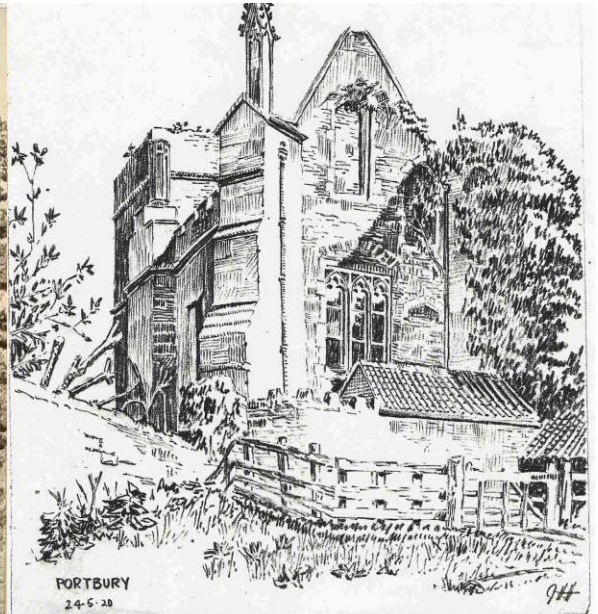




Portbury Parish – Neighbourhood Plan  
2020 – 2038



## A message from Portbury Parish Council



Dear Resident

Your Parish Council has worked extremely hard over a number of years to develop this Parish Plan for you. It has been a long time in the making and has been hampered somewhat by the hiccups in the North Somerset Local plan process and more recently by the Coronavirus epidemic. Nevertheless, we are publishing this document at a very appropriate time as the Local Plan process is now moving again and we can therefore keep this plan up to date and relevant to the current situation. In the end it will be “our” plan and I therefore recommend that you take time to read and understand it, although I realise that this is significant task.

Please also take the opportunity to feed comments back to us so that the document can be adjusted where necessary. It will then be offered back to the whole Parish for approval at a formal referendum prior to becoming adopted policy by North Somerset Council

Wenda Cowlard  
(date ?)  
Chair of Portbury Parish Council

## Introduction by Councillor Mike Phipps

In writing this plan 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.

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.



Mike Phipps  
January 2021  
Past Chair of Portbury Parish Council

## Foreword by Councillor Peter Cooke

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 and amenities which the villagers enjoy. 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.



Peter Cooke  
January 2015  
Past Chair of Portbury Parish Council

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## Introduction

Portbury Parish spans a wide area of over 10 Square Kilometres and embraces a variety of settlement groups all with their own character. The main Village contains the main concentration of residences, and it is here that community services and facilities are located. Sheepway is perhaps the most distinct and discrete sub-unit of the Parish, spanning the old summer road to Portishead. This document uses the term “Portbury” to mean the whole of the Parish, of Portbury with Sheepway if you will, whilst using the term “Village” or “Portbury Village” to signify the main settlement around the village green. The Caswell Lane area has no generic name of its own and is known as Portbury by its association with the Parish even though at Redding Cottages one is effectively in Clapton. Mill Lane/Portbury Lane has very sparse settlement which stretches South from Portbury Village until reaching the boundary of Wraxall/Failand Parish in the open countryside.

The most recent electoral roll records 399 residences in Portbury Parish. These are distributed as follows –

Main Village	228
Sheepway*	131
Caswell Lane	19
Portbury Lane	14

\*Note that Sheepway includes the distinct developments of

Elm Tree Park	50 homes
Moorgate/Ashlands	50 homes

### 1.0 What and why?

The Neighbourhood Development Plan process, as set out in the Localism Act 2011, enables communities to better shape the place where they live and work, to inform how developments take place and help influence the type, quality and location of those developments, ensuring that change brings local benefit.

The Portbury Neighbourhood Development Plan is based on wide research within the Community that is Portbury. It has tapped into knowledge of residents who have lived in the village since its main growth era from 1970 onwards, as well as listening to newer residents and younger people. Opinion has also been sought from local businesses, community organisations and services.

