrained the spread of Bristol, and extensive suburban development has largely been held in check since the 1950s by the designation of the Green Belt.

A considerable legacy remains from this heritage. The Neighbourhood Plan Area contains twenty-eight Listed Buildings, one registered historic park/garden, seven unregistered historic gardens and two Sites of Special Scientific Interest.³⁷ There are other unlisted historic areas (e.g. Church Road in Abbots Leigh and the old harbour area in Pill) which need protection from inappropriate development. The significance of these historic buildings, monuments and gardens is often unknown or misunderstood, both locally and by visitors. Each of the four settlements of the Neighbourhood Area – Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano – contributes to a shared community heritage which it is important to retain, but each settlement has its own particular history.

37 A full list of historic/listed buildings is given in Background Paper 4

8.2 There is a long history to **Abbots Leigh** – Following the abolition of the monasteries Sir George Norton took possession of the Manor of Abbots Leigh and 1580 built a new mansion.

The Norton family held the manor until 1715 when the estate passed to the Trenchards who held the property until 1811 when the estate was sold to Philip John Miles. Miles demolished the Old Court House and built Leigh Court. The Miles family were forced to sell the Estate in 1915 and it was then broken up into separate holdings. From The George Inn along Church Road to Holy Trinity Church lie a succession of historic buildings, several listed.

8.3 Ham Green lies between Abbots Leigh and Pill. It has a long history dating from the Saxon period. For almost two hundred years from 1100 Ham Green pottery was produced and widely exported across England and Europe. There is little written evidence of life at Ham Green until the eighteenth century. The two decades 1710–1730, however, saw construction of the Queen Anne wing of Ham Green House, the gardens of Ham Green House and the Gazebo and Watergate (now all listed).

8.4 Pill The original name Crockerne Pill means literally 'pottery wharf' and arose from the industrial-scale pottery nearby (see above). Little of the bustling port settlement remains and there are only two listed buildings in Pill. Some archaeological sites remain – at the Pill SSSI.

8.5 Easton-in-Gordano There are a number of listed buildings in the immediate area and a group of roads in Easton-in-Gordano – Rectory Road, Priory Road, Old Priory Road, together with a cluster of listed buildings – seem to echo a settlement associated with St George's Church.

8.6 In addition to listed buildings and gardens there are some special areas which need safeguarding against inappropriate development. **Church Road** in Abbots Leigh has some listed buildings but also a number of historic cottages dating from the 1830s. The older parts of **Pill**, on and above Victoria Park and the Creek, do not have any formal listed status other than Mulberry House and the Watchhouse. Nevertheless, other interesting older buildings remain as does much of the traditional lay out of the harbour area. The lanes that drop down – Back Lane, Port View, Friendly Row, Star Lane – bring a reminder of the era of a bustling and prosperous village of the nineteenth century. There are farms (e.g. Happerton Farm) where the traditional main farmhouse remains even if there have been conversions of outbuildings and barns.

In addition to listed buildings there are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) at Avon Gorge and at Chapel Pill (Ham Green).

Local recognition of the importance of heritage lies with the Pill and Crockerne History Society and the Abbots Leigh Heritage Group both recording much local material. The importance of history and heritage is fully recognised³⁸ and, whilst there have been modifications and extensions to many grade II listed buildings in the area, there has also been strong commitment to protection with the majority of listed buildings well shielded from negative change. The Neighbourhood Plan restates this commitment and the new developments proposed in the Plan (see Chapter 5) do not negatively affect the setting of any listed buildings. Proposals for a Conservation Area in Abbots Leigh are to be examined.

38 National Planning Policy Framework (pp 26–14). North Somerset Core Strategy (CS5). Development Management Policy (DM 4).

Improvement Area 3 Abbots Leigh Heritage

There are several listed buildings on Church Road and Manor Road (Leigh Lodge, Abbots Leigh House, the George Inn, the Priory) as well as unregistered gardens (The Glebe, Campfield, the Manor House). The Village Hall and nearby cottages are also of heritage importance, whilst all along Church Road to the Church are a succession of important buildings. This heritage is increasingly threatened – parking, congestion, delivery lorries – and there are safety issues on crossing the busy A369 road which is overloaded and narrow at this point.

