

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION STATEMENT

This note is the statement referred to on page 22 of the Consultation Statement which accompanied the Neighbourhood Plan submitted to North Somerset Council.

It was prepared to assure the Parish Councils of Abbots Leigh and Pill and Easton-in-Gordano that the Consultation Statement was accurate in its response to comments from a respondent to the consultation.

It does not form part of the Neighbourhood Plan

**Pill and Easton Parish Council
Abbots Leigh Parish Council**

October 2020

The Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Neighbourhood Plan

Preparation and Process: Response to Local Consultation comments (page 22 of the Consultation Statement)

1 Background on the Community Land Trust and the Neighbourhood Plan.

In early 2016 the Parish Councils of Abbots Leigh and Pill/Easton-in-Gordano set up two joint initiatives – a Community Land Trust (PDCLT) and a Neighbourhood Plan. Both initiatives were a response to housing challenges – the first an awareness of the lack of housing for local people in the area and the second the threat of major housing (1000 dwellings) either at Martcombe or at Chapel Pill (which lies within Abbots Leigh) or possibly both.

PDCLT, supported by both parish councils, was initiated at an open meeting in May 2016 and became formally registered as an independent Community Benefit Society in August 2016. The possibility of conflicts of interest was discussed and all present declared no interest as landowner or having an option on land that might come forward for CLT homes. At a further open meeting (August 2016) a Board was elected with two Abbots Leigh parish councillors and two Pill/Easton Parish Council councillors. A further three Pill Parish Council members joined the Trust as members. A bank account was opened and office bearers appointed.

In late 2016 North Somerset Council undertook a local Housing Survey on behalf of the CLT Board and a need for housing for 90 households was established. An extensive search for sites was commenced and over the next two and a half years PDCLT sought a suitable site and held discussions with ten land owners (documentation of search for sites available). The site at Chapel Pill Lane was chosen, and since then negotiations with the landowner were started (and still continue).

After a submission from the two parish councils a Neighbourhood Plan Area was approved by North Somerset Council in September 2016 after local consultation. Through 2017 and early 2018 background work on the plan was undertaken, consultations took place with community organisations, a Groundwork Locality grant application was submitted and awarded, and consultants were appointed to undertake transport, climate change and environmental studies. All this was presented to the Parish Councils and agreed with them. In 2018 and 2019 Abbots Leigh councillor Murray Stewart acted as a liaison between the parish councils, attended Pill/Easton parish council meetings, and oversaw progress on the Plan (finalisation of background papers, preparation of Exhibition, contact with North Somerset Council). Regular Update Reports were prepared and discussed by the parish councils.

At the end of 2018 it was agreed that a Steering Group should be established to advise on the final stages of plan preparation. In February 2019 Bob Langton (Vice Chair Pill/Easton PC) and Murray Stewart met to discuss membership and terms of reference. In March 2019 an invitation was set out in the Pill Paper inviting anyone interested in becoming part of the Steering Group to come forward. It was important to combine strong parish council presence (Pill PC was the accountable body), to bring relevant skills and experience (Economy, Environment, Housing, Heritage), and to reflect geography (membership from Abbots Leigh, Ham Green, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano). Potential members were approached and in May 2017 the parish councils agreed membership and terms of reference. Later in May the first meeting was held. The Steering Group requested a wider gender balance and confirmed its role and terms of reference. Given their importance in consideration of Pill Precinct, an Alliance Homes presence was sought for the Steering Group. Papers for, and minutes from, this and later meetings in September and November 2019 and in January 2020 and October are available.

In relation to specific proposals for development, PDCLT has gone through well documented procedures involving the landowner and Alliance Homes in order to take forward the Chapel Pill Lane site. The landowner of Orchard View was invited to give a presentation (January 2020) to the Pill/Easton Parish Council setting out his proposals in more detail.

