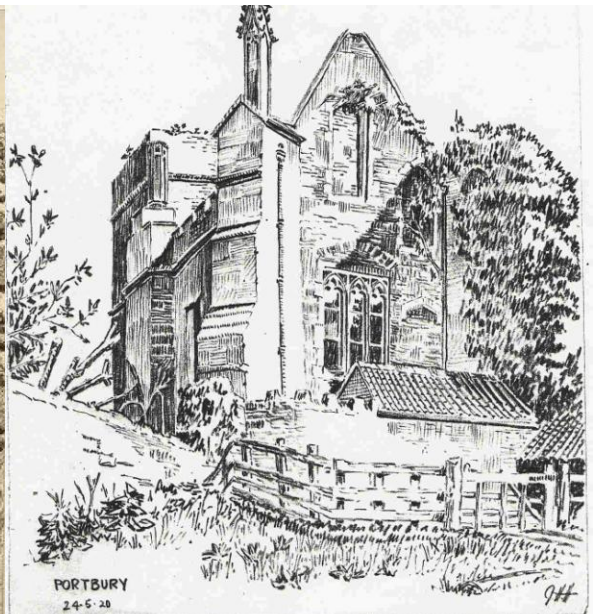




Portbury Parish – Neighbourhood Plan
2015 – 2035



Introduction by Mike Phipps – current Chairman of Portbury Parish Council



Please read the following Parish Plan draft concentrating in particular on sections 8 onwards. We have drawn on the parish questionnaire referred to in the plan to give us a starting point, please recognise that this is a DRAFT plan therefore and we want your views to get it right. There will be errors and omissions in this first draft of the plan as it has been written so far by volunteers in their own time. Any such errors and omissions are not intentional and we will correct anything that is brought to our attention during consultation on the plan. Consultation on the plan will take up to a year; we will break it down into key parts and offer the opportunity for a focussed discussion to anyone who wishes to contribute. Details of this will follow.

I hope you will appreciate what we are trying to achieve for the village and maybe also that this document will provide new information to you about the place where you live.

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Foreword by Peter Cooke
Immediate past Chair of Portbury Parish Council

It is vitally important that Portbury Parish develops a Community Plan which serves the Parishioners. For a long time elected Councils have operated with the best of intentions for the residents, whilst not knowing specifically what their electorate wanted them to do. This developing document provides a long term and consistent framework for the development of all services on which the villagers depend. It will also give the Council a mandate for dealing with external influences that affect the village from time to time.

This plan has been a long time in the making, and more time is still needed to make it functional and practical. Nevertheless we have already been able to establish a clear framework for the future which will help all both current and future elected Councillors to work effectively.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Cooke', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Peter Cooke
January 2015

1.0 What and why? - to be written

2.0 A Vision for Portbury

Portbury has been an important centre in the Shire of Somerset since Saxon times, being the principle settlement in the “Portbury Hundred”. In the years since that time the Village has been somewhat eclipsed by the growth of other residential and commercial centres. It is the hope of the residents of the Parish of Portbury that this plan will help the present day Portbury to retain its semi-rural, separate village character whilst promoting community facilities and sustainable development. We want Portbury to continue to be a “special” place to live and visit.

3.0 How it was Prepared

The initial source of information that initiated this plan was been a questionnaire circulated to the whole Parish in 2013. This exercise was based upon work carried during 2007 by the Parish Council and was accelerated during 2012 when responding to the challenge created by the Hinkley C Connection project. Copies of the questionnaire and the response data are given in Appendix 1.

This returned questionnaires identified a number of key “themes” that were identified as highest priority from the responses received. These themes, summarised in Table 1, have since been the subject of further definition and refinement through focussed consultation over a period of 12 months during 2016 to 2017. Views received from the Parish have been collated and incorporated into this version of the plan.

Alongside the information collected from residents the Parish Council has examined landscape objectives highlighted by the Landscape Character Assessment of North Somerset¹ carried out in 2005. The objectives for the 3 principle landscape areas that cover Portbury Parish have been extracted from this document and set out in Appendix 2. This document is also supported by an individual Landscape Character Assessment for Portbury Parish, Appendix 3, which sets out more specifically the character of the distinct zones within the Parish.

Experience from the Hinkley C Connection Project has played a significant part in helping the Parish Council to formalise its landscape objectives for the Parish. The onset of this project highlighted risk and vulnerability from development outside the control of the Parish and its residents and gave momentum to the need to generate an overarching vision and plan for the Parish. Much of the source documentation used in generating this plan was therefore created in the period 2012 to 2015. Whilst it is still felt that this data is relevant to today, it must be accepted that there has already been a degree of “change” since then, especially in relation to the publication of the Strategic Plan for North Somerset and the housing allocations that have arisen from that.