The Parish Council is examining the possibility of a Conservation Area in order to protect this heritage, an initiative distinct from, but closely related to, suggestions for traffic management and parking improvements. Such a Conservation Area would certainly include the cluster of Buildings around the junction of the A369, Manor Road and Church Road (i.e. the George Inn, Leigh Lodge and the cottages nearby in Church Road and Abbots Leigh Road) but might run to the Church and beyond.



Map 9 Abbots Leigh Heritage Area (Manor Road and Church Road).

8.7 Policies

Existing NSC Core Strategies and Development Management Policies address Landscape and the Historic Environment (CS 5), Listed Buildings (DM 4), Non-designated Heritage (DM 7) and Nature Conservation (DM 8).

Planning Policies

Her 1 The design of new development and/or extension of existing development should be undertaken in sympathy with

the distinctiveness and setting of the historic environment.

Her 2 The desirability and feasibility of a Conservation Area in Abbots Leigh should be fully examined.

9 ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT *(See also Background Paper 5)*

Primary Objective

Support the generation of local jobs for local people.

9.1 Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano are often perceived as areas of limited economic activity and jobs, functioning as commuter satellites with heavy peak hour traffic especially to and from Bristol. This fails to recognise the scale of the local economy and the number of local jobs. The 2011 Census showed 2,829 residents aged 16–74 actively engaged in economic activity (full or part time employment, self-employed or unemployed) with 1,238 residents inactive (retired, long term carer, sick or disabled). Of those actively engaged 54.1% were in full employment, 21.6% in part-time employment and 16.7% self-employed. Of industrial sectors, health and social work (14.0%), wholesale, retail and vehicle repair (13.5%), education (9.4%) and construction (8.5%) were the major areas of work for local residents. Around 20% of residents work from home.³⁹

In mid-2019 there were 104 businesses within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.⁴⁰ The largest being **Royal Portbury Dock**. The Bristol Port Company estimates that Royal Portbury Dock accounts for around two thirds of the 10,000 jobs across the two docks (Royal Portbury plus Avonmouth) of which 600 are direct Bristol Port Company employees and the remainder in port and dock related businesses.⁴¹

The Eden Business Park at Ham Green has 43 business sites providing over a thousand

jobs and, with 300 car park spaces and significant traffic. There are both major employers and smaller firms.

The **Old Brewery Business Park** provides office space in converted brewery premises for fifteen businesses which generate around 120 jobs. The Old Brewery offers accessibility to the M5, on-site parking, up to date and reasonably priced office accommodation, and a pleasant 'out of Bristol' environment.

The Pill Precinct. There are a number of retail outlets on the Precinct. A local business survey evidenced 21 business premises, with 12 leased, largely from Alliance Homes. Local employment is 67 with 20 male and 47 female jobs and 36 full-time/31 part-time jobs.

Elsewhere there is significant employment at the **Abbots Leigh Nursing Home** (78 jobs), **Penny Brohn** (80 jobs), **Leigh Court** (180 jobs) and **Freeways** (40 jobs). Education and Health provide further employment at **St Katherine's School** (100 jobs), at **Heywood Family Practice** (30 jobs) and at **Avon Fire and Rescue in Pill** (16 jobs).

There are also workshop clusters at Cross Lanes Farm, Markham Farm, Normans Way (in Royal Portbury Dockland) with individual businesses of various sizes and activities. Such places offer a flexible base for non-office-based businesses to start up and establish themselves. Adding in estimated jobs elsewhere (public houses, farms, garages, garden centres etc.) together with those working from, or at, home (200 residents), the total number of jobs in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, excluding the docks, is estimated to amount to around

39 See Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 2, para 3.2.

40 A local count was taken in 2018 of businesses in operation. A full list is in Background Paper 5.

41 The timing and specific location of work-shifts in the docks depends on the volume and type of port traffic and, crucially, on the tide. The level and timing of work at Royal Portbury Dock thus varies.