Once adopted it is intended that it will have significant weight in the determination of planning applications. It will also set out aspirations of the Community if the Village were to grow as a result of new development occurring, securing these aspirations through the planning process (section 106 agreements) and other available funds such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

## 1.1 Aims of the Plan

This is not intended to be a development plan, and no sites will be considered as “allocated”. However, several sites are within the scope of the land being considered by North Somerset Council in their most recent “call for sites”. These sites are listed in this plan at Annexe 7. Although not yet examined in detail within the Local Plan process, in its strategic assessment of sites North Somerset have indicated that areas such as Portbury would be considered as part of a “dispersed” approach to housing supply, and that this approach would be least likely to fit with the overarching sustainability criteria in the new Local Plan. This means that any development in Portbury is only likely to occur when other approaches to supply have begun and then if predicted housing supply is still seen as insufficient.

Notwithstanding the above, Portbury does have good connection to other places of commerce, employment and services. Being situated adjacent to the M5 and also to the main bus routes between Bristol and Portishead makes Portbury one of the better connected locations within North Somerset’s dispersed strategy. There is a small amount of local employment, by virtue of 2 trading estates. A major lack is that of any retail outlet however, meaning that for day to day provisions residents must travel to nearby centres at Portishead, 2 miles, or Nailsea 5 miles. There are no health services in the Village.

Portbury lies within an area termed as “washed over” Green Belt, which covers virtually the whole of the Parish. When this status came into force the previous “Village Boundary” became redundant, although still existing as a definable feature. Since that time there has not been any activity from housing developers to promote sites other than through the North Somerset “call for sites” process, running in parallel with local plan consultation. The last major development of Portbury occurred in the 1960’s and 70’s when most of the modern-day Village centre was created. Discrete developments at Elm Tree Park, (Park Homes displaced from Marsh Lane) and the Ashlands, (adjacent to Portishead), have been the only significant housing developments since then. Other development within the former Village Boundary has been mainly through single infill sites or the conversion of redundant farm buildings.

Whilst it would necessitate a review of the Green Belt, there is the possibility that one or more sites in and around Portbury may be brought forward within the planning period of the Plan. This might occur if the adopted local plan does not deliver the required number of housing completions during the implementation stage.

The aim of this Plan therefore is to place potential housing development into a context taking account of the past, current and future for Portbury so that residents have the opportunity to consider any proposal from an objective base. To do this each site is examined against a number of criteria that enable residents to evaluate both positives and negatives when considering any proposals.

## 1.2 Legal Status of the Plan

Neighbourhood Development Plans were established under the Localism Act (2011). This Act aims to give local people more say in the future of their community. To be granted legal status a Neighbourhood Plan must be approved by a local referendum and formally adopted by the Local Authority. It then forms part of the Statutory Development Plan with the same legal status as the Local Plan and will be used to determine planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area.

This plan aims to conform with the strategic direction of the North Somerset Core Strategy and the emerging Joint Spatial Plan. It sets out ways in which the special character of Portbury can be preserved if development occurs and indicates infrastructure constraints and needs that should be addressed during the planning stages. The Plan will also articulate ways in which the sustainability objectives of the Government might be achieved in a Portbury context.

## 2.0 A Vision for Portbury

Portbury has been an important centre in the Shire of Somerset since Saxon times, being the principal 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.

A set of objectives were established for the Village in 2013 emanating from the surveys carried out during research for this plan. They can be found at Annexe 1. Alongside this a Vision Statement was defined which is used alongside the objectives to help steer the Parish Council through the variety of planning and other issues that occur year on year. The vision statement is –

*We want Portbury to continue to be a desirable place to live for all. People should have the certainty that, having chosen to live in the village, they can be assured that the aspects of living in Portbury that are most valued are protected as far as is possible despite the inevitable changes in the world around us.*

## 3.0 How it was Prepared

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 development of the questions for this exercise the Council formalised a set of Strategic Objectives that had been followed implicitly for many years, see appendix 1. These objectives have since been the key determinant in helping the Parish Council to carry out its functions. In 2013 a final questionnaire was distributed within the whole Parish from which specific feedback has now been taken to feed into this plan.

Questionnaires were delivered to each household, and 116 were returned, representing over 30% of households and 20% of residents over 16. The level of response was considered to be sufficiently representative to proceed to the next stage of a draft plan for wider consultation. A report on the consultation process along with copies of the questionnaire and the response data are given in Annexe 2.

This returned questionnaires identified a number of key “themes” that were identified as highest priority from the responses received. These themes, summarised in section 7, 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 Somerset carried out in 2005, see Annexe 4. The objectives for the 3 principal landscape areas that cover Portbury Parish have been extracted from this document and set out in Annexe 3. This document is also supported by an individual Landscape Character Assessment for Portbury Parish, Annexe 8, 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.

