

# Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026



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

**The Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Neighbourhood Plan was prepared on behalf of the two Parish Councils of Abbots Leigh and Pill & 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.**

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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.

*October 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](mailto:nhoodplan@btinternet.com)

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## Volume 2 Background Papers

**Housing**

**Transport and Movement**

**Environment**

**Heritage**

**Economy and Employment**

**Climate Change**

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Copies of Volume 2 are to be found on the Neighbourhood Plan page of the Neighbourhood Plan website [www.pillanddistrictplan.org](http://www.pillanddistrictplan.org)

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# 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, with community engagement also 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 & Easton-in-Gordano are all distinct settlements, but have a number of important planning and development issues in common, including:

- A concern about urban sprawl from the edge of Bristol down to the M5 motorway should development be allowed to spread along the A369.
- A related concern over risks to the Green Belt with valuable open space, together with environmental and heritage assets at threat of loss.
- A recognition that the A369 is, and will increasingly be, 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.

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## 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, climate change and community. 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 Statement). A website was created and a Steering Group established, drawn from the two parish councils together with additional community members with relevant skills and experience.

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 a period extended as a consequence of COVID-19 from mid-April to mid-September.

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 have been overtaken by further local consultation and 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 local consultation process and the subsequent North Somerset Consultation (also six weeks), and also to assure local residents that appropriate policies do exist, the policy sections at the end of each chapter 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. 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.

A new Local Plan 2038 is now being developed and our Neighbourhood Plan has been informed by the July Challenges and Choices Consultation to which we made a submission. The two Parish Councils have also responded to the September 2020 Call for Sites by submitting the sites proposed for the two development schemes set out in Section 5.5 below. At the same time there are Government proposals for changes to the planning system, to local housing numbers and to the Green Belt, all of which will have an effect on long-term thinking about our area.

The strategic framework for this Neighbourhood Plan, however, remains North Somerset's current Development Plan which consists of its Core Strategy (January 2017), its Development Management Policies (July 2016) and the Site Allocations Plan (April 2018). The implications of this are that our Plan assumes that, with the exception of two sites in Ham Green, the Green Belt remains as it is at present, the Pill Settlement boundary remains unchanged and Abbots Leigh remains 'rural'. The policies suggested in the Plan relate only to the period up to 2026.

At the same time, however, much of our thinking still relates to the longer term and a number of the issues explored are clearly applicable to the fifteen years 2023-38. We expect that once a strategic framework has been finalised for North Somerset, hopefully in early 2023, our Plan will be updated and/or revised and we are happy to make a commitment that this will be done.

# 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 16 sq.km. 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 on its north-western edge by the River Severn with the River Avon marking the north-eastern boundary.<sup>1</sup> In 2017 the area had a population of 5,698, 80% of whom live within the Pill/Easton/Ham Green settlement boundary.

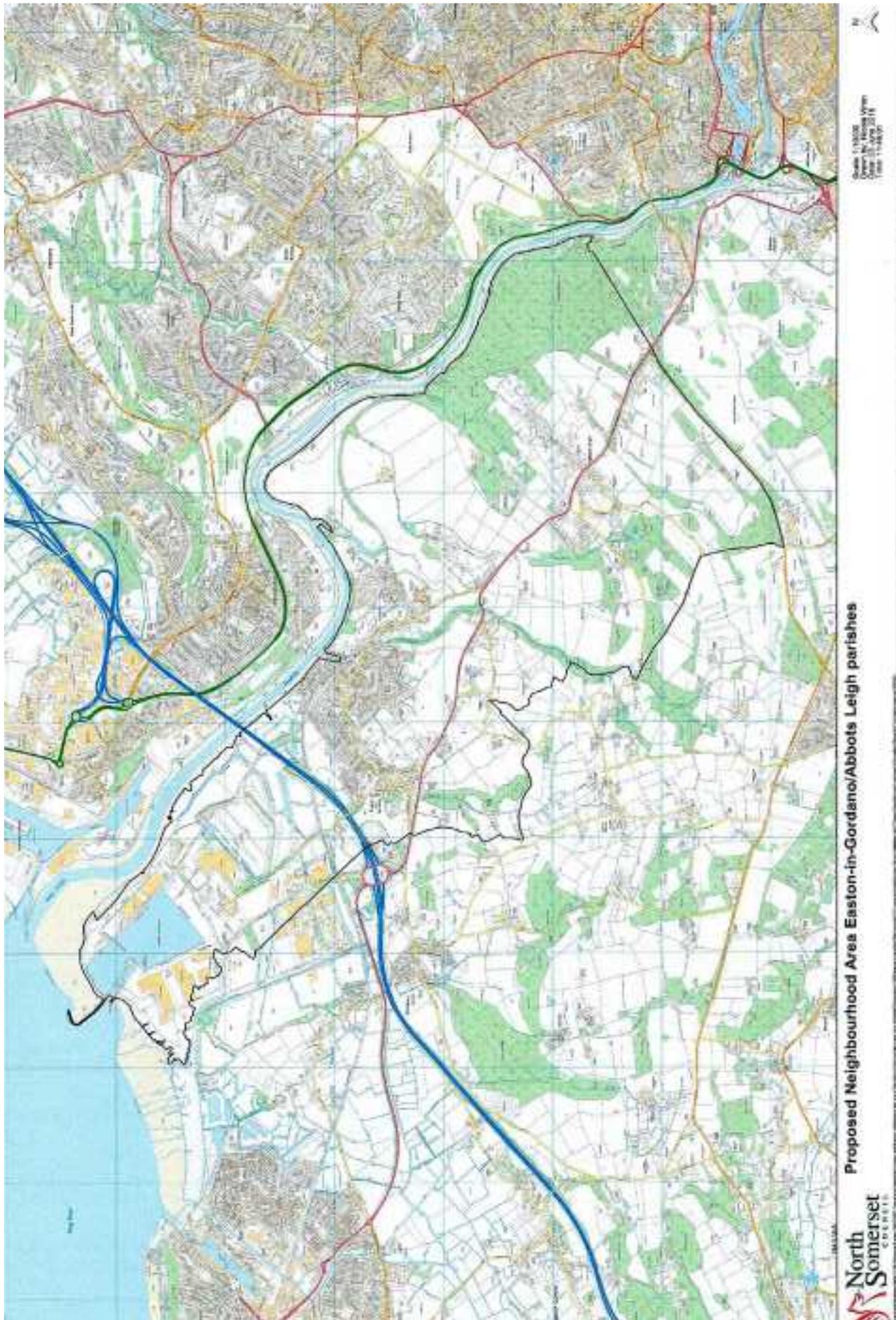
Encompassing most of the Leigh Woods woodland (including some Forestry England and National Trust owned land) down to, but not including, the towpath along the Avon Gorge the NPA includes the village of Abbots Leigh and assorted woodland and farmland past Leigh Court to Ham Green, Pill & Easton-in-Gordano 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 rail 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 (SSSIs and SNICs, RAMSAR, Protection Areas) as well as flood defences.

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

2 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 biodiversity 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 job opportunities 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.

We recognise that these objectives may pull in different directions and may sometimes appear contradictory. Not all the primary objectives can be met across the whole Neighbourhood Area. Meeting housing need may conflict with environmental conservation, new development may

create traffic and fail to encourage walking and cycling. There have therefore been compromises which we hope our local communities will recognise and accept.