1,700. Royal Portbury Dock adds around a further 6,000–7,000.⁴²

9.2 As transport statistics demonstrate (see Chapter 6) there is much commuting in and out of the Area. The Neighbourhood Plan Area represents an active, open local labour market with around 8,000 jobs supplied in part by a labour force of almost 3,000 economically active residents. Taking account of what is known about travel to work patterns (again see Chapter 6) our estimate is that there are almost 1,000 local jobs for local people.

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is a good place for business – close to Bristol, with access to the M5 and a forthcoming rail link to Bristol Temple Meads Station. Much business is stable and likely to be present for the long-term (e.g. at Royal Portbury Dock, in local retail and in agricultural related business), but there is also business and labour market ‘churning’ as businesses grow and decline, move in and out, and recruit or lay-off employees.

9.3 There is significant working from home (7% of those at work) and this represents a strongly developing sector of the local economy with economic, social and environmental benefits. The digital future will be one that facilitates connected social and economic life between public and private business workplaces and the home. Digital fibre connection of high quality to homes and workplaces is of growing importance with upgrading to 5G as soon as practicable.

One of the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan is to ‘help create the conditions in which businesses can invest and adapt.’⁴³ This includes ‘supporting a prosperous rural economy and ensuring the vitality of town centres’. The proposed care home/housing development at Ham Green (see Chapter

5) is likely to provide up to sixty new jobs, a number of which are expected to be local, and this development is welcome on employment as well as health and housing grounds. Across the area there are several farms and agricultural holdings which offer potential for conversion to residential or business uses. Residential conversion is covered by existing NSC policies but we would wish the potential for conversion to workshop or small business use to be recognised.

9.4 Royal Portbury Dock, part of which lies within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, is a regional as well as a local asset. Bristol Port Company has particular land requirements which will need to be addressed in the new North Somerset Local Plan 38. Whilst there are no current plans for growth of the dock area within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the dock has important implications for employment, traffic and environment – especially were freeport status to arrive. Growth elsewhere (e.g. Sheepway) could generate further employment growth and traffic on the A369. NSC Core Strategy (CS24) currently says that further expansion of the Port within North Somerset is not supported, that the next longer-term development of the of the Port will occur on the northern side of the Avon and that no further land for port development within North Somerset will be allocated. The Neighbourhood Plan welcomes the economic growth of Royal Portbury Dock (whilst recognising the traffic, environmental problems and air quality problems this may cause), hopes to stimulate.

42 Fuller estimates of employment at Eden Park, the Old Brewery and the Precinct are provided in Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 5, para 2.

43 National Planning Policy Framework Ch. 6 and 7.

9.6 Policies

Existing NSC Core Strategy and Development Management Policies address Supporting a prosperous economy (CS20), Retail hierarchy and provision (CS21), Royal Portbury Dock (CS 24), Proposals for economic development (DM 47), Royal Portbury Dock (DM 49), Agriculture and land-based rural business (DM 51).

Planning Policies

Emp 1 The extension of domestic buildings for home working is supported.

Emp 2 The conversion and re-use of redundant buildings (including vacant and under-used agricultural buildings) for workshops or small businesses is supported.

Emp 3 The retail and office business of the Pill Precinct together with the Old Brewery and Eden Park business areas should be protected from non-employment related development.

Emp 4 The redevelopment of land and buildings at Orchard View (Ham Green) as a mixed-use development with associated employment generation is supported.

Emp 5 Continued up-grading of digital infrastructure is encouraged across the area.

Community Action

CA/Emp 1 School/business links should be encouraged and more local job placements offered.

CA/Emp 2 Travel to work by public transport, by car-sharing and through the use of walking/cycling routes should be encouraged.

CA/Emp 3 Job vacancies and employment opportunities should be more widely advertised locally.