4.0 History of the Parish

Portbury's history can be traced back to Saxon times and beyond since it occupied a strategic position on the edge of the Severn Estuary, close to the water's edge in days when sea levels were higher. A Saxon Hundred was centred on Portbury and became the home of the Berkeley family who had close ties with Henry II.

Conygar Hill, an Iron Age fortification, gives some physical evidence of the strategic importance of the area. The magnificent 12th Century Church is further evidence of the wealth that may have existed here in mediaeval times.

Whilst there is not a wealth of recorded history of major events in the area, residents of the Parish have always been enthusiastic to know as much as possible about the heritage around them. A local group was formed in the 1980's to record and preserve physical material and folk lore concerning Portbury. That group has assembled a significant archive of material that now exists in a study room located within St Mary's Church. Additionally there is a specific Social Media Group that shares newly acquired information amongst the residents who use this technology. Much new material has been collected from this source over recent years.

The most obvious remaining feature of local heritage lies within the landscape and buildings that go to make up the Parish. There are several listed buildings within the Parish which give a glimpse of the heritage that lies beneath the surface. The layout of the few roads in the Parish echoes an older time when Portbury was on a major route from Bristol to the Port of Portishead. The connection to Clapton in Gordano via Caswell Lane echoes the time when the Gordano Valley would flood, making the route via "the Sheepway" impassable.

The creation of the Heritage Room at the Church has been a major achievement for the Parish, carried forward by a very small team of volunteers. More could be done to bring out a more obvious reflection of the heritage of Portbury by thinking about the streetscape of the main residential areas and using street furniture to tell some of the story.

It is difficult to deduce an accurate picture of the population in Portbury until the arrival of the census in 1841. Even then there is no accumulated figure for the numbers living in the Village and surrounding area. What we do know is that agriculture dominated the whole of the period up until 1841 and beyond. The population would have numbered in the small hundreds, there being little evidence large areas of housing outside of the main village, stretching along the roads to Portishead. 1892 saw the creation of the current Village Hall, donated by a local philanthropist, indicating a thriving is sparse community. Even in 1911 the

census records show a very sparsely populated area, albeit supporting both a significant Inn and a railway station, closed in 1963.

The 1960's saw a major expansion of the village with the creation of much of the housing that we see today. Priory Road and Walk, Forge End, Mill Close, Hillside and Brittan Place were all created at that time. Development continued over several phases into the 1970's with each phase having differing characteristics of design, although in each case multiple houses of similar style and size were clustered together. Post 1980 development is much more piecemeal, with houses built singly or in pairs as "infill" on sites within the established village settlement boundary.

The population of Portbury has changed little since this development in the 1960's and 70's. A total of 827 people were recorded as resident in Portbury at the 2011 census, occupying approximately 450 dwellings. The gender mix is approximately 50/50 with 67% of the age group 16 to 74 being economically active. The age group up to 15 represents about 20% of the population, those over 65 representing 24%.

In 2001, with changes in the strategic plan for North Somerset, Portbury became an entirely "green belt" area, with the settlement boundary being abolished. Development in the Parish since that time has been almost exclusively to transform redundant or derelict buildings into residences, or to simply extend existing properties.

5.0 Area Covered by the Plan

The area covered by the plan is the Parish of Portbury, as shown in Map 1. The boundary of the Parish is shown in red. Whilst this area includes Royal Portbury Dock, part of the estate of the Bristol Port Company, the Parish Council recognises that within the agreed operational area of the docks specific policies exist that protect the strategic importance of this business.

6.0 Duration of the Plan

It is intended that the plan covers a 20 year period, which is considered appropriate given the general stability envisaged for the Village. Within this timescale it is unlikely that any proposed changes in green belt areas will come forward, the bulk of the housing need for the North Somerset District being allocated to currently available land and sites. Should circumstances change the plan can be updated and developed according to any new challenges that arise.

7.0 Portbury Today

7.1 Population

Portbury has changed little since the period of its greatest development activity in the 1960's and 70's which saw the parish population grow to over 800. There is a

suggestion of a slight population decline in recent years as the census returns for 2001 show a population of 830, whilst in 2011 it is recorded as 827. Over this same period there was a slight increase in housing stock and thus one would expect to see a rise in population not a fall, however small. This effect is not uncommon in North Somerset villages that have seen little or no development, the decline being a combination of reducing birth rate, population mobility and in part the absence of affordable homes for both children of current residents and those wishing to downsize in later life.