## 5 HOUSING *(See also Background Paper 1)*

### Primary Objective

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

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 & 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 & Easton-in-Gordano) with some private rented throughout the area. Social renting was at 7% in Pill & Easton-in-Gordano (and zero in Abbots Leigh).

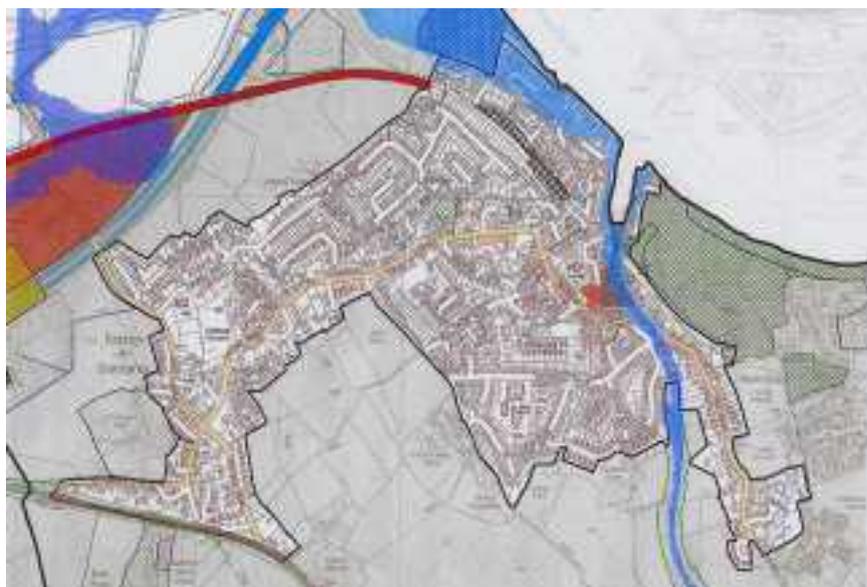
### 5.1 Background<sup>3</sup>

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

### 5.2 Household Growth

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is dominated by the Green Belt. The whole of the parish of Abbots Leigh and the more recent St. Katherine's Park estate at Ham Green lie within the Green Belt. The built areas of Pill

& Easton-in-Gordano (the Pill Settlement – see Map 2) are surrounded by Green Belt, as is Royal Portbury Dock.



Map 2 Pill Settlement Area

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

Pill & Easton-in-Gordano parish - 9 sq.km including 6 sq km of Royal Portbury - is 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).

Within the Green Belt itself growth has been heavily constrained. Abbots Leigh parish (9.13 sq.km) lying entirely within the Green Belt, has no formal settlement boundary and is a much larger, more rural parish than Pill & Easton-in-Gordano with a number of outlying areas beyond the village - Home Farm Road, Ashgrove Avenue, Blackmoor

Road, parts of the Pill Road and a few houses in Ham Green. The proportion of parish population living within the main body of the village is 55% (households 61%).

Between 2007 and 2017 completed development sites within the Settlement Area of Pill & Easton-in-Gordano produced 60 new dwellings.<sup>4</sup> In Abbots Leigh the figure was 5 new dwellings within the village.<sup>5</sup> 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.

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### 5.3 Housing Demand and Provision

There has been a recent tendency for existing owners to extend rather than sell property and many local planning applications seek improvements and extensions - sideways or upwards. Nevertheless there is strong housing demand throughout the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Developers believe that housing supply in North Somerset is insufficient to meet current housing targets and there have been speculative proposals both for major (1,000 dwellings) development projects at Chapel Pill, Martcombe, and St. George's Hill (now sometimes referred to as Plummer's Hill) and at other smaller sites where landowners/ developers hold land with hope value.

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, 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, is 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.

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### 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

both the number of rooms (63 rooms, amounting to 2.9% of all dwellings) and the number of bedrooms (945 dwellings, amounting to 2.1% of dwellings). There are

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

5 North Somerset Council: Parish Profiles:2017 Abbots Leigh

significant numbers of households with dependent children and children under 4. Pill West is the 35th most deprived LSOA<sup>6</sup> in North Somerset, being the only area in North Somerset outside Weston-super-Mare lying within the 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,<sup>7</sup> 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 unable 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](http://www.pillanddistrictplan.org)

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## 5.5 Neighbourhood Area Housing Strategy

The North Somerset Local Plan 2038 will provide a longer-term framework for development covering the years 2023–2038. The Plan may cover issues such as the introduction of a settlement boundary for Abbots Leigh, updating the Pill Settlement boundary to include the housing built on and around the former Ham Green Hospital

site, and reconsideration of the Green Belt and its boundaries. There will certainly be a revision of the housing numbers required of North Somerset, expected to increase to around 1,700 dwellings a year.

In order to underpin their strategic thinking about the possible scale of future growth

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

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

and provide a realistic context for their thinking the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group assessed a range of hypothetical longer-term housing scenarios. Three scenarios were tested:

- **Minimal growth** – retaining tight control of new development, maintaining the Green Belt and accepting only infill and/or 'exceptional' new projects.
- **Medium growth** – allowing limited growth in the order of 100-150 new dwellings – mainly in clusters around the edges of Pill and Abbots Leigh with minor adjustments to Green Belt boundaries.
- **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.<sup>8</sup>

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 infill and/or 'exceptional' sites.

**Scenario 2** – the development of 100-150 dwellings in small clusters of housing of around 20-30 dwellings adjacent to existing settlements would retain the bulk of the Green Belt, would offer a modest contribution to the housing needed in service villages and other settlements and would offer close linkage with existing local services in Pill.

**Scenario 3** not only runs counter to Green Belt and Landscape Quality policies,<sup>9</sup>

but would threaten biodiversity and the ecological framework of the Area, would exacerbate peak hour traffic congestion and overload on both the A369 and the Pill Loop, would threaten environment and biodiversity, would create further pollution and would hinder attempts to address climate change. In short this scenario is both damaging and unsustainable. 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.*'<sup>10</sup> Expansion of this scale would increase the number of households in Pill & Easton-in-Gordano by 50% and would radically damage the social patterns of community life.

Community opinion on the three scenarios was tested both at public exhibitions in autumn 2019<sup>11</sup> and in Regulation 14 local consultation in April-September 2020.

At the Exhibitions 35% of the 210 local residents attending favoured Scenario 1 – minimal new development. 61% favoured Scenario 2 – medium growth. Only 4% welcomed Scenario 3 – major growth of 1000 dwellings.

Local Consultation confirmed these preferences – retention of the bulk of the Green Belt, provision of affordable housing and small-scale local development. The possibilities of major development schemes of up to 1000 dwellings put forward by developers were universally unwelcome to residents.

Results from the 2016 Housing Survey provided both evidence of housing need and (71%) a preference for a small development of affordable housing. Whether the survey remains up to date was checked with North

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

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

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

11 The Exhibitions are described in the separate Consultation Statement

Somerset Council and the survey results were found to be still valid.

This evidence led the Steering Group to confirm that Scenario 2 was the best option because, in the light of the most recent estimates of the levels of dwellings likely to be required in North

Somerset, the Steering Group considered that a slightly larger dwellings target was more realistic. Scenario 2 was adjusted, therefore, to suggest 150–200 dwellings by 2038 provided in clusters of up to 20–30 dwellings. The evidence also led the Steering Group to confirm that Scenarios 1 and 3 were unacceptable.