10 CLIMATE EMERGENCY *(See also Background Paper 6)*

Primary Objective

Respond to climate change and move towards a carbon neutral neighbourhood

10.1 Local Action

This Chapter was informed by a consultancy report commissioned from the Centre for Sustainable Energy. CSE ran two workshops and provided a report which suggested an Energy Plan together with a range of initiatives which might be taken locally.

The full report of CSE work is included as an appendix to Background paper 6 Climate Change.

Both parish councils (as well as North Somerset Council) have declared a Climate Emergency, recognising that action at local as well as national and international levels will be needed if proper protection of the natural environment is to be successful.

To give substance to these declarations, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council has set up an Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group. The Group includes councillors (from both

parishes) and interested members of the community, and has established sub-groups to address renewable energy, carbon capture and biodiversity, food, and transport. These groups have begun work – projects involving community led tree planting and solar pv installations, for example – and further actions enabling more changes are planned.

The Neighbourhood Plan, and its three key principles – the need to protect the past, to address the future, and to react to the immediate present – reflect the urgency of a response to Climate Change. The Plan contains some policies which are being brought forward at once, but there are others which will only evolve over time.

Sustainability – of past, present and future assets – is a core theme of the Neighbourhood Plan and, across the whole of the Plan, policies – for housing, transport, environment, heritage and community – have been framed in way which ensures that they will contribute positively to combatting climate change and its effects – notably reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and/or the enhancement of local biodiversity. Many of these echo the most recent North Somerset Strategy on Climate Emergency⁴⁴ and we welcome, and will seek to apply locally, the aspirations therein.

10.2 Renewable energy

Practical means to install sources of renewable energy will be investigated and, as far as possible, carried out. These may include ground-mounted solar arrays, especially on brownfield or industrial land and/or installation of renewable heat systems, such as air-source heat-pumps.

The latter may be of particular interest in conjunction with solar pv systems.

There may also be potential for the establishment of wind turbines at appropriate locations. The Neighbourhood Plan Area offers locations which might be

44 North Somerset Council. Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan 2019.

appropriate⁴⁵ (Royal Portbury Dock or the Avon longshore). Any such development needs to be considered in the context of the forthcoming Local Plan 2036. Approaches to encouraging renewable energy might also include the involvement of a community energy society or bulk purchase schemes to enable householders to access photovoltaic systems cheaply.⁴⁶

Encouragement and advice should be provided to householders, community organisations and the owners of business premises to improve the energy efficiency of their properties – the Solar Street scheme being a good example. New build properties should be required to be built to high standards of energy efficiency and, with only 43% of homes well insulated in North Somerset,⁴⁷ advice and encouragement will be given to householders at all income levels.

10.3 Carbon Capture and Biodiversity

Increasing the level of tree cover and biodiversity within the Neighbourhood Plan area will be encouraged through tree-planting schemes. New woodland or orchards and planting in private gardens and public open spaces are encouraged. These will reflect the latest information about appropriate species, planting densities and best practice in the care and protection of new trees.

Other approaches to biodiversity should include allowing suitable areas of land to regenerate naturally together with better management of roadside verges and other public land to encourage wildflower growth. Encouragement and advice should be given to private landowners (including householders and organisations such as churches, schools, community buildings) to encourage both re-wilding and creation of wildflower meadows and provision of suitable habitat to encourage wildlife.

10.4 Food

Steps will be taken to encourage both the local production of food, and the use of food that is locally produced. Such steps might include encouragement and advice to private landowners (including householders and organisations such as churches, schools, community buildings) to make use of available land for food production and/or establish raised beds outside churches or village halls. Schemes to ensure that food that is locally grown is used optimally and not wasted may include spare produce from the Allotments, from the Community Orchard, or from fruit trees in private gardens together with work with local shops to increase the amount

of food sold grown relatively close to the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Pill and Easton celebrates 10 years as a Fair Trade village this year and the aim is to continue and extend this work and particularly to emphasise the environmental advantages of Fair Trade, including approaches to agriculture that both combat climate change and help reduce its impact on crops.