7.2 Business and Employment

Agriculture has been in general decline over the Parish in part due to the fact that very little good quality land exists. The former Elm Tree Farm land has been either acquired for commercial use, Royal Portbury Docks and Elm Tree Industrial Estate, or converted for housing, Elm Tree Park and Elm Tree Farmhouse. Grounds formerly under the control of Portbury Priory have also been converted for mixed commercial and residential use. Consequently employment available within the Parish has now changed from primarily agriculture to commercial. Royal Portbury Dock, part of the Bristol Port Company, provides an important and significant source of employment within easy access to residents. Other small businesses exist which provide specialised service, eg Dog Kennels, these are situated within areas where sufficient land exists for the business to operate in tandem with residential use. The Village Shop and Post Office closed in the 1990's after several changes in ownership. There is a strong desire for the return of such a business, but in parallel there are doubts about its potential sustainability

7.3 Landscape

Portbury Parish sits within three differing characteristic areas, Clapton Moor, Portbury Settled Coastal edge and Abbots Leigh Sandstone Uplands. These areas differ both in look and feel and in terms of the assessed condition of the landscape. Clapton Moor is seen as being in generally good condition, and can be kept so by a careful and sensitive overarching strategy. Portbury Coastal Settled edge by contrast is seen to be in decline as hedgerows and other natural features cease to be maintained due to a decline in active agriculture. Here a more considered strategy is needed to manage continued pressure from changes in land ownership and usage. Abbots Leigh Uplands is also seen as being in good condition but with dry stone wall features being in decline. Proliferation of clutter and signage associated with development is seen as a pressure, much of which arises from the busy linking roads that run through this area.

The whole Parish is rural in underlying character, containing both "Village" based settlement in its main centre, "Hamlet" style along the Sheepway and Caswell Lane and dispersed/isolated dwellings along Portbury Lane.

7.4 Neighbourhood Characteristics

The Parish has 4 distinct settlement areas which have differing characteristics and needs.

7.4.1 The Main Village

It is here that the main concentration of parish population is situated, in and around the Village Green. Housing still follows the line of the main historic through roads, High Street, Mill Lane and Caswell Lane, echoing the long established form of the village determined by the natural topography. Station Road no longer continues towards Portishead, the M5 having severed this link in the 1970's, but a footpath still connects the main Village to the area known as Sheepway.

Residents of this area identify themselves as a distinct community with local services such as the School, Church, Village Hall and The Priory Public House giving them a range of activities on offer that is "on their doorstep".

Sensitive urban layout created largely in the 1960's has given over 75% of the properties in the Village an open aspect to either their rear or front and in many cases both. In general more modern houses are set back from the road, with gardens. Some older properties remain which have a frontage directly on the street, Mill Lane in particular. Whilst the M5 causes noise intrusion due to its proximity to Priory Road, North side, it is well screened by trees and does not cause a feeling of being overlooked other than at the pinch point near to the footbridge. Consequently residents in the Village, in the main, benefit from the feeling of being within a clearly semi-rural setting whilst gaining benefits from being close to the larger urban centres of Portishead and Bristol.

7.3.2 Sheepway

The Sheepway has become the name of the continuation of the old Bristol or Station Road that formerly ran from Martcombe Road across the wetland to Portishead. This name is also used as a "collective" name for the housing that stretches from the first houses across the railway bridge, Cole Acre and Station House, all the way to Tarr Bridge near to Portishead. The housing here hugs the road in typical ribbon development form and there is a wide variety of styles and ages of building including one grade 2 listed former farmhouse and one thatched cottage, also grade 2 listed. "Sheepway" has a distinctly rural feel as the road meanders its way to Portishead, narrowing to only one car's width in places. At the limit of the Parish, now within a small urban development of "Moor Gate", stands a further listed building, Moor Farmhouse. Solitude is somewhat disturbed by the fact that motorists from eastern Portishead use the route a cut through to the A369 when the volume of traffic is greatest.