## 5.6 Proposals 2020–2026

Whilst the three scenarios were developed to assist strategic thinking and provide a long-term context, particularly relevant given that the North Somerset Local Plan 2038 is under way, the Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Neighbourhood Plan covers only the years up to 2026. The housing targets established for this period in the Core Strategy 2017 required 2,100 dwellings for service villages (including Easton-in-Gordano/Pill) and 985 for other settlements and countryside (including Abbots Leigh). Specific targets for individual parishes were not specified but with the Neighbourhood Area being largely Green Belt little, if any, growth was built into the 2017 Strategy.

In the period to 2026 housing possibilities in the Neighbourhood Area are limited by the Green Belt (CS 6), and the status of Abbots Leigh as a 'rural' parish (CS,16, 32). Nevertheless, the Neighbourhood Plan offers a planned increase in the supply of housing units of fifty-five (55) by 2026 together with re-use of a largely derelict brownfield site.

**Infill** There is scope for some limited residential infill within the Pill Settlement boundary together with the possibility of residential gain in Abbots Leigh through the adaptation or conversion of agricultural buildings.<sup>12</sup> Together with windfall sites across the Neighbourhood Area this might produce in the order of fifteen (15) new dwellings by 2026.

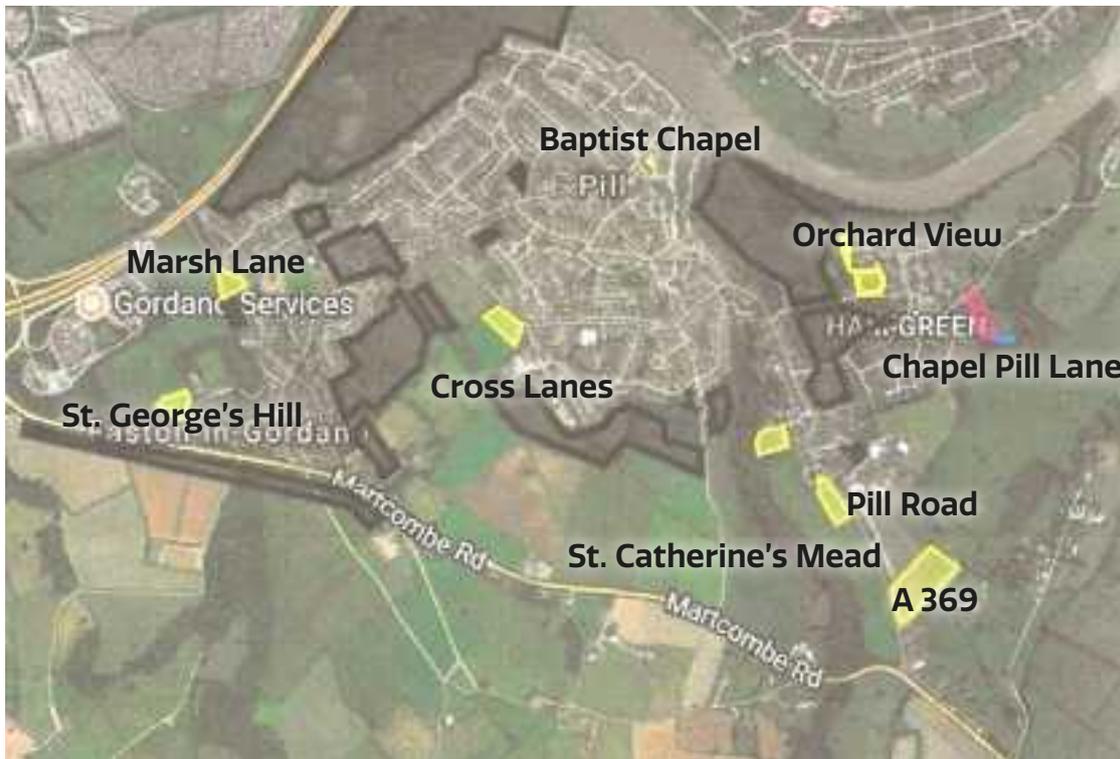
**New Development** The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, in collaboration with the Pill and District Community Land Trust, identified a number of potential sites that could meet the need for a cluster of affordable housing. Nine sites were considered (see Map 3 on page 14).

- The former Pill Baptist Church
- Land off the main road at Ham Green

These two sites lay within the Pill Settlement boundary but were severely constrained in terms of access, size, legal and construction obstacles, and feasible housing type. The remaining six sites lie in the Green Belt, just outside the Pill Settlement boundary.

- Land at the top of St. George's Hill (sometimes referred to as Plummer's Hill)
- Land off Marsh Lane (lower Plummer's Hill)
- Land off Cross Lanes (beside the allotments)
- Land adjacent to St. Catherine's Mead
- Land off the A369 beyond St Katherine's School
- Land at Orchard View/Somerset Lodge
- Land off Chapel Pill Lane/Hayes Mays Lane

On the first four of these latter sites, all the landowners held strong 'hope value' views and were unwilling to consider a sale to the Land Trust. Land beyond St. Katherine's School was thought to be both Green Belt and too far from existing services. The land at Orchard View, not in single ownership



Map 3 Community Land Trust Search for sites

at the time, was too constricted to allow a viable development. A further site – Brookside – was also considered but, lying in the Green Belt and important for play and recreation (see Chapter 11), was rejected by the Steering Group. Two potential sites were identified in Abbots Leigh but the primary need for affordable housing is in Pill and the Land Trust recommended that Abbots Leigh was not a priority for its first development.

Chapel Pill Lane was well located and the only site where the landowner was willing to engage and sign terms of agreement. The whole of the brown field site at Orchard View/Somerset Lodge has since come into single ownership and offers the potential for mixed-use redevelopment within the plan period.

For the period to 2026, therefore, the Plan allocates two new development sites in Ham Green which would offering a further forty (40) new dwellings in the Plan Area by 2026 (see map 4):

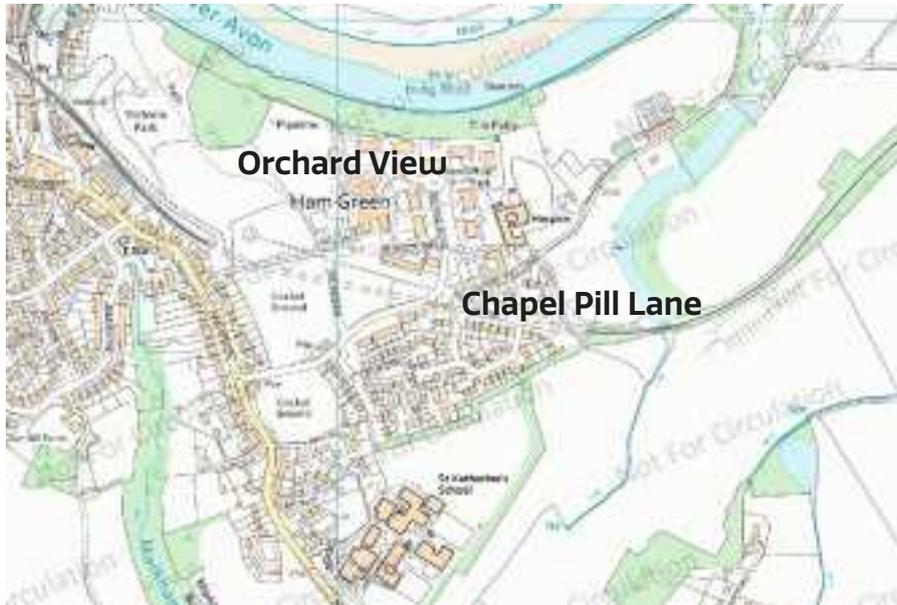
- **ORCHARD VIEW:** a 3-acre brownfield site at Perrett Way in Ham Green for a mixed

development of around thirty (30) mixed tenure housing comprising both market and affordable housing, together with a sixty-bed care home.