45 See Regen SW. 2014. Resource assessment for wind and solar in North Somerset.

46 See also para 10.6 below.

47 Friends of the Earth

10.5 Transport

The A369 generates the third highest level of air pollution (NOx emissions) in North Somerset and a central aim of transport policy is to bring reductions in carbon emissions from traffic making it easier for people to walk, cycle and enjoy outdoor recreation. In addition to encouragement of the use of public transport and Active

Travel (walking and cycling), the Plan recognises the growing importance of the adoption of electric vehicles (see also Chapter 6). Practical measures could include encouragement of the formation of car sharing clubs, provision of community transport, improvements to the availability, reliability, frequency and cost of public transport, and improvement of facilities for walking and cycling.

10.6 Air Quality

Traffic and transport issues are also included within the possible actions being considered by the Bristol Port Company as part of an Air Quality Strategy consultation.⁴⁸ The prospect of a Port Sustainable Transport Plan, together with work towards the reduction of emissions from traffic, less-polluting means of getting to and from work, and discouragement of road based freight movements, would be beneficial to the whole Neighbourhood Area. A range of

other initiatives relating to the Port Estate are welcome – energy efficiency and conservation, opportunities for renewable energy (including solar panels and wind turbines), green infrastructure, dust management – which would all contribute to a more sustainable carbon-neutral development of the port.⁴⁹ The Parish Councils plan to maintain contact with Bristol Port Company on air quality as well as environmental issues.

10.7 Flood Risk⁵⁰

Flooding has long been not only a risk but an actuality along the River Avon, with Pill in particular subject to significant flooding. Indeed, much of the Neighbourhood Plan Area lies within flood risk zones. Climate Change will increase these risks, but flood control is not simply a Neighbourhood Area issue and extends to rivers and the coastline across North Somerset. Existing protection along the Avon may need to be reinforced from Pill down the longshore to the Estuary (including parts of Royal Portbury Dock. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is included as part of the evidence to be developed in the Local Plan 38 process.⁵¹ It is essential, therefore, that river and coastal flood

policies and practice are reconsidered in the new North Somerset Local Plan 2023–38.

48 The Bristol Port company: Air Quality Strategy, Initial public consultation, February 2020.

49 Air quality and green infrastructure are also covered in Chapter 5 (para 6.8) and Chapter 7 (paras 7.3–7.4)

50 see National Planning Policy Framework Section 14, paras 155–169; also North Somerset Council Core Strategy CS 3 and Development Management Policy DM 1.

51 North Somerset Council. Local Plan 2038: Pre-commencement Document February 2020.

10.8 Policies

Existing North Somerset Core Strategy and Development Management Policies already in place include: Addressing climate change and carbon reduction (CS 1), Delivering sustainable design (CS 2), Environmental impacts and flood risk management (CS 32), Flooding and Drainage (DM 1), Trees and Woodlands (DM 5), High Quality Design and place-making (DM 32), Local Centres (DM62).

Planning Policies

CC 1 Land allocations and management which enhance carbon capture and ecological biodiversity are welcomed.

CC 2 The fitting of solar pv panels to domestic property is supported where appropriate in terms of architecture and location.

CC 3 Proposals for the development of new housing, extensions to dwellings or business premises, will be particularly supported where they are designed to generate as much of their energy as reasonably feasible from renewable sources.

CC 4 The establishment of local wind-turbine generation capacity should be pursued.

11 COMMUNITY ASSETS AND FACILITIES

Primary Objectives

Protect, maintain and enhance Open Spaces, Rights of Way and pathways for walking and cycling.

Celebrate and sustain the strengths, cohesion and inclusion of the diverse communities of the area.

groups – specifically younger children and older people. Groups meet for sport and exercise, culture and arts, music and dance, and simply 'getting together' for coffee, tea or lunch. The Community Forum supports many of these local groups through the award of grants funded with support from the parish council. There are also important community wide events – the monthly Community Market, the annual Pill Rag, an annual music festival, the annual Regatta, the Orchard Wassail, and Pill in Bloom.