Living in Sheepway is a very different proposition from the Main Village. Upon leaving the A369 and crossing the old railway bridge the change in environment is almost immediate. As the noise of the M5 disappears the streetscape and landscape changes; at first the feel of the area is that of a "Hamlet". To the west

landscape forms part of Clapton Moor with the Sheepway “lane” being the boundary with the Portbury Settled Coastal Edge. The landscape is very open with the M5 and Portbury itself well screened from view. At street level one is not aware of the proximity of the docks to the East as this is well screened by established woodland planting. At night there is a high contrast with the Village in that no street lighting exists until Portishead is reached. Further along Sheepway the housing becomes sparse. This helps to make Sheepway feel distinctively separate and rural in its character. There are houses at the west end of Sheepway that form part of the eastern Portishead development. The “Ashlands” development is within Portbury Parish and is relatively separate in nature but its feel owes more to being part of east Portishead rather than being a “Hamlet” in its own right. When this point is reached, near Moor Gate Farmhouse, the feeling of rural lane changes and at the junction with the A369 at Portbury Common the density of housing clearly signals the arrival of the Town development of Portishead.

Sheepway has no distinct central focal point and people living here would need to travel some distance to gain access to facilities such as those offered in the main Village. Residences situated towards around Moor Gate and Tarr Bridge feeling the most dissociated with Portbury Village.

Although constantly under pressure from the pressures of land usage changes and the continuing development of Royal Portbury Dock, the wildlife in and around Sheepway is very rich and supports a wide variety of species. The dark corridor that connects the Gordano Valley hinterland to the Severn Estuary is wide, and embraces Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve and virtually all of Sheepway. This dark corridor underpins the ability of the landscape in this area to support a wide variety of fauna.

7.3.3 Caswell Lane

Running along Caswell lane towards neighbouring village of Clapton-in-Gordano is another distinct area of Portbury. The housing here also follows a ribbon style of development along what was the old high “winter road” to Portishead, avoiding the marshy area in the bottom of the valley. There is physical separation from the main village by virtue of the 1km distance to the first established housing at Caswell Hill and Caswell Cross Farm, and a further listed building, Lower Caswell House. These properties are isolated both from Portbury and the continuation of residential development to the west of this point. Beyond Caswell Cross most of the property is situated on the higher ground to the South of Caswell Lane, the land generally falling away to the North. This area sits just below the Tickenham Ridge landscape feature and above Clapton Moor.

Travelling along Caswell lane, there is again a very clear rural feel with farm property often being situated right on the road frontage. After Caswell Cross properties are generally contiguous, with few intervening gaps, but their setting makes them feel sparse until Redding Cottages are reached. This is the limit of

the Parish. Beyond this point the sparse feeling continues until the junction with Naish Hill where the streetscape feels more physically joined to Clapton village. Portbury residents along this lane here have therefore perhaps only a weak link with Portbury as they are almost certain to look westwards towards Portishead in search of local services. Like the Sheepway there is a wide variety of housing ages and style, Lower Caswell House being the only listed building in the area, grade II. Caswell lane also suffers traffic flows from Portishead motorists seeking to avoid traffic congestion on the Portbury Hundred road. This is however attenuated by the sheer length of this route from Naish Hill in Clapton and its extreme narrowness in several places.

7.3.3 Mill Lane/Portbury Lane

Finally there are a small number of properties that lie along Mill Lane/Portbury Lane running north towards Failand. This area also includes properties that lie along Failand lane, running up toward the hamlet of Lower Failand and Saint Bartholomew's Church. This route is a main connection to the B3128 Clevedon to Bristol road, affording an important link to the M5. Traffic flow is very heavy here at peak periods and calming measures have been necessary to help reduce the number of accidents near to Racecourse Farm. Beyond the edge of the main village settlement houses are very few in number, many being in isolated positions and set back from the main road. The character of the area is sparse, with dispersed dwellings. The primary feel of this area is that of rolling upland with high density woodland framing the lane between Oakham Farm and the limit of the Parish near to Limekiln Plantation. On Old Failand Lane properties are set back and screened from the road in most cases adding to the feel of sparseness. The narrowness of the lane coupled with the height of hedges and fields bordering the road make this lane feel very remote, and not at all like an area just outside a major urban conurbation.

Residences in this area are very self-contained, and their distance from either Portbury Village or Failand to the South weakens their linkage with these communities.

7.4 Recreation.

There are several recreational opportunities in different areas of the parish some ranging from public open spaces to commercially run tourist facilities.

The key recreational features are;

Commercial and organisations

The Priory Inn

Oakham Treasures

Gordano Services

Gordano Sharks rugby club

Public spaces

The Village Green

The Playing Field – (leased from Newcombe Estates)
Priors Wood – (Avon Wildlife Trust)
Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve

Village Assets
The Village Hall and Social Club
Station Road allotments

Other assets
Elm tree allotments
Sheepway fishing lakes – currently disused

In the surrounding countryside there is a wealth of interlinking footpaths including a section of the 26 mile long circular Gordano trail.