- **AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** A one-and-a-half-acre 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).

It should be noted that the provision of a 60 bed care home would release accommodation elsewhere in North Somerset and beyond and hence making a further contribution to meeting housing need.

Both these sites lie within Ham Green (see Map 4). 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.



Map 4 Ham Green

## 5.7 Improvement Area 1

### Improvement Area 1 Orchard View

This proposal brings together what were formerly two separate care units owned by the North Bristol NHS Trust until Ham Green Hospital was closed in the 1950s. Sold to the Milestones Trust, Somerset Lodge became a 35-bed dementia and mental health care home, whilst Orchard View was until, 2010, an Intermediate respite care unit.

Located on Perrett Way, the site is bounded by Eden Business Park and the

Pill Community Orchard and is the final undeveloped part of the former Ham Green Hospital complex (see Map 5). In addition to the two main buildings there are some outbuildings. The whole site is now in single ownership and the owner is keen to redevelop it into mixed-use – twenty-four market and rental housing dwellings (including an affordable housing element) plus a new and up to date care home with sixty beds and a staff of sixty. Up to sixty jobs would be created, many for local people. The intention would be to build smaller units,



Map 5 Orchard View





including some apartments, at a range of size and cost. New housing provision might be up to thirty (30) dwellings incorporating some affordable housing.

The site is in the Green Belt and outside 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. The site is unoccupied (other than as a temporary rental at Somerset Lodge) 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 have been held with the planning authority. This is an already developed, brown field site and the proposal is for a continued health and social care use. The proposal addresses housing need and demand, and might have additional value in so far as long-term care home residents moving to the care home might release other local dwellings into the housing market. The scheme would also offer significant local job opportunities.

## 5.8 Improvement Area 2

### 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 owner and planning approval, a site of one and a half acres has been identified lying between Chapel Pill Lane and Hayes Mays Lane. (see Map 6 on p17).

The site is on sloping ground falling down towards Ham Green Lake (a Wildlife Site and a Site of Nature Conservation Interest)

and offers an outlook over open ground and across to the Leigh Court Estate. The development would make joint use of a new MetroWest entrance adjacent to Hayes Mays Lane to be constructed to give access to the Portishead rail tunnel which runs beneath St. Katherine's estate.

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



Map 6 Chapel Pill Lane (Site plan and aerial view)

The one and half acre development would consist of up to 16 dwellings offering a mix of one, two and three-bedroom units. The precise number would depend on final negotiations on land purchase, timing of the MetroWest access road, and available grant for housing and consequent affordable rents. The housing would be provided (built and managed) through a partnership of PDCLT and Alliance Homes and would offer affordable housing to households with a local connection. A local allocation process has been developed to ensure that the new development would 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. Although formally not open to motor vehicles other than residents, traffic on Chapel Pill Lane below the proposed development

site 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 but the proposed development site is privately owned with no public access. Ham Green Lake is a private fishing lake to which local walkers have access with the permission of the owner. Hayes Mays Lane is an old track which comes to a dead-end above the entrance to the rail tunnel which runs through to Pill. The proposed development site is within reach of local services at Pill Precinct and is 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.



*The proposed Chapel Pill Lane development site*

Both development proposals (Section 5.5 above) are close to important heritage and environmentally important sites at Pill Community Orchard and Ham Green Lake. Any threat to landscape can be addressed sensitively to preserve heritage vistas through appropriate screening and tree-planting. Local

consultation, reported in the Consultation Statement, demonstrated considerable local opposition to the Chapel Pill Lane development, but on balance two thirds (65%) of the 130 respondents expressing a view were in favour of the scheme.

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## 5.9 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.<sup>13</sup> North Somerset Council Core Strategy also emphasises both that 'quality design should be accorded priority if places are to be shaped as sustainable, and socially, economically and environmentally responsive'.<sup>14</sup> '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.'<sup>15</sup>

The Core Strategy is reinforced in NSC Development Management Policies which highlight the importance of place making, accessibility, housing mix and density.<sup>16</sup> 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. In the two proposals for development in this Plan emphasis should be given to environmental amenity – tree planting, water run-off, wildlife habitats. Planning applications for new development should be required to include proposals for management and maintenance of the immediate and surrounding environments.

There is a growing incidence both in the more rural parts of the area but also within Pill of the conversion to residential use, often without recourse to planning permission and often of poor design

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<sup>13</sup> National Planning Policy Framework. Section 12, paras 124-127

<sup>14</sup> North Somerset Council, Core Strategy CS 32

<sup>15</sup> North Somerset Council, Core Strategy CS 2

<sup>16</sup> North Somerset Council, Development Management Policies DM 32, 33,34, and 36

quality, of stables, outbuildings etc. Where this is 'infill' it may damage the character and appearance of neighbouring buildings. Where it takes the form of the conversion of an existing barn or other outbuilding it needs to be done in a manner that respects

local character and avoids inappropriate design. Conversion of non traditional barns and utilitarian shelter structures to residential uses should be exempted from a Permitted Development status that currently exists in North Somerset.

## 5.10 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).**

### Policies

HO 1 Site A (Orchard View as shown on Map 5) is allocated for a Care Home and thirty (30) houses.

HO 2 Site B (Chapel Pill Lane as shown on Map 6) is allocated as an exception site of up to sixteen (16) 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.

HO 5 Planning applications for new development should be required to include proposals for the sustainable management and maintenance of the immediate and surrounding environment.

HO 6 Restrictions should be placed on the conversion for residential use without planning permission of outbuildings within the curtilage of a main dwelling.

### Community Action

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

## 6 TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT *(See also Background Paper 2 Transport and Movement)*

### Primary Objective

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 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.

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## 6.2 Traffic Volumes

The A369 is heavily loaded and congestion occurs at peak times. 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% 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 Easton-in-Gordano. (the disparity is probably as a result of the one way exit from Easton onto the A 369 via Rectory Road). By contrast with the main A369, the volume of traffic is spread more evenly throughout the day. The volume and speed of traffic – especially heavy lorries – creates major anxieties at a number of points, with the Sandy Lane/Leigh Court junction on the A369 identified in local consultation as a major danger point.

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## 6.3 Traffic Growth

Not only are the current levels of traffic causing some congestion at peak hours,

but further growth seems likely. The latest draft Joint Transport Plan<sup>17</sup> suggests that

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

without major change the most likely local outcomes by 2036 are vehicle trips up by 26%, CO2 emissions up by 22%, and congestion costs running at £800m a year. The removal of tolls on the Severn Bridges and/or the opening of the South Bristol Link together with growth at Royal Portbury Dock may influence traffic levels

in and around the Neighbourhood Plan Area over the next seven years<sup>18</sup> although due to COVID-19 and lockdown the level of homeworking has increased and traffic levels have dropped. Nevertheless further increases in peak-hour congestion should be avoided.

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## 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.