11.1 Community Organisations

Sustaining the longstanding sense of identity and community is a key aim of the strong network of community organisations – with over fifty active groups in Pill and Easton-in-Gordano and a further eight groups in Abbots Leigh.⁵²

In Pill there are women's, men's and mixed organisations addressing a range of age

In Abbots Leigh there are a number of similar groups – exercise, heritage, wildlife, artists. All residents are members of the Civic Society which runs a programme of village events throughout the year- New Year Brunch, Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Drinks Party, Festival in the Field, Bonfire Night, and Children's Christmas Party.

⁵² Details of community organisations and their use of community buildings is given in an Appendix to Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 8.

11.2 Community Infrastructure

Buildings: Activities such as those listed above are held in a range of community spaces which include Abbots Leigh Village Hall, Lodway Cricket Club, Methodist Church Hall, Miller's Close, Pill Community Centre, Salvation Army Hall, St. John Ambulance Hall, St George's Church Hall (and Scout Hut), and Pill Memorial Club. These community spaces are under varying ownership and management, have varied levels of space and facilities, and operate under varying financial arrangements. The Community Centre is owned by Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council. The Village Hall in Abbots Leigh is owned and run by the

Parish Council with a resident caretaker. Most buildings are used regularly, some several days a week, the Pill Memorial Club throughout the day.

The Community Centre lies within the old 1843 school building. It is the most heavily used space in the area in terms of the range of organisations. The centre is the home for the monthly market, a weekly café and play group and the Youth Club, together with providing space for a wide range of community activities. There are rooms for meetings or public events.

11.3 Other Community Services:

Several of the pubs, including the Memorial Club, serve meals. There is a café in The Precinct and also at Brackenwood Garden Centre whilst St Katherine's School offers a weekly evening restaurant meal during term time in their hospitality training room. This is the only public restaurant in the UK run by a secondary school.

There are other small service centres elsewhere, one with a doctors' surgery, garage and hardware shop, another with a second Co-operative store and the anticipated new rail station. There are three churches and six public houses across Pill and Easton-in-Gordano but no community services in Abbots Leigh other than the Church and the George Inn.

11.4 Communication

There are a variety of channels of communication which support the exchange of information across communities. Both parish councils have a web-site and a monthly newsletter - the Pill Village Voice and the Abbots Leigh Link - both delivered to all households. There is a widely used Pill Facebook group (the Daily Pill) with over 3,000 subscribers posting news, sharing information and inviting comment and discussion. These various media outlets carry parish news, dates and venues of community organisation meetings, and requests for assistance of all

kinds. Their regularity and reliability do much to assist community cohesion.

The digital future will be one that facilitates social and economic connectivity and digital fibre connection of high quality to home and workplace (FTTP) will continue to be of growing importance.

11.5 Open Space

There is much highly valued public open space within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, some of it jointly run by North Somerset Council, the Parish Councils and/or community groups. Such spaces across the Area are well used, valued and contribute to community wellbeing offering provision for recreational and leisure use and generating environmental and bio-diversity benefits

- **Watchhouse Hill** (with Green Flag status) incorporating Pill Community Orchard is owned by North Somerset Council and managed by a joint council/community committee.
- **Abbots Pool** is a woodland area for walking, cycling and fishing, jointly owned by NSC, Forest England and managed by a joint NSC/community committee. It is a recognised Local Green Space (with Green Flag status).
- **Easton in Gordano Football Ground** is the home of St George's Football Club.
- **Hardwick Road** in Easton-in-Gordano is an NSC owned play space and a football pitch.
- **The Old School Field** in Abbots Leigh is leased to Abbots Leigh Parish Council by North Somerset Council and is used for leisure, play and village events.
- **Brookside** in Pill is similarly owned by North Somerset Council and managed by Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council.
- **Priory Fields** lying between Pill and Martcombe incorporates the Village Green and is widely used for walking. (designated by NSC as a Town Green).
- **Victoria Park** in Pill running from the precinct to Pill Creek, is jointly owned by North Somerset Council and the Parish Council.
- In addition, there are the valued playing fields of the **Easton-in-Gordano** and **Lodway cricket clubs**, the former located at Martcombe.