7.5 Commercial Enterprises

There are a number of commercial activities which offer employment and business opportunities within the parish. In addition there is the presence of Royal Portbury dock which has a number of businesses operating from within its estate.

The main business activities are
Elm Tree Park industrial units
J. Higgins – industrial units various
The Priory Inn – Pub/Restaurant
Portbury Service Station – garage services
Oakham Treasures – museum and coffee shop
Copper Beech Farm – kennels
Cole Acre - kennels
Shipway Meats – local butcher

8.0 Background to the Development of the Plan

With encouragement from North Somerset Council Portbury Parish Council have been preparing the ground for a Community Plan to mesh with the developing Core Strategy work on the whole Region. Whilst the drivers of the need for such a plan do not principally derive from the likelihood of major development within the Parish, the Council decided, in 2007, to develop a living document that would provide current and future Councillors a means by which a continuity of thinking could be applied to the variety of issues that arise within the Village.

In 2011, following much discussion within the Council and at Annual Parish meetings, it was decided to develop a questionnaire to assemble overall views of the residents of Portbury on the sub-set of issues contained within this developing plan. In order to assist in the formulation of the questions for this exercise the Council developed a set of Strategic Objectives that formalised the

strategy that had been followed implicitly for many years, see appendix 1. In 2013 a final questionnaire was distributed within the whole Parish from which specific feedback has now been taken to feed into this plan, see appendix 2.

Some 450 questionnaires were delivered, one per household, and 116 have been returned, representing 25% of households and 16% of residents over 16. The level of response at this stage is considered to be adequately representative to proceed to the next stage of a draft plan for wider consultation.

9.0 Key Objective Areas

The subject areas of the plan that have been developed from the 2010 questionnaire and further discussion within the Village are;

1. Invigorating and sustaining the local community
2. Protecting and Enhancing our Local Environment
3. Transport
4. Supporting Local Housing Needs
5. Preserve and Protect the Heritage and History of Portbury
6. Preserve and Protect the Parish's best and most versatile Agricultural Land
7. Preserve and Protect the diverse range of Flora and Fauna throughout the Parish

Each of these areas has generated a set of sub objectives that are set out separately in the ensuing sections.

10.0 Invigorating and Sustaining a Local Community

10.1 Background

Portbury is a very small Parish with limited resources to be able to sustain, let alone develop its community facilities. The Village is blessed with a Community Hall, given initially by a local philanthropist in 1892, which is used extensively by local residents, user groups and visitors for a variety of pursuits. A Not for Profit Limited Company owns and operates the building and endeavours to ensure that the ageing building remains as fit for purpose as is practicable and that the cost of using the building is within the reach of voluntary organisations that provide activities for residents.

10.2 The Village Hall and Community Facilities

A key constraint of the current building is the lack of perimeter land within the title of the Village Hall. This offers no scope for car parking, with one disabled bay being the total extent of parking offered. Additionally the access to the side entrance of the Hall is shared with a local Garage Service Business, which itself generates demand for significant numbers of cars. The requirement to keep free the access to the field North of the Hall is constantly breached and this situation is not sustainable. The inadequacy of the current land title is a significant drawback to the potential use of the Hall for large events, e.g. wedding functions, and thus limits the income that can be gained from such activities. Whilst the current Business Tenant at Portbury Service Station appears to be financially successful, if land owners imposed their right to have free access to the field adjacent to the Hall then the business's ability to service customers would be totally compromised. This makes the future sale or leasing of the business very challenging.

The area to the South of the Hall is prone to flood when excessive rainwater runoff flows down Mill Lane into the Village. There is a well under the Village Hall floor, a relic of the past brew house on the site, and this is just about the lowest point in the whole area. As a consequence if the High Street does become flooded at the bottom of Mill Lane then the Village Hall will also inevitably be flooded at the same time.

In order to make a significant change to the economic prospects for sustainability of the Hall and the neighbouring garage business, Portbury Service Station, an area surrounding the Hall, to the North and East needs to be reserved and developed for the following purposes.