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## 6.5 Safety

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is not a high accident area,<sup>20</sup> 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 are most severe at junctions, where the majority of accidents occur, notably junctions on the A369 and the several side roads joining between the Beggar Bush Lane and the M5 motorway.<sup>21</sup> In particular there are major concerns about the risk to cyclists as they cross side-roads and private entrances when on the cycle path (for example, the exit to the Clifton College sports ground) and when they join and

cross 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 & Easton-in-Gordano parish (a wish that has recently been agreed).

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## 6.6 Parking

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. These would be an important element in planning the future of the Precinct. The local transport survey endorsed tighter parking policies in Pill –

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18 See Chapter 9 below

19 Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 2, Para 2.6-2.7

20 Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 2, Para 2.8

21 Police accident data provided by North Somerset Council

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). Elsewhere there is likely to be a spillover demand for parking space as a consequence of the opening of the rail station.

In Abbots Leigh current parking difficulties 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).

Clear verges help to provide safe walking routes. Throughout the Neighbourhood Area there is a growing incidence of parking

on pavements and verges. Parking on pavements obstructs pedestrians especially those with prams or pushchairs. Verges are often a protection for pedestrians but also offer important habitats for insects or small mammals. They can also be useful play spaces for young children.

Generally there is a tension between those who want access to parking to be limited and others wanting it to be made easier, a tension evident from local consultation responses to the Plan in relation to Pill on Macrae Road and to Abbots Leigh on Church Road. Throughout the area there is also tension between motorists – parking on pavements – and pedestrians obstructed by parked cars. It is particularly in the interests of those walking with pushchairs or buggies that pavements should be kept clear. Finally there is tension between those who concrete over gardens to provide parking space and those who wish to see all green space around dwellings protected.

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## 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 30 mph. Heavy vehicles/buses are often unable to pass each other. 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 a T-junction traffic light control.

The Pill Loop creates resident concern at the Precinct and the narrow part of the Loop at Lodway has been a concern for years.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> The frequent misdirection of heavy vehicle bound for Royal Portbury Dock creates unwelcome traffic through Easton-in-Gordano.

There is much cycle movement on the A369 and cycle and pedestrian movement 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.

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22 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 20mph speed limit in the parish

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

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## 6.8 Pollution

The main pollutant measured by NSC locally is nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) 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.<sup>24</sup> Increases in road traffic emissions should be avoided.<sup>25</sup> Concerns were expressed in consultation that air pollution levels around the M5 and Junction 19 were severe and that monitoring should be extended to give better coverage.

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## Cycling and Walking

### 6.9 Cycle Networks

A shared-use traffic free path 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 riders to Bristol but also recreational cycling, accessing, for example, Leigh Woods, Abbots Pool and Snake's Well. There are several side entrances and 'give way' markings which slow down and deter hardened cyclists. As a result and despite the poor quality of the road surfaces in some places, some cyclists choose to cycle on the main road 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. Nevertheless this offers a level access into Bristol and is popular as both a commuting and recreational route. Due to lack of maintenance, however, its condition has deteriorated so much that it is now almost impassable in places and needs significant repair works. **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

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24 North Somerset Council, 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report, June 2018

25 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

– possibly making travel to work journeys to Royal Portbury Dock. Secondly up to half 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.

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## 6.10 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 and School.** 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.<sup>27</sup> Walking to work is most likely for those employed locally – to shops in the Precinct or elsewhere, to the Health Centre, to 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 school is encouraged at Crockerne Primary making a contribution to relieving congestion in the immediate vicinity.

**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. The busy main road through Pill is a difficult crossing

for pedestrians to and from the precinct. An additional zebra crossing would be welcome.

### Recreational Walking

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 6.9 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 down through the Bottoms across Priors Fields towards Pill (see map 7). 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 shortcuts to the Pill Precinct.<sup>28</sup> 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 routes would benefit from improvement either as public footpaths or permissive paths and all would benefit from regular maintenance.<sup>29</sup>

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

27 See Section 2.8 above

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

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



*Map 7 Rights of Way in the Neighbourhood Area*

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## 6.11 Active Travel

The availability of Rights of Way and footpaths can encourage 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 (and in the future scooters). Car sharing is one obvious measure especially appropriate for the many commuters into and out of the Neighbourhood Area.

There are also initiatives targeted 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 some car-sharing and cycling to Royal Portbury Dock which the Port Company is working to promote further. Other businesses at Eden Park and the Old Brewery will be encouraged to give greater visibility to Active Travel.

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## 6.12 Public Transport

**Buses** The Neighbourhood Area is currently served by two bus services. The X4 serves Abbots Leigh, Pill & 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 8). 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. Firstly there is a threat to the environment along the line both at Chapel Pill and particularly at Lodway where the ponds, wetland and woodland provides an important corridor 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 8 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 8 Pill Railway Station

## 6.13 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 integrate with well-provided and regular public bus or rail infrastructure and service provision and to minimise traffic congestion and air pollution.

T 2 Rights of Way and pathways within the Neighbourhood Area (and around The Bottoms, Martcombe, Chapel Pill and Ham Green in particular) should be protected, maintained, enhanced and extended.

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

T 5 The impact on local amenity of the re-opening of the Pill railway station (traffic, parking, business and residential activity) should be taken into account in the consideration of new development/redevelopment.

T 6 New development should be located so as to encourage walking and cycling to work (especially to school) and to ensure access to local retail and public services in Pill.

### 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 protection of verges and the prevention of pavement parking where they are considered to be a hindrance or hazard to pedestrians.

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, and businesses).

CA/T 5 The Parish Councils will pursue Active Travel initiatives across the Neighbourhood Area.

CA/T6 The Parish Councils will work with bus service providers to maintain public bus transport within the Neighbourhood Area

CA/T 7 The Pill & 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)*

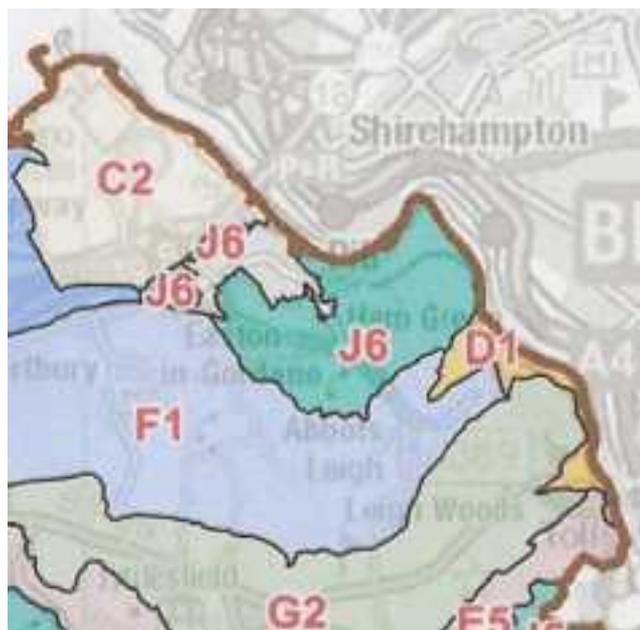
## Primary Objective

Sustain and enhance the landscape, ecology and biodiversity of the area whilst protecting its environmental assets.

### 7.1 Topography, Landscape and Ecology

The Green Belt dominates the landscape of the Neighbourhood Area. Both the Pill Settlement and Royal Portbury Dock are surrounded by Green Belt and the whole of the remainder of the Area lies within the Green Belt. We fully endorse both the National Planning Policy Framework and the NSC Core Strategy that restate the importance of Green Belt land, not simply as a break between town and countryside but as a fundamental feature of the overall character of landscape and environment.