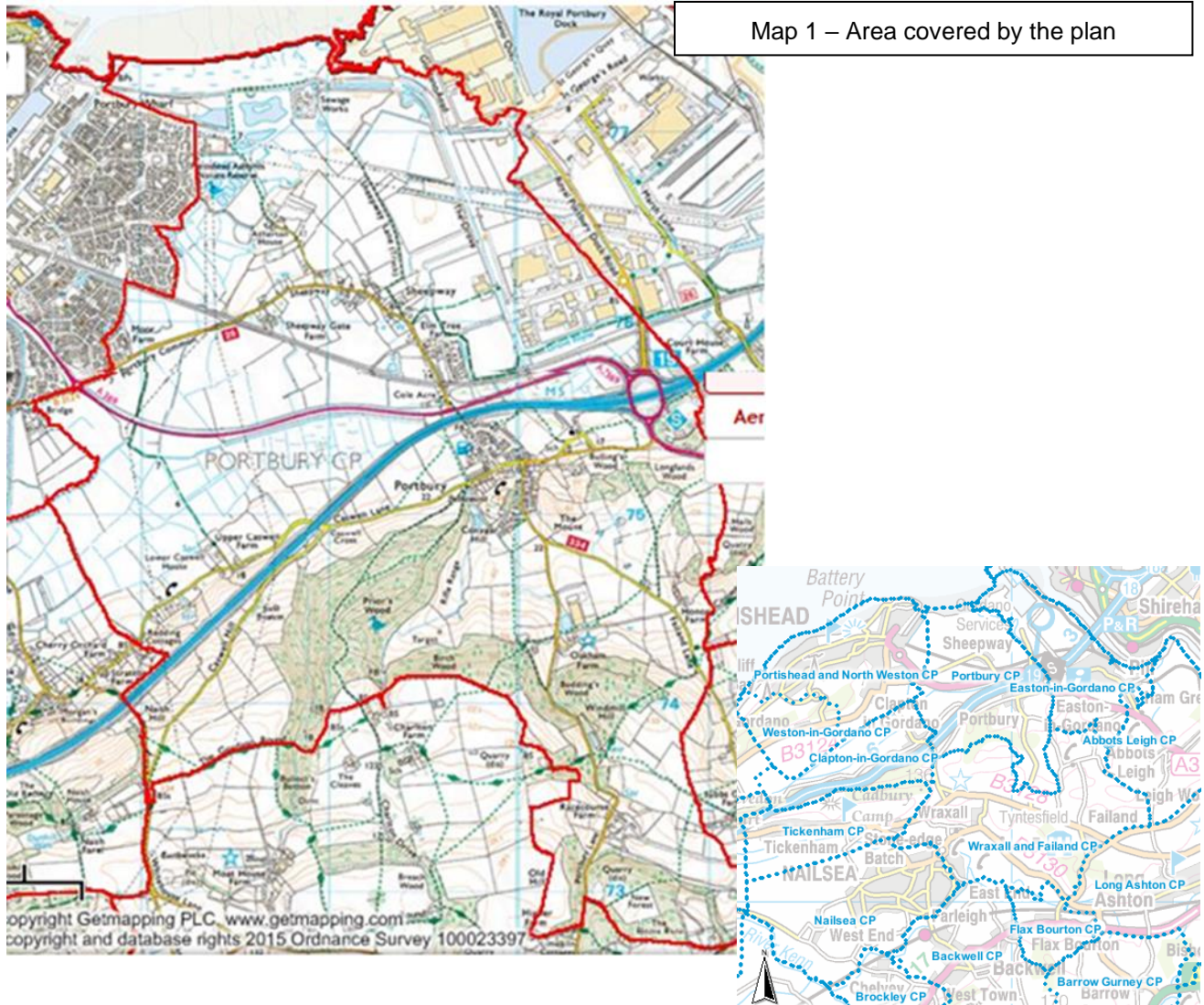


#### 4.0 Area Covered by the Plan

Portbury sits alongside both the A369, to the East, and the M5. Portishead is 2 miles distant and the outskirts of Bristol only 5 miles. The village is physically divided by the M5 although a footbridge keeps the settlement area known as Sheepway connected to the North. To the North East is the Royal Portbury Dock Estate and the sea, to the South and West is open countryside much of which was once part of the vast Tyntesfield Estate.