- a) Car Parking for up to 40 cars for the Hall
- b) Car Parking and improved access to Portbury Service Station
- c) Storage space for the Hall for refuse etc.
- d) A balancing pond to deal with flood water from Mill Lane
- e) A recreation area based around the pond including children's play area and equipment and a public barbecue facility.
- f) A site or extension space earmarked for the provision of a Village Shop

11.0 Protecting and Enhancing our Local Environment

11.1 Background.

Portbury is a semi-rural village and has a distinct boundary and street pattern that reflects its development over centuries. To the East and North are the M5 and Royal Portbury Dock which have already had a significant and detrimental effect upon the environment within the village. The whole of the Parish sits within the Green Belt and as such special circumstances must be brought forward prior to any consideration for development. This did not however prevent a recent planning application, by National Grid, for the routing of large 400kV electricity pylons through the Village adjacent to the current pedestrian bridge over the M5 and Portbury Hundred Road (A369).

Portbury has developed since the early 1800's much in the way that other villages in Somerset did. Standing on the main route from Portishead to Bristol most of the original housing followed the alignment of the road, with little infill behind. There was also a winter road, via Clapton in Gordano, and again houses follow this alignment closely. Development in the 1960's and 70's has altered this pattern to a degree, but the same basic topography is clearly visible today, despite the cutting of Station Road by the M5. There is a mix of architectural styles, the Church dating back to the 12th Century, the Old Priory also to the 12th and many to the 19th Century. Larger, more substantial buildings are set further back from the street front, and the few 3 storey buildings are either institutional in form or are deliberately placed against a hillside background in order to provide an appropriate setting. (ref landscape appraisal)

Portbury has worked successfully for many years with the Bristol Port Authority in order to minimise the impacts that development might have upon the amenity of all Parish residents. In 2007 the Local Replacement plan defined a zone that established a specific area, to the South of the Portbury Dock complex, adjacent to the A369, which remained in the Green Belt. This provides an important buffer between the Dock Estate and residents of Portbury, and Sheepway, such that inappropriate visual impacts will not appear on the skyline and streetscape of the principle areas of the settlement.

11.2 Protecting the Skyline

In order to continue to protect the boundary between the Portbury Dock Estate and the Village, this agreed buffer zone should be established by formal planning policy.

11.3 Land Use

The vast majority of undeveloped land within the Parish of Portbury remains in agricultural use. Significant plots have been given over to equine use and whilst this is a welcome alternative to land falling into disuse, there is a limit to the amount of such activity that the area can offer without undermining the underlying agricultural (farming) character of the area.

11.4 The Village Green

A key asset in the public realm of Portbury is the Green in the centre of the main village. This was established during the period of development in the 1960's, the land being gifted to the Village at that point. The Parish Council is in the midst of a project to improve the Green to give it more visual impact and to renovate and develop the War Memorial at the South Western corner. There is an active project which is exploring the possible relocation of the plaque of names commemorating those who served and died in the world wars so that it faces the Green. This would both serve to provide more visual impact and also allow services to be carried out without interference from traffic. New artwork would also be sought to give the memorial a higher visual impact, this could be placed

on the current rear of the memorial if the plaque of names remains where it is currently located.

The overall scheme for the Green will be to elevate and improve the current path which bisects it, with perhaps some feature incorporated into the surface at the centre point. Planting is envisaged on the boundaries of the Green, seating will also be provided to all sides. There is demand for a “toddlers” play area, none existing anywhere else in the Village at the present time. The North Eastern corner of the Green is a possible location for this as it sits on the junction of 2 footpaths and is at the lowest point of the Green, thus being little used for ball games. There is one magnificent Lime Tree at the centre of the Northern edge of the Green; it is envisaged that there will be strategic planting of other ornamental trees on each side of the Green to complement the border planting that is envisaged.

This whole project is fundamental to creating a social gathering space in the centre of the main village.

11.4 The Playing Field

In the 1960's the developer of Portbury Village, Newcombe Estates, leased a patch of land adjacent to the M5 and the Church to the Parish Council for use as a playing field. This facility is well used by recreational walkers as a link route to the Church and other paths, dog walkers, the local Rugby Club, and children who use the play equipment installed by the Village at the Western end nearest to Priory Road.

The long term future of this area should be secured as a playing field by its designation as “local green space”.

11.5 Towards a more cohesive and contiguous urban form

The Church and School remain somewhat separate from the population centre of the Village which detracts from the overall cohesiveness and sense of belonging. Additionally the journey to school for parents and children follows the main road which is a very busy artery to the M5 for commuters in the morning and evenings. To approach the school from Priory Road via the playing field is not viable as this would mean negotiating fields which are unavoidably muddy in the winter.

Once an area around the Village Hall is established, as set out in 8.2 above, the opportunity then exists to create a much shorter and direct route from this area to the School. This would also provide a second direct link from the High Street to the playing field.