- The 5-acre **Pill Allotments** site is owned by the Parish Council but is let to and managed by the Pill Allotments Association under a lease which is reviewed and renewed every ten years. There are 124 plots of varying sizes, rented to 94 named members/plot holders from the community.

All these Open Spaces are of value with regard to their contribution to the townscape, character, setting and visual attractiveness of the Neighbourhood Area and make an important contribution to the network of green infrastructure.⁵³ Development proposals affecting these spaces would have a detrimental effect on green infrastructure and, whilst ineligible for Local Green Space designation, should be protected and retained for community use. Proposals which enhance and improve existing community facilities and/or Open Space will be supported as will new facilities, providing they are compatible with existing neighbourhood uses.

There are other open spaces to which residents have access such as Leigh Woods and the Leigh Court Estate, the latter stretching down to Paradise Bottom, together with the spaces across which pass the many Rights of Way and footpaths (see also the Transport and Movement Background Paper 2).

Much of the land in Abbots Leigh along Beggar Bush Lane is devoted to sport and recreation – the new Bristol Bears rugby training ground, Cotham Park Rugby Club, Bristol Real Tennis Club, Clifton College Sports Ground, Abbots Leigh Cricket Club. This land is Green Belt and thus protected from housing development but there remains potential for leisure, sport and outdoor recreation.⁵⁴

53 See NPPF para 114 and NPPG para.4.45.

54 Subject to NSC Core Strategy CS 27.

11.6 Public services

Education

St. Katherine's Secondary School has 780 pupils with plans to grow to 1,000. Intake is from over 50 primary schools with St. Katherine's being first choice for parents locally, in neighbouring admissions areas and Bristol (from where 70% of pupils come). St. Katherine's is now one of three secondary schools in the Cathedral Schools Trust.

Crockerne Church of England Primary School

in central Pill has become a member of the Kaleidoscope Academy Trust based in Weston. Crockerne has a nursery entry of around 50 and a pupil population of over 300. 8.5% of pupils are on free school meals and 11.6% have Special Educational Needs. Many pupils move on to St. Katherine's but some also to Bristol and to Gordano secondary sector.

Health

Heywood Family Practice has 6,700 patients drawn from Pill, Easton-in-Gordano, Abbots Leigh, Failand and Portbury. It employs 30 staff (largely part-time), including seven (part-time) doctors, a nursing staff of five, and also receptionists, dieticians, and admin and clerical staff. The Practice has become one of five in a new primary care network which will bring economies of scale and new specialisations. Social prescribing is to be introduced with three new staff across the network involving more outreach and contact with isolated patients (e.g. home visits, triage to services).

There is a dental practice on the Eden Business Park, an 80 bed Care Home in Abbots Leigh and a centre supporting people with learning disabilities (Freeways). One of the major projects proposed for the area is a new 60 bed care home at Ham Green.⁵⁵

Neighbourhood Plans can address health and wellbeing in a variety of ways – tackling pollution, encouraging healthy eating, improving access to open space, encouraging walking and cycling, designing health developments, supporting the use of public spaces and community buildings.⁵⁶ Many of these initiatives are identified in this Plan.

Fire and Rescue

Pill Fire station, one of 21 stations in the Avon Fire and Rescue Service, is in a group of five stations (Pill, Clevedon, Weston super Mare, Blagdon and Winscombe). Pill Fire station is crewed by fifteen retained duty firefighters, many holding full time jobs elsewhere. Staff must live or work within five minutes of the station bringing a strong community focus to work in and with the community. In Pill, the Fire Station is central to the village and there are close community links, not least because retained staff live locally.