The area covered by the plan is the Parish of Portbury, as shown in Map 1 below. The boundary of the Parish is shown in red. This area includes part of the Royal Portbury Dock complex, 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. Similarly the area covers part of the Gordano Services complex, and again the importance of this business to the region is recognised. Both organisations also provide important employment opportunities to residents of the Parish.

Map 1 – Area covered by the plan



This area was designated in December 2015 by Portbury Parish Council. The application stated –

*‘The Parish Council considers that this is an appropriate area to include in our plan as the area is wholly administered by Portbury Parish Council. Portbury continues to be faced with difficult challenges brought about by its physical proximity to a growing industrial complex, Royal Portbury Dock, and also its adjacency to the busy M5 motorway. Whilst Portbury currently sits totally within the Green Belt, and thus is not facing the immediate prospect of development it is important to formalise what residents want to achieve within our Parish. Consultation carried out so far shows wide commonality of views about what residents want for the Parish, some of which led to challenging objectives which will take many years to accomplish. It is vitally important therefore that a plan is formulated in order to record these objectives and set a longer-term agenda with objectives for the Parish Council.’*

## 5.0 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 which is a scheduled monument, gives some physical evidence of the strategic importance of the area. The magnificent 12<sup>th</sup> Century, Grade I listed 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 folklore 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 10 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. Opportunity exists to bring to public view the heritage of Portbury by thinking about the streetscape of the main residential areas and using street furniture such as information boards, 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 of 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 if 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 smaller groups of houses of similar style and size were built. Post 1980 development is much more piecemeal, with houses built singly or in pairs as "infill" on sites within the established village settlement boundary. A number of redundant farm buildings have also been successfully converted into dwellings.

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 was placed into a "washed over" green belt area, meaning that the former village boundary became obsolete in planning terms. 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.

## 6.0 Duration of the Plan

It is intended that this plan covers a 20-year period, sitting alongside the North Somerset Local plan to 2038. Within this timescale it is not clear if 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 Key Themes and Objectives

The key purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan is to anticipate development and to create a framework for it. Prior to any development occurring in Portbury there would need to be a green belt review, and so the possibility of new housing in Portbury is some way off. The surveys carried out therefore did not ask residents to consider a binary option of yes or no to development. Instead views were sought on the matter of green belt review and the type of housing thought to be most appropriate, along with a preview of the sites that were within the "call for sites" process at the time. In this way the surveys investigated more deeply what residents' underlying concerns and desires were so that a total plan could be developed.

Returned survey data was collated and analysed to identify key themes that underpinned the issues raised. The themes considered relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan were -

Traffic, Transport and Parking – this theme dominated many areas of the responses to the survey. Increased traffic problems were quoted by 74% of the respondents as being a negative factor if development were to occur. Traffic related issues continue to be the highest priority area for the work of the Parish Council.

Community spirit – for over 87% of the respondents this was the major aspect that people recorded as liking about living in Portbury.

Rural location – the rural setting of Portbury, whilst being so close to Bristol, was flagged as a key advantage of living in Portbury by over 54% of respondents. 66% of respondents were against a green belt review.

Services and amenities – responses concerning the main amenities in the village, the green, playing field, village hall and many others, were registered by over 60% of respondents.

Housing – whilst not facing a yes or no question about housing, there was a high level of response to the question of type and density of any new housing.

## 7.1 Policy Background

This bit – to be re-written

North Somerset Core Strategy (adopted January 2017)

Policies of most direct relevance:

- CS1 Addressing Climate Change and carbon reduction
- CS2 Delivering sustainable design and construction
- CS3 Environmental impacts and flood risk management
- CS4 Nature conservation
- CS5 Landscape and the historic environment
- CS6 Green Belt
- CS12 Achieving high quality design and place making
- CS13 Scale of new housing
- CS14 Distribution of new housing
- CS15 Mixed and balanced communities
- CS16 Affordable Housing
- CS17 Rural exception schemes
- CS19 Strategic gaps
- CS32 Service villages
- CS33 Smaller settlements and countryside

(b) Policy SA1 in the Site Allocations Plan (April 2018).

This policy has, in Schedule 1, identified sites within the village for residential development. These are:

(c) Emerging West of England Joint Spatial Plan (JSP)

The submitted Joint Spatial Plan, which is at examination stage, proposes the need to identify additional capacity for up to 44,000 homes for the West of England in

addition to the existing commitment of 61,500 for the sub-region. This requirement, following the outcome of the examination process, will inform the new North Somerset Local Plan for the period 2018-36. While there are no proposals for development in Portbury specifically there are significant numbers of houses proposed for both Portishead and Nailsea. Either of these locations would have an indirect effect on Portbury in terms of traffic congestion through the village and at the junction of the M5 and A369 as a result of commuters seeking access to the motorway and to Bristol.