11.6 Recreational Facilities

It is important to ensure that recreational facilities in the Parish are supported to ensure their long term sustainability. Whilst this does not mean that expansion of current facilities or creation of new ones will be automatically supported, where

there is a clear local benefit that can be demonstrated then the plan is likely to encourage such development.

11.7 Housing

Population figures tend to suggest a slight real terms decline in population over a 20 year period to 2011. The reasons for this are complex and not fully researched or understood. The little data that is available shows that the number of children in the village is declining and also some residents have moved away in order to downsize in retirement. Portbury has a marginally "older" age profile than the average in North Somerset, a trend which is set to continue given the low turnover rate in housing.

There was evidence in the 2013 questionnaire that a minority of people desired there to be a wider range of affordable housing in Portbury, at the moment there is no opportunity to address this issue.

12.0 Transport & Traffic

Portbury is totally dependent on travel to be able to access virtually all essential services. The typical walking travel distance from Portbury main village to the nearest bus stop for regular commuter services in and out of Bristol is 0.3miles (Portbury Station) to 0.5miles (Martcombe Road). This is at the higher end of the desirable range for comfortable travel distance for commuting and weighs against the likelihood of people using public transport for shopping. The nearest shop for supply of groceries is a walking distance of 2.6 miles, to Portishead. As a consequence Portbury is highly dependent upon the motor car, borne out by the 2013 questionnaire which showed that 90% of working people travel to work by car. Furthermore more than 50% of households are in possession of 2 or more cars. The above situation creates a strong link between transport and traffic issues for villagers.

Given therefore the number of private cars already owned in Portbury it is not surprising to find that parking congestion is an issue for residents. The majority of houses in the Village have only one garage and little drive space for a second car. Additionally many commuters from other parts of the region park in and around Portbury in order to car share for commuting within the region, some cars being parked in the village from Monday morning until Friday evening. Overspill parking for the Priory Hotel inevitably also causes congestion within the streetscape; apart from local clientele all visitors to the Priory arrive by car.

As a result of the number of parked cars Portbury main village has therefore a very congested feel to it through most of the working week and into the weekends, especially where there are no footpaths. During times when there are local events taking place, Rugby matches at Gordano Sharks, junior rugby matches at the playing field, visitors to Priors Wood - especially during May, events at the Village Hall etc, the congestion is even more evident and to such an extent that illegal, hazardous parking occurs.

Whilst it is not realistic to be able to solve all of these problems, there are a number of policy steps that could help keep the situation stable whilst looking for longer term opportunities for change. Firstly the Parish Council recommends that no garage conversion should be allowed unless this is accompanied by the building of a replacement. In terms of design standards then for any new roads a carriageway width of 5.5m is required to allow for parking for casual callers. The amount of parking space allocated for any new build or major refurbishment should be, as a minimum, calculated from the Parking standards guidance issued by the Planning Service. Portbury should be regarded as a “low-density” area when applying these criteria.

The objectives set out for the Village Community area will have a beneficial impact upon car congestion in general. The Parish Council also wish to consider some form of parking restriction, in favour of residents, to manage the number of spaces taken up by people simply “passing through” the Village.

13.0 Local Housing Need

At the present time there are no opportunities for new development within the Parish as most of the available “previously developed” sites have now been exhausted. Moreover Portbury is categorised as an “infill” village within the district core strategy and also sits entirely within the green belt. This means that there would have to be exceptional circumstances before any development could be considered.

Whilst the current (2016) allocation of housing for the District is substantial, (number), this can be accomplished without any redefinition of the green belt. Thus Portbury is not likely to face any pressures for development from external bodies during the term of this plan.

Nevertheless, in the “call for sites” initiative by North Somerset Council in support of their Core Strategy, 4 sites were brought forward by potential developers for consideration.

There is a balance of benefit and detriment with all the sites a preliminary consideration of the sites is outlined below. Much more in depth analysis would be needed if and when these sites were brought within the Core Strategy for the District or the Region.

Site 1 – NS0092 – 23.2 acres at Eastern Portishead – within Portbury Parish.

This site is proposed to create 281 homes, with part of the site lying in flood plain. As with other sites previously developed in this area this would create a high density urban area which has no synergy with the main existing constituent parts of Portbury Parish. The immediate effects of this site would be felt in the main by current residents living in this area, at the end of Sheepway and in the Moor Gate area. Other effects for the entire Parish would be the significant

increase in traffic on the A369 and Sheepway. The development would do nothing to improve the sustainability potential of the Parish.