Police and Community Safety

The Abbots Leigh and Pill/Easton-in-Gordano parishes lie within the Redwood beat of the Avon and Somerset Police Area. There is no police presence in Pill with the nearest police station in Portishead. Crime rates in the Area are low by comparison with other parts of the police area. Nevertheless, there are local priorities – vehicle crime in Leigh Woods and anti-social behaviour in Pill (noise, harassment, nuisance, rowdy or inconsiderate neighbours, vandalism, graffiti) addressed in part by the issue of Community Protection Warnings. In relation to planning and development community safety can be addressed through *Secured by Design*, a national

55 See also Chapter 5 Housing and Chapter 8 Economy and Employment.

56 National Association of Local Councils 2019. *Neighbourhood Planning and Community Health and Wellbeing*.

police crime prevention initiative to reduce crime at the design stage and to introduce security into the built environment, for

example through natural surveillance, landscaping and lighting.

11.7 Social Inclusion

The importance of such public services is especially crucial in supporting the welfare of vulnerable or 'protected' groups. A number of the policies identified in this Plan - for housing, for transport, for employment and for community (organisations and buildings) - will make public services more accessible for older

people, for young children and for people with disabilities. They are also directed at vulnerability and social deprivation with some parts of the Neighbourhood Area displaying deprivation levels more severe than any other parts of North Somerset outside Weston-Super-Mare.

11.8 The Pill Precinct

Improvement Area 4 The Pill Precinct

The Pill Precinct is a hub for the village and surrounding areas. It is often thought of as the forecourt in front of the Baltic Place shops on Heywood Road, but a wider definition used for the Neighbourhood Plan includes Pill Street, Bank Place, Victoria

Park as far as the railway bridge and Mount Pleasant (see Map 10).

The Precinct is the nearest local shopping centre for the whole Neighbourhood Area and is a North Somerset Council designated 'service village'. It is felt by local people to be accessible, convenient, familiar, a place to do local shopping and to have a chat. Despite



Map 10 Pill Precinct

these advantages, however, the Pill Precinct has long been recognised as needing improvement. Community surveys (at the Pill Rag, through the Daily Pill, by a business survey) confirm the widely held view that the Precinct is tired, drab, outdated, untidy and needing modernisation.

The main Heywood Road is dominated by an unattractive brick frontage and Pill Street is a mess of untidy parking with an absence of greenery throughout. There is a lack of variety in the available shops and a perception that the two retail sites – Baltic Place and Bank Place – are disconnected,

An attractive precinct is crucial for local residents and for local business. Local stakeholders – the Parish Council, Alliance Homes, North Somerset Council and the local community – have come together to form a partnership through which the ownership and management of land and property across the precinct area can be reviewed and improvements planned and implemented. A review of the area has identified matters which can be addressed within a year, issues which require some

thought and resources, and finally 'blue sky' ideas which may be possible in the longer term.

The possible future for the Precinct has been explored through a local survey and also by a joint parish council/community 'walkabout.'

Key issues which have emerged include:

- Traffic management, including parking on Heywood Road, Pill Street and Victoria Park.
- The absence of greenery, and the potential of green walls, flower beds and planters.
- Tidiness and cleanliness, together with the location and screening of bins.
- Improved linkage between the retail areas of Baltic Place and Bank Place.



Victoria Park from Pill Street, in the 1930s before the railings were removed to be recycled to make munitions.

11.9 Policies

Existing North Somerset Core Strategy and Development Management Policies already in place address Supporting Healthy Living (CS26), Smaller settlements and Countryside (CS33).

Planning Policies

CAF 1 (and Env 2) The Open Spaces identified in this Plan should be protected, maintained and enhanced.

CAF 2 Proposals for the redevelopment and enhancement of Improvement Area 4 – the Pill Precinct – will be supported.

CAF 3 Proposals for further sport/recreation uses on Beggar Bush Lane will be supported.

Community Actions

CA/CAF 1 Continued financial and other support to community organisations, the Community Centre and other community spaces should be sought.

The collage of photos on the back cover is the product of a community project 'Views from the Footpaths'. Thanks go to all who contributed and to Liz and Peter Milner for bringing the whole display together.

Thanks to Ben Clark and Ellie Wilkinson of Bluemoon Design Studio and Kris O'Shea and Jane Miller of Quay Digital for their advice and support on design and printing'.



find us on Facebook:
[@viewsfromthefootpaths](#)



Views from the Footpaths

Photographs taken in Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano by local residents