With regard to communication, the Chapel Pill Lane project was not made public by PDCLT whilst negotiations with the landowner were in progress. Communication from the Steering Group could have been wider and better. Steering Group members could have spread news about activities relating to the Plan. Nevertheless, as the Consultation Statement records there were extensive discussions, meetings and workshops involving both individuals and local groups. The specific choice of a potential site at Chapel Pill Lane was known to local people in March 2019 (a letter from Penny Brohn explicitly made comments on the Chapel Pill site). The Plan was discussed with local residents attending the autumn 2019 Exhibition, and was visited on several occasions by local MP Liam Fox. The site was included in the draft Plan issued for consultation in March 2020.,

Comments from the respondent and Neighbourhood Plan Team Responses

(a) Landowners

Comment: 29/8/20 para 1.3 *extensive planning pre-application background discussions have taken place with landowners and prospective developers leading to closed development proposals and conclusions*

Response: The regulations relating to Neighbourhood Planning require consultation with local businesses including landowners/developers. They were thus included in the consultations/meetings of both the Land Trust and the Neighbourhood Plan. The alternative sites examined by the Community Land Trust are listed in the Neighbourhood Plan.

(b) Recruitment of Steering Group members

Comment: 20/8/20 para 2.1 *Steering Group members have been appointed by parish councillors and not through an open transparent recruitment exercise aimed at securing the involvement of individuals contributing plan-shaping proposals in their own right .and not as representatives of organisation.*

Response: Following a PC meeting where the establishment of a Steering Group was noted a meeting between between BL and MS was held. A public invitation in the Pill Paper invited involvement. It was also important and appropriate to engage with stakeholders (e.g. Alliance Homes as owner/manager of Pill Precinct). SG members were invited by skill/experience. They came from different parts of the Neighbourhood Lan Area but were not representatives.

(c) Plan Co-ordinator

Comment: 20/8/20 Para 2.2 *the locally appointed Plan Coordinator who has connections to the Pill and District Community Land Trust should....not be a member of the Steering Group but should report to and take direction from it.*

Response: Professor Stewart brought relevant skills/experience, and as an elected councillor in the Neighbourhood Plan Area offered voluntary liaison/co-ordination. He reported regularly to the SG and the Parish Councils and followed its advice and instructions.

(d) Social Geography.

Comment: 2/9/20 paras 1.1 -1.2in order to demonstrate conformity with the development of the North Somerset Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan should be withdrawn and a fresh plan substituted and consulted upon to run in parallel with which the Local Plan. Moreover, for the reasons stated above, the opportunity should be taken to consider re-drawing the plan area to omit Abbots Leigh with which Pill and Easton in Gordano have little in common as village settlements, the one entirely rural the other semirural with significant urban characteristics, except sharing Green Belt and the A369 main route to Bristol. An alternative proposal should consider preparing a joint Neighbourhood Plan with Portbury which has similar socio-economic characteristics and a shared interest in the Royal Portbury Dock and M5 Junction 19/Gordano Services major infrastructure installations.

Response The Neighbourhood Plan Area was approved by North Somerset Council after public consultation.

(e) Protecting Abbots Leigh

Comment 2/9/20 para 1.3questions of whether this is a coherent neighbourhood plan, that is genuinely representative of a single like-minded community sharing a common purpose, or whether it is a contrived bringing together of two distinctly separate parishes each with quite different aims and objectives for what they hope the plan will deliver for the communities they serve..... This comes through strongly in the stated intention to establish a designated for planning purposes Conservation Area and Settlement Boundary along the lines of the historic village fence in Abbots Leigh, in order to ringfence the village from the possibility of unwanted housing development, whilst making a strong case for the Pill Settlement Boundary to be redrawn and for exceptions to be made from existing Green Belt policy to permit further development and mixed use redevelopment at Ham Green in an attempt to avoid major development elsewhere. In summary, viewed from this perspective, it can be concluded that the plan is not well made but is more concerned with protecting the village of Abbots Leigh from development than it has to do with facilitating sustainable development elsewhere within the plan area.