Four main implementation strategies are emerging from the new North Somerset Local Plan 2038. Only one main strategy focuses on developing housing in a dispersed manner, ie using other locations and smaller settlements such as Portbury. Whilst this strategy acknowledges the greater distances resulting for travel to services, facilities and jobs, this strategy can provide growth and support opportunities within local communities. For example, St Mary's CEVA Primary School was expanded in the 1990's as a result of the need for child spaces to accommodate school closures elsewhere, Easton in Gordano and Failand. The number of children at the school is however currently supplemented by children allocated from the Portishead area where there is a shortage. With more housing the school could become more sustainable and car journeys to school would be reduced. Moreover, an increase in population would support current community organisations, activities and venues such as the Village Hal and Church.

## 7.2 Demand for housing in Portbury

A full housing needs assessment for the Portbury area has not been carried out at this stage. Whether housing comes to Portbury in the future will depend upon the chosen implementation strategy for the eventual, adopted Local Plan for North Somerset. That said a sense of what need there is likely to be can be derived from the responses to the surveys carries out.

The majority of housing need, 61%, is seen to be for affordable houses whereas only 18% considered "luxury" homes to be a priority. This is backed up by responses from businesses, primarily Bristol Port Company, who felt that this was also critical to providing a supply of employees for the future.

**To be expanded** to include data from estate agents

## 8.0 Portbury Neighbourhood Plan Policies

### 8.1 Housing

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. Taking account of the feedback from surveys the following policies have been developed in relation to new housing.

#### Policy H1 – Housing in Portbury

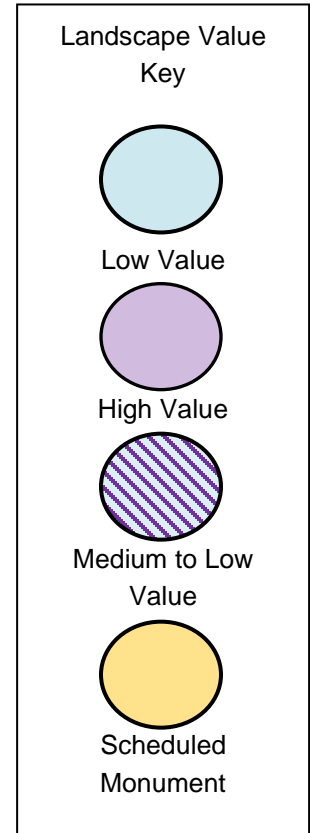
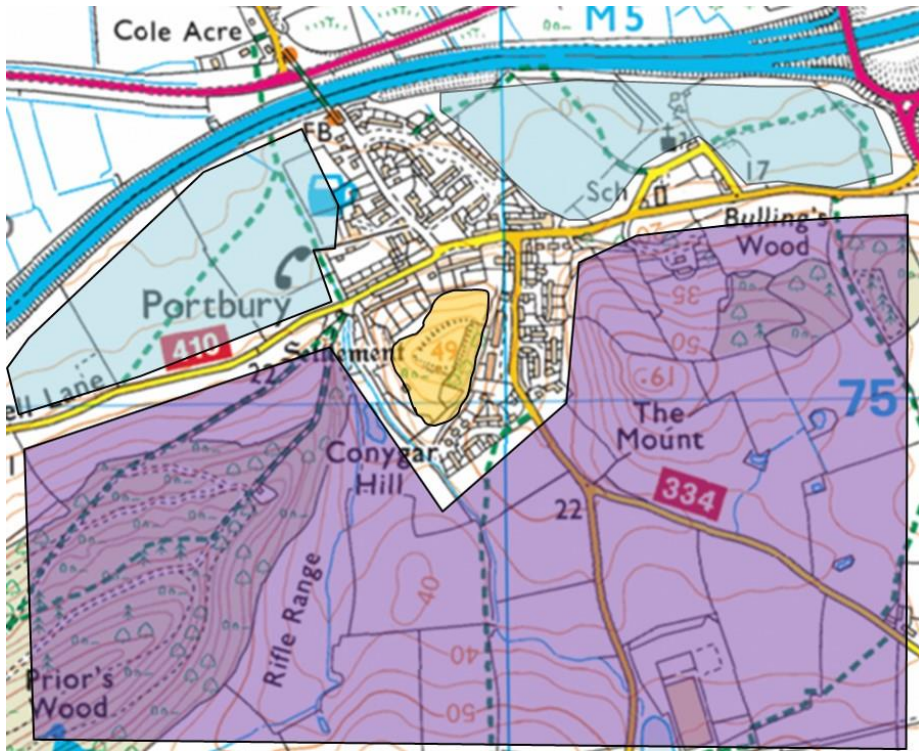
- a) New development will only be supported where the location provides the ability for residents and their children to walk safely to Village Facilities and Services and have easy access to public transport, thus reducing the need for multiple car ownership.
- b) Preference will be given to locations that can demonstrate the least impact on traffic congestion at peak periods within the Village.
- c) New development should respect the amenities of existing residential development and conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Village and its key built assets.
- d) New development must respect the desire to avoid creeping coalescence of settlements and maintain the distinct rural essence of each element that makes up the Parish of Portbury.
- e) Priority for allocation of sites should take into account the sensitivity of the landscape and ensure that appropriate measures are incorporated to protect areas of highest value.