The 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 Estuary<sup>30</sup> (see Map 9). 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, the features of which differ from one end of the Neighbourhood Area 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. By contrast the Pill & Easton-in-Gordano areas have more farmland and small areas of pasture and open field surrounding the built-up settlement area as well as the fresh water of Ham Green Lake. The Royal Portbury



Map 9 Neighbourhood Plan Area Landscape Features

30 The Area includes Landscape Areas G2 (Failand Settled Limestone Plateau, D1 (Avon Gorge), F1 (Abbots Leigh Sandstone Uplands), J6 (Avon Rolling Farmland) and C2 (Portbury Settled Coastal Edge). North Somerset Landscape Assessment 2018

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 benefits 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 area of allotments 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 Historic England 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 Assessment<sup>31</sup> '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.<sup>32</sup> 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).

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## 7.2 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. Woodland (some 'ancient') stretches across the area – from Leigh Woods and Oak Wood, past Snake's Well and Fishpond Woods through to Hail's and Summerhouse Woods. The streams that run through the 'Bottoms' (Ox House, Vowles and Markham) feed a rich and diverse ecosystem.

**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 removed. This grassland adds enormously to the landscape and rural character of the area. Individual veteran trees are common in open fields supporting rich ecosystems as well as roosts for birds and bats.

**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

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

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

barley which can support skylarks, pipits and lapwing. The importance of food production to the local economy is referenced in Section 9.1 of the Plan and its significance in the response to climate change in Section 10.4.

**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 then 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. Lodway Farm Ponds have breeding newts and frogs whilst the farm itself has deer, badgers, foxes and year-round resident toad and smooth newts. This area is an important wildlife corridor integral to toad migration.

A Wildlife Site and a Site of Nature, the **Ham Green Lakes** (part of the River Avon Site of Nature Conservation Interest) supports 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 Easton-in-Gordano, 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. Much of this area forms the Portbury SSSI.

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## 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. There are also North Somerset Council recognised Wildlife Sites and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. The Avon Gorge Woodlands and the Severn Estuary are designated under the EC Habitats Directive.

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## 7.5 Connectivity and Biodiversity

The combination and inter-connectedness

of woodland, grassland, open farmland,

hedgerows, orchards, ponds, streams and river foreshore are crucial in providing shelter, feeding and breeding sites vital

to the survival of the numerous wildlife species of the area and to the sustainability of the biodiversity of their many habitats.

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## 7.6 Environmental Management

There are many Open Spaces with wider community and social uses<sup>33</sup> 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 Company<sup>34</sup> 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. Areas for rewilding, tree-planting and provision of hedges and verges are all central to environmental management. Planning applications for new development should be required to include proposals for the sustainable management and maintenance of the immediate and surrounding environment.

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## 7.7 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 Green Belt, high sensitivity landscape and habitat land above Crockerne Drive and Brookside will not be supported.

Env 2 The environment and wildlife (especially the salt marshes and the inter-tidal shore) of Royal Portbury Dock should continue to be protected and enhanced.

Env 3 Landowners should allocate areas for rewilding, plant native trees, shrubs, margins and flowering plants, protect the diversity of hedges and verges, and allow grasslands to develop as wild flower meadows.

### Community Action

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

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

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33 Open Spaces are discussed in Chapter 11

34 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 Paleolithic 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 12<sup>th</sup> century (hence Crockerne Pill). From the sixteenth century Pill has been a bustling community harbour, and latterly marina, 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 three SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest).<sup>35</sup> 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 & Easton-in-Gordano – contributes to a shared community heritage which it is important to retain, but each settlement has its own particular history.

It is important to remember, however, that much of this heritage stems from the wealth created by historic landowners – amongst

35 A full list of historic/listed buildings is given in Background Paper 4 which also contains an Initial historical Heritage Statement

them Henry Bright of Ham Green and Philip John Miles of Leigh Court. Much of their wealth was built on the slave trade. The buildings they left can be appreciated for their architectural merit but how their wealth was created cannot be ignored or forgotten.

**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 in 1580 built a new mansion. The Norton family and later the Trenchards held the property until 1811 when the estate was sold to Philip John Miles who 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. 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). The 'pleasure gardens' of the nineteenth century Ham Green Estate constructed by Henry Bright remain formally an unregistered park/garden. Much of the land, including Ham Green Lake, the field within which the Chapel Pill lane development is proposed and parts of Eden Business Park, was sold off in 1961 by the National Health Service. Orchard View is not part of the unregistered park/garden but does lie within the wider setting of the former Ham Green House.

A full planning application for the Chapel Pill Lane development will provide a Heritage Statement setting out the history of the former Bright Estate at Ham Green House (now Penny Bohn) and its heritage

significance. An Annex to background paper 4 provides an initial history/heritage statement.

**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 port settlement remains (although the stretch of land at the Avon is known as Waterloo Wharf). There are only two listed buildings in Pill.

**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 the historic St George's Church. These buildings echo the historic connection between Easton-in-Gordano and Portbury Priory and probably lay on the route from Portbury to the Pill ferry.

**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, interesting older buildings remain as does much of the traditional layout 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 busy and prosperous village of the nineteenth century. There are farms (e.g. Haperton Farm) where the traditional main farmhouse remains even if there have been conversions of outbuildings and barns.

In addition to listed buildings there are three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) at the Avon Gorge, at Ham Green and along the banks of the River Avon and the Severn Estuary. It is important, also to recognize the

contribution of streetscapes. Streets have character and qualities whether listed or not – Edwardian or 20th century housing make their contribution.

Local recognition of the importance of heritage lies with the Crockerne Pill & District History Society and the Abbots Leigh Heritage Group both recording much local material. The importance of history and heritage is fully recognised<sup>36</sup> 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.

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 (see Map 10).

### **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



*Map 10 Abbots Leigh Heritage Area (Manor Road and Church Road)*

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

## 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 & 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.<sup>37</sup>

**9.2** In mid-2019 there were 104 businesses within the Neighbourhood Plan Area,<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup>

**The Eden Business Park** at Ham Green has 43 business sites providing over a thousand jobs and with 320 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 housing a gym.

37 See Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 2, para 3.2

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

39 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

**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 was 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** and **Crockerne Primary School** (over 150 jobs), at **Heywood Family Practice** (30 jobs), at **Avon Fire and Rescue in Pill** (16 jobs), and at **Brackenwood Garden Centre** (30 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.

Food production is also important in the Neighbourhood Area, making use of the open land which the Green Belt helps to protect. With six active farms there is considerable farmland grazed by dairy or meat livestock. The production of vegetable produce (as at the Pill Allotments, the Community Orchard or Leigh Court Farm) play a further – and increasing part. Food grown in individual gardens for local consumption will become more important. When the emphasis is on 'local jobs for local people' the role of food production contributes helpfully to sustainability.

Adding in estimated jobs across the Plan area – 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 1,700. Royal Portbury Dock adds around a further 6,000–7,000.<sup>40</sup>

**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 job opportunities 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. Support for home working – extensions for 'office' use, for example – are to be supported, but our concerns about inappropriate design standards evident in current conversions of huts and barns remain crucial (see 5.9 above). Equally the indiscriminate conversion of commercial properties

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

to residential use can easily result in substandard accommodation.