Response: The two parishes have many common interests as set out in the Neighbourhood Plan Section 1.1 and have worked in collaboration. The longer-term Plan Scenario for 2038 involves the provision of housing in Abbots Leigh. The Neighbourhood Plan makes reference to the possible establishment of settlement boundaries for Abbots Leigh, but makes no mention of the 'Village Fence'

(f) Timescale

Comment: 2/9/20 para 2.1the Neighbourhood Plan 2020-26 will only have a five year period left to run, whereas the North Somerset Local Plan 2038, on which it relies and with which it has to demonstrate conformity for the exceptions it seeks, is only at the plan-shaping public consultation stage of early development that will not be approved until at least 2-3 years after the Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2026 itself has been approved.

Response: The Neighbourhood Plan relies on conformity with the existing North Somerset Local Plan 2017. There are only six years to 2026 but SG felt it important to generate proposals given that developers were proposing major housing numbers. The Plan was submitted 2/11/20 and is likely to be helpful in framing a response.

(g) The National Planning Policy Framework

Comment: 2/9/20 para 2.3 The rest of the plan in terms of its longer-term soft aspirations - community, heritage, environment, climate change etc - is fine, but these are aims and

objectives that one would expect to accompany plans of this kind in respecting the National Planning Policy Framework.

Response: As is required by the Regulations, the Plan (Basic Conditions Statement) explicitly sets out the ways in which all Plan policies conform to the NPPF.

(h) David Gillespie

Comment 12/9/20 para 6 *.....these decisions attempt to confer a significant planning advantage to both David Gillespie, the developer of Orchard View/Somerset Lodge (the latter occupied by short term social housing rentals and not unoccupied except for a caretaker as incorrectly stated in the Plan), and the landowner of the Chapel Pill Lane/Hayes Mayes Lane Green Belt exception site.*

Response: Inviting DG to explain his ideas to the Parish Council ensured that the idea was given close attention and made him accountable for the proposals. Similarly the land owner was consulted on Chapel Pill Lane, and earlier links with land owners/developers are reported in Section 5.6 of the Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan inevitably gives some early information to those whose land is under consideration for development but does not preclude all the standard planning application processes

(i) Celia Dring

Comment: 12/9/20 Para 7 *Celia Dring the Principal Planning Officer ...has directed some of the Plan content, e.g. the identification of two development sites, who it appears may have become too close to the Plan making process and should, for that reason, take direction from her head of profession at North Somerset Council.*

Response: CD is the nominated NSC liaison officer responsible for neighbourhood plans. She has a duty to support the local community in plan preparation (and is explicitly thanked for her support). She provided advice as the plan progressed but did not direct any of its content or directed the identification of development sites.

(j) Alison Needler

Comment: 12/9/20 Para 8-9 *I should not allow to pass unremarked the position of Alison Needler, the community representative for Ham Green, who, having attended the Steering Group meeting of 26th September, is then reported in the minutes of the Steering Group meeting of 26th November 2019 as having resigned. No explanation for that resignation is given: whether it was for purely personal reasons unconnected with the Steering Group; whether she felt that her voice was not being heard in speaking up for those Ham Green residents objecting to any new development adjacent to St Katherine's Park; or whether, because of a sharp disagreement with the Steering Group over these issues and the proposals for the two development sites, she was invited to stand down.....Moreover, there appears to have been no subsequent discussion of the need to consider appointing a replacement for Alison which does beg the question of whether this was a deliberate decision not recorded in the minutes of the 26th November 2019 and 14th January 2020 Steering Group meetings in order to avoid any direct representation of Ham Green residents on the Steering Group where they would have had a voice in continuing to oppose or modify the two development proposals. This is a serious oversight which should be corrected, the Steering Group not having completed its work or input to the plan-making process.*

Response: Steering Group members were not representatives. AN had a personal reason for resigning from SG (work). There no disagreements between her and the SG, she was not asked to resign. She was replaced by Lucy Byrne - a Ham Green resident.