#### Justification for Policy H1

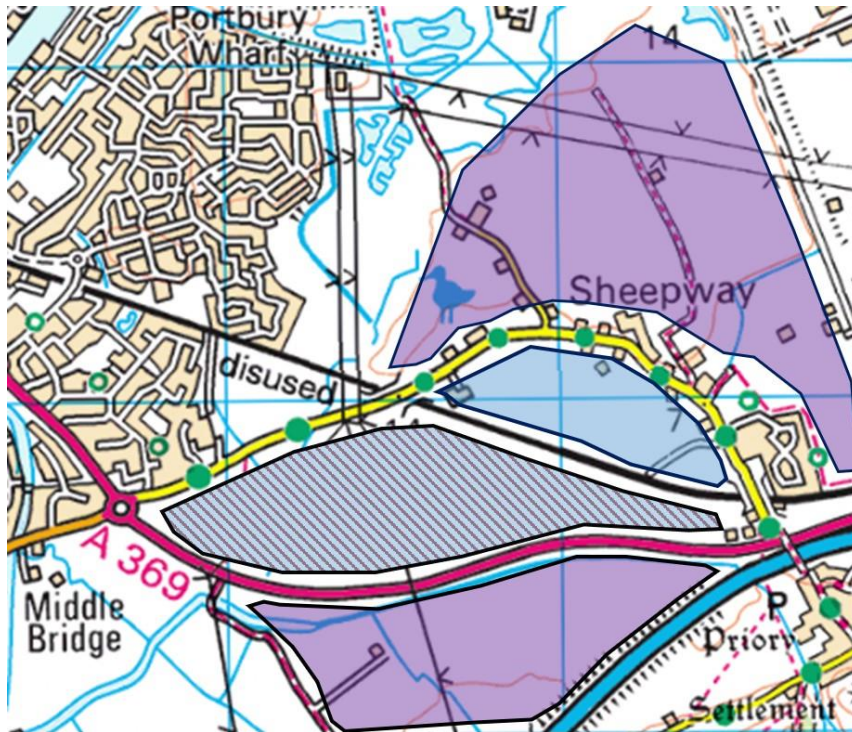
These policies aim to promote sustainable development and assist in delivering the ambitions of the North Somerset Local Plan 2038. Any new development must respect and enhance the character of the Village and also help to sustain local community services. Whilst this plan has not attempted to allocate any housing sites from those that have been identified within the Parish, this policy establishes part of a framework that can be used to evaluate any proposal that come forward.

All the potential new sites in Portbury sit within washed over Green Belt by virtue of existing policy for the area. Much of the landscape around Portbury is also of high value, see annexe 5 Landscape Character Assessment – Supplementary Planning Guidance and Annexe 6 Landscape Value – Portbury (An extract from SPG with maps). Portbury therefore has a desire to maintain its character, protect the landscape and rural character and wishes to restrict uncontrolled development. Maps 2 & 3 show the areas of Portbury that are considered to be ‘High Value’ in terms of landscape sensitivity. It is fundamental therefore that any development must assist the delivery of the whole of this plan.