**9.4** Eden Business Park currently (October 2020) has vacancies, together with some undeveloped land. Local consultation suggested that this might be released for housing. The prospects for the economy are uncertain, but the Steering Group took the view that, whilst opportunities for housing should be kept under review, for the plan period to 2026 releasing employment land was inappropriate. The current North Somerset Core Strategy stresses the importance of safeguarding sites in existing economic use.

With post COVID-19 experience and enjoyment of the countryside and its environment there may be possibilities associated with visitors and eco-tourism. Welcoming visitors on bikes, on foot or on boats for a day trip to enjoy our footpaths and cycle paths, to visit farms, or to enjoy historic gardens would generate educational as well as recreational benefit. There is already a forest school in Abbots Leigh, the creek and marina at Pill might host trips out from Bristol, eco-tourism and agri-tourism might offer local employment opportunities. Initiatives which foster such activities will be supported.

One of the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan is to 'help create the conditions in which businesses can invest and adapt'.<sup>41</sup> 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 job opportunities, 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 supported.

**9.5** 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 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. Shipway Farm) 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 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, but we would wish the economic benefits to be weighed against any traffic, environmental or air quality problems this might cause.

41 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 conversion, extension or improvement of domestic buildings (including digital infrastructure) for home working is supported.

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

Emp 3 Initiatives which create space for local start-up business, working hubs or internet hot-desking are supported.

Emp 4 Initiatives which draw in visitors or tourists and create local job opportunities are supported.

Emp 5 Changes of use outside of use class E would not be supported.

Emp 6 The redevelopment of land and buildings at Orchard View (Ham Green) as a mixed-use development with associated employment generation is supported.

Emp 7 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.

*an Energy Plan together with a range of initiatives which might be taken locally.*

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.

### 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*

To give substance to these declarations, Pill & 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 combating 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 Emergency<sup>42</sup> and we welcome, and will seek to apply locally, the aspirations therein.

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## 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 appropriate<sup>43</sup> (Royal Portbury Dock or the Avon longshore). Any such development needs to be considered in the context of the forthcoming Local Plan

2038. 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.<sup>44</sup>

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,<sup>45</sup> advice and encouragement will be given to householders at all income levels.

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## 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.

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

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

44 See also para 10.6 below

45 Friends of the Earth

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. The example set by the St. George's Flower bank and the Abbots Leigh Verges Group

provide good examples. Encouragement and advice should be given to private landowners (including householders and organisations such as churches, schools, community buildings) to encourage both rewilding and creation of wildflower meadows and provision of suitable habitat to encourage wildlife.

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## 10.4 Food

Steps will be taken to encourage both the local production of food and the sale of food that is produced in the neighbourhood area. The use of farmland for food production demonstrates that the Green Belt has an active economic function as well as environmental and planning functions. Farming - livestock and arable - remains important, but given the threat posed by climate change and other wider influences far beyond the neighbourhood area, the wider encouragement of market gardening and small-scale food production is needed at a more local scale to support our communities' food security. Local retail outlets selling 'weekly shop' food items will be encouraged, so residents are able to do their weekly shop without having to drive to neighbouring larger conurbations.

Encouragement and advice should be given 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 Plan Area. Pill and Easton celebrate 10 years as a FairTrade 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.

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## 10.5 Transport

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.

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## 10.6 Pollution

**Road Traffic Emissions** 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. The main pollutant measured by NSC locally is nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) originating primarily from road traffic emissions. The level of air quality is the third poorest annual level in North Somerset and increases in road traffic emissions should be avoided (see also para 6.8 above).

Pollution is a major concern along the A369, but concerns were expressed in consultation that air pollution levels around the M5 and Junction 19 were severe and that monitoring should be extended to give better coverage. Traffic and transport issues are included within the possible actions being considered by the Bristol Port Company as part of an Air Quality Strategy consultation.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> The Parish Councils' plan to maintain contact with Bristol Port Company on air quality as well as environmental issues.

**Light Pollution** The inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light – can be noted in the Neighbourhood Area. The north-western sky can be seen illuminated by the combined effects of the M5 motorway, the motorway services, the Avon bridge and the port complex, whilst within the Area a number of sports grounds make use of artificial light. While modern LED lamps are energy efficient, they emit light on a broad spectrum. This can disrupt the natural cycles of both wildlife and humans as well as hindering appreciation of views of the night skies. The planning system should seek to influence and control development lighting schemes in order to minimise/reduce light pollution in the neighbourhood plan area.

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## 10.7 Flood Risk<sup>48</sup>

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. We welcome the joint initiative by Bristol city council and the environment agency that

existing defences at Pill need to be upgraded although disappointed that such work may not be required until 2065. We feel that it is essential that river and coastal flood policies and practice are reconsidered in the new North Somerset Local Plan 2038 Measures to reduce flooding risk and minimize storm run-off such as planting trees would be welcome. More locally there is potential for reducing run-off and members of the community should be encouraged to incorporate rainwater harvesting and where possible incorporate permeable surfaces for driveways and gardens.

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

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

48 See National Planning Policy Framework Section 14, paras 155-169; also North Somerset Council Core Strategy CS 3 and Development Management Policy DM 1

## 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 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 3 New development should establish lighting schemes which minimize light pollution where possible.

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

CC 5 Planning applications which incorporate rainwater harvesting and do not increase urban run-off are supported.

CC 6 Initiatives which would benefit from the use of land or buildings for the local production of food are welcome.

CC 7 Initiatives which would benefit from the use of land or buildings for the local production of food are welcome.

## 11 COMMUNITY ASSETS AND FACILITIES

### Primary Objective

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.

### 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 & Easton-in-Gordano and a further eight groups in Abbots Leigh.<sup>49</sup>

In Pill there are women's, men's and mixed organisations addressing a range of age groups. Groups meet for sport and exercise, culture and arts, music and dance, and simply 'getting together' for coffee, tea or lunch. There is strong support for younger children and older people. 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, Arts Festival, Christmas Lights and Pill in Bloom. The long-standing historic churches of the area – Holy Trinity, Christ Church, the Methodist Church, and St. George's play an important part in sustaining community welfare.

<sup>49</sup> Details of community organisations and their use of community buildings is given in an Appendix to Neighbourhood Plan Background Paper 8

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’s Brunch, Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Drinks Party, Festival in the Field, Bonfire Night, and Children’s Christmas Party.

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## 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, Pill 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. Adjoining the Community Centre is Christ Church, also a useful space for local events and meetings. Ideas have emerged about the potential redevelopment of the two buildings and their integration into a smaller church, community centre and café, with some housing fitted into a multi-use community hub. The Parish Church Council and the Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council are asked to investigate any long-term development possibilities.

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## 11.3 Other Community Services:

Several of the pubs, including the Memorial Club, serve meals. There is a café at Brackenwood Garden Centre and Penny Brohn, 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 parts of the Neighbourhood Area where local services are available, 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 & Easton-in-Gordano but no community services in Abbots Leigh other than Holy Trinity Church and the George Inn.

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## 11.4 Communication

There are a variety of channels of communication which support the exchange of information across communities. Both parish councils have notice boards, a web-site, 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



Map 11 Open Spaces: Pill and Easton-in-Gordano



Map 12 Open Spaces: Abbots Leigh

discussion. The windows of the Post Office and the Resource Centre as well as telegraph poles are widely used to post messages. These various media outlets carry parish news, dates and venues of community meetings, and requests for assistance of all kinds. Their regularity and reliability do much to sustain community cohesion.