Site 2 – NS0093 – 10.8 acres adjacent and behind the Village Hall

This site is proposed to create 131 dwellings and is claimed not to be affected by flooding, although the land is in part at the lowest level of land in the area. This would be a major development of high density housing which would have a significant effect on the main urban centre of the Village. Traffic issues would be created on the High Street heading towards the A369 and these effects would have knock on consequences for the heart of the main village. It has the potential to contribute to the sustainability of the village by virtue of the affordable housing proposed and for better land use in the area of the Village Hall.

Site 3 – NS0094 – 10.8 acres off Mill Lane.

This site is proposed to create 50 dwellings, some of the land is affected by water runoff from higher ground, but is not categorised as flood plain. The residents of Mill Close would be the most immediately affected by this proposal which would impede their current open views up towards Failand. Traffic issues would have the effect of worsening the congestion at Mill Lane/High Street junction at peak times. The inclusion of affordable homes would fit with some perceived demand for such accommodation from within the Parish.

Site 4 – NS0095 – 0.62 acres – off High Street

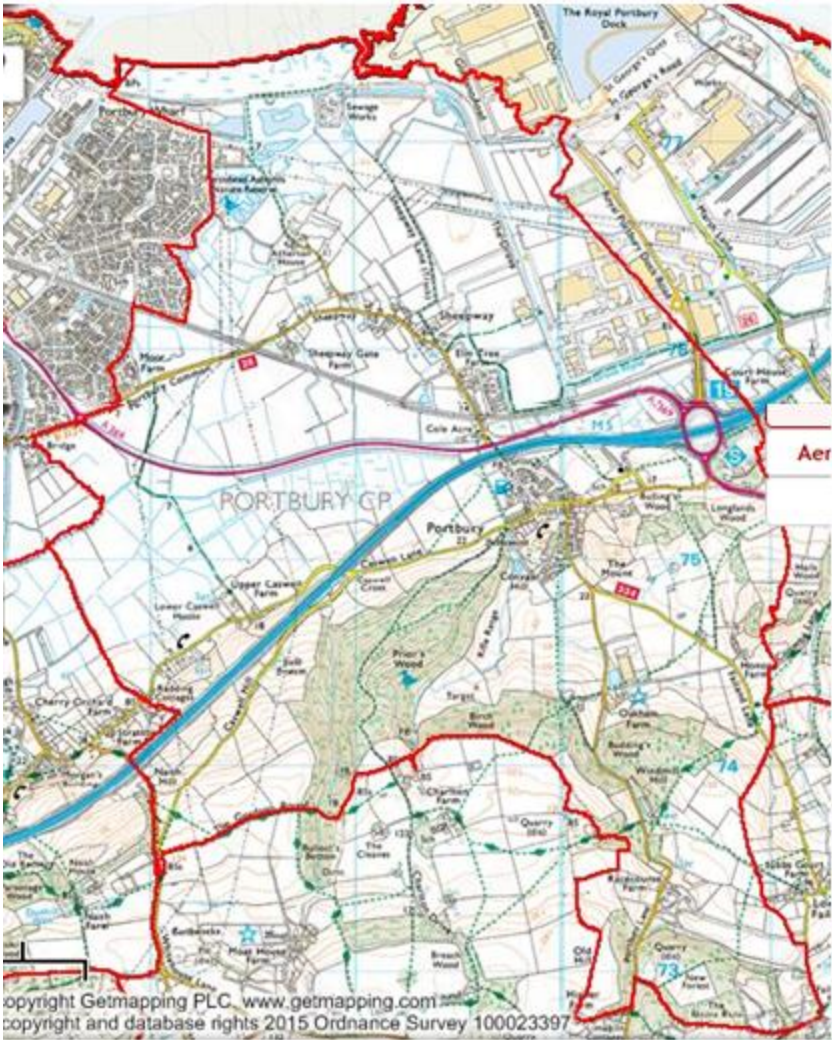
This site proposes 5 individual dwellings on a sloping site to the South of High Street between existing bungalows and the former Rectory. The number of houses here is small, thus reducing overall impact. However there would be little opportunity to create a “slip road” for access and thus this would result in more traffic exiting housing directly onto the busy section of the High Street. In terms of other impact on sustainability this site would have little impact.

13.0 Protecting the Heritage of Portbury – to be written

14.0 Agricultural Land – to be written

15.0 Protecting Flora and Fauna – to be written

MAP 1



Site 2 - off High Street – near Village Hall



Site 1 - off The A369



Site 3 - off Mill Lane



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Site 4 - off High Street



MAP 1
Aerial View