The digital future will be one that makes full or part-time working from home even more normal than it has become under COVID-19. Social and economic connectivity and digital fibre connection of high quality to home and workplace (FTTP) will continue to be of growing importance. The planning system needs to be fully supportive of the new normal home-based employment.

## 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 biodiversity benefits (see Maps 11 and 12).

### Local Green Space (NSC designated)

**Watchhouse Hill** (with Green Flag status) incorporating the Pill Community Orchard is owned by North Somerset Council and managed by a joint council/community

committee. (10.29 ha); used for recreation and events.

**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. (3.91 ha).

**Hardwick Road** (formally called Yew Tree Gardens) in Easton-in-Gordano is an NSC owned play space and a football pitch. (2.3 ha).

**Crockerne Pill** (often referred to as Waterloo Wharf); a grassed area adjoining the historic pill leading to the River Avon (0.29 ha); used for picnics and events.

**Victoria Park** in Pill running from the precinct to Pill Creek, is jointly owned by North Somerset Council and the Parish Council. (0.221 ha).

**Macrae Road** land north of Macrae Road, Ham Green (1.16 ha.); used for recreation.

### Community Leisure, Recreation and Play Spaces

**Leigh Woods** Forestry England/National Trust open access walking and cycling land including the Avon Gorge SSSI and Paradise Bottom arboretum.

**Priory Fields, including the designated Town Green** lying between Pill and Martcombe is widely used for walking. (designated as a Town Green).

**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 & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council.

**The Pill Foreshore** offers views of the River Avon with a recently improved riverside walking opportunity.

**Jenny's Meadow** An SSSI Grassland and Meadow site close to the Avon belongs to Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council but is managed by a small group of volunteers.

**Court Hay Field**, owned by St. George's Church is the home of St George's Football

Club, with the Pavilion and Scout Hut leased by the Trustees of the Court Hay Trust.

**Easton-in-Gordano cricket club** (located at Martcombe in Easton, and Lodway **cricket club** (in Ham Green),

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 open spaces.<sup>50</sup> 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.

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.<sup>51</sup>

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## 11.6 Play and Recreation

Our survey of community buildings highlighted that whilst there are a number

of facilities which support parents (mainly mothers) and young children, there are gaps

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50 See NPPF para 114 and NPPG para.4.45

51 Subject to NSC Core Strategy CS 27

in what is available to older young people aged 15–25. The Youth Club fills a gap for all youth ages, but it is important that both indoor and outdoor play and recreation space is maintained and enhanced. Play and Recreation are also central to health and wellbeing (para 11.7 below) and offer support to mental health, social inclusion and community cohesion.

The list of Open Spaces (para 11.5 above) includes several sports facilities – Hardwick Road, Court Hay Field and Macrae Road as well as the two cricket grounds at Lodway and Martcombe and it is crucial to leisure and play opportunities for young people that these be retained. Greenspace at Victoria Park, Crockerne Pill, Brookside and Hardwick Road provide further play opportunities for younger children.

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## 11.7 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 and Wellbeing

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.<sup>52</sup> Many of these activities are identified elsewhere in this Plan.

**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, new specialisations and the employment of additional staff. Across the network social prescribers work to assist socially isolated patients in many ways where a healthcare professional is not required thus freeing up valuable time. Three staff offer outreach and contact with isolated patients (e.g. home visits, triage to services). In the same way the network plans to recruit physiotherapists, care co-ordinators and pharmacy technicians working across the network.

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.<sup>53</sup>

### Fire and Rescue

Pill Fire station, one of 21 stations in the Avon Fire and Rescue Service, is in a group

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52 National Association of Local Councils 2019. *Neighbourhood Planning and Community Health and Wellbeing*  
53 See also Chapter 5 Housing and Chapter 8 Economy and Employment

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 a police presence in the area but

no police station 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 is addressed through *Secured by Design*, a national 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.

## 11.8 Social Inclusion

The contribution of such public services is especially crucial in supporting the welfare of vulnerable, protected or sheltered residents. 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. The proposal for a new care home at Ham Green will meet the needs of older local residents both from



Map 13 Pill Precinct

the Neighbourhood Area but also from a wider population catchment across North Somerset. Making it easier to reach and use the Precinct is an important priority.

With some parts of the Neighbourhood Area displaying deprivation levels more severe

than any other parts of North Somerset outside Weston-Super-Mare it is important that planning policies take into account the incidence of social and economic deprivation and address the specific needs of vulnerable and minority groups.

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## 11.9 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 (an NSC Local Green Space) as far as the railway bridge and Mount Pleasant (see Map 13).

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 these advantages, however, the Pill Precinct has long been recognised as needing improvement. Community surveys (at the Pill Rag, through the Daily Pill, via 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. Pedestrians have difficulty in crossing Heywood Road to and from the Precinct,

and local consultation highlighted the need for an additional zebra crossing.

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 establish links 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 future has been explored through a local survey and also by a joint Alliance Homes/parish council/community 'walkabout.'

#### Key issues which 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.
- Opening up Pill Street, and Victoria Park.
- Better signage and local information boards

## 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 listed in 11.5 and shown on Maps 11 and 12 should be protected, maintained and enhanced. Proposals for development thereon should demonstrate that they would not hinder access nor harm amenity value.

CAF 2 Proposals for enhancement of the amenity and accessibility of Improvement Area 4 – the Pill Precinct as shown in Map 13 – 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.

# POSTSCRIPT:

## COVID-19 AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Coronavirus and lockdown inevitably put a temporary halt to the processes of Neighbourhood Plan preparation. Local consultation was extended to five months instead of six weeks. Momentum was lost, delay was a disappointment, and lockdown restrictions inhibited local debate.

Local services – shops, health centre, library, churches, pubs – were closed. Home-schooling replaced in-school education. With home-working the new norm the Eden and Old Brewery Business Parks and the Pill Precinct were quiet. Planning for new developments at Ham Green slowed. Community involvement was very limited.

In contrast the numbers of walkers and cyclists – local residents and visitors escaping Bristol – flourished. Leigh Woods, Watchhouse Hill and other open spaces became even more popular, whilst an overcrowded and unsafe Abbots Pool had to be closed for the summer.

Against these and other pressures the already powerful sense of local community and identity described in Chapter 11 survived and strengthened. Individuals and community organisations came together to offer comfort, support and resources to counter the social isolation and dependency of families in need.

Reflecting on the eight months from March to November 2020 the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has looked back at the original Vision for the Plan (see Chapter 4). This remains appropriate and the range of planning policies and community actions set out throughout the Plan are still fit for purpose. Above all the three key Principles underlying the Plan – Protection and Continuity, Resilience and Change, Cohesion and Collaboration have proved to be more relevant after the months of COVID-19 than they were in March.

Coronavirus has not gone away, but the Neighbourhood Plan sets the scene for development and change over the next six years. It also provides a local baseline against which the local implications of the North Somerset Local Plan 2038 can be assessed and taken forward. Many of the issues raised and proposals suggested in this plan will remain relevant to strategic thinking for the decade beyond 2026, but new challenges will emerge – ever-growing use of the countryside and open space, the cumulative impacts of climate change, reforms of the planning system, the need for both affordable and market housing, growth of Royal Portbury Dock and a possible Freeport. It is against these challenges that we will revisit and update this plan.

*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.*

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# Views from the Footpaths