MAP 2 – Landscape sensitivity – Portbury South



MAP 3 – Landscape sensitivity – Portbury North and Sheepway





## Policy H2 – Sustainable Development Site Principles

- a) Proposals for development of 10 or more dwellings should provide a minimum of 30% of the houses as affordable (for either rent or shared ownership).
- b) New development should have regard to the needs of first-time buyers, elderly and disabled residents.
- c) Design proposal should seek to minimise carbon footprint and energy requirements. The target for construction design should be 'Excellent' BREEAM level or equivalent.
- d) The fitting of photovoltaic panels to domestic property will be supported and this should inform the location and alignment of houses and roof forms

### Justification for Policy H2

There is a recognised need for affordable housing in North Somerset. In addition, the response to our local survey confirms that residents support the need for affordable homes within any development that might occur in the Village. Portbury is home to an above average proportion of older residents many of whom choose to stay in Portbury after their own family has grown and left the village. This demographic group is very active within the Community and this helps in part to feed the community spirit that has been mentioned in surveys. There are very few bungalows in the Village and the use of this form of house would limit the loss of visual amenity if placed strategically in any new development. This type of house would also provide downsizing opportunities for those wishing to stay in the Village beyond retirement.

The principal road layout within Portbury is based upon a N-S alignment, Mill Lane/Portbury Lane and Station Road, together with an E-W alignment, High Street/Caswell Lane. Sheepway begins in a N-S direction and turns through its length to E-W. Although the village is situated at the base of the Tickenham Ridge, most of the land sits in the plain with little obstruction to sunshine from surrounding hillsides. This means that achieving satisfactory alignment for solar panel installations is easy and the number of sunshine hours that can be achieved is near to the maximum for the latitude, evidenced by the number of houses in the village that have already invested in this type of system.

### 8.2 Community Facilities

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. The Church of St Mary the Virgin is the other principal Community Facility providing also a Heritage Centre based upon its historic holding of artefacts and documents. It is a Grade I listed building dating back to the 12th Century and is still able to provide a burial service within its own grounds. Gordano Sharks RFC also provides an important sport based facility that provides structured activity for the younger population of the Village.

**Policy F1 - Protecting and Enhancing Community Facilities.**

The main community facilities in the Village comprise, The Village Hall, The Church of St Mary the Virgin, the Village Green, the Playing Field, Gordano Sharks RFC, allotments. In order to reinforce and secure the role played by these facilities in the Village the following policies will be followed:

- a) The loss or reduction of existing community facilities will not be supported.
- b) Proposals which enhance and improve existing community facilities will be supported, providing they are compatible with existing, neighbouring uses.
- c) The expansion of the facilities of the Gordano Sharks RFC will be supported if accompanied by an attendant increase in Car Parking sufficient to cater for their own larger events.

**Justification for Policy F1**

The importance of existing Community Facilities is well demonstrated. Numbers of members of the congregation at the Church of St Mary the Virgin continue to grow and the creation of a Heritage Centre has brought to the fore the value of the assets and historic information held at the Church. Membership of the Village Hall and Social Club continues to grow and the use of the Hall to support wider community activities and clubs is very diverse. Both organisations are self-sustaining for all but the largest of infrastructure needs and have sufficient local expertise to be able to secure specialist grant funding when needed. Both of these key assets are hampered by the lack of parking space adjacent to them. The High Street is a very busy thoroughfare and there are no parking opportunities along virtually its whole length. There can be up to 100 people at the largest events held in each location and up to 50% of these people will arrive by car. There is thus latent demand for 30 to 40 car parking spaces at both locations. The playing field is leased by the Parish Council from a landowner and provides free open space and play equipment for a range of ages of children. It is strategically located adjacent to the Church and School and so is well used at all times of year. The field also provides additional pitch space for Gordano Sharks RFC who regularly use it for training and matches for their youth teams. "The Sharks" is a very successful club and continues to grow and attract younger, local players, the life blood of any amateur Sports organisation. The club wishes to expand its operations and has RFU support to do this as part of a diversification strategy to make Rugby accessible to children of wider physical abilities. As with the other venues in the Village car

parking is a critical issue, particularly when larger competitions are hosted at their main ground.

### 8.3 Landscape and Rural Environment

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 visual effect upon the environment within the village. The whole of the Parish sits within washed over Green Belt and as such special circumstances must exist for there to be any consideration for development.

#### Policy L1 - Landscape and Rural Environment

In order to protect the semi-rural setting that Portbury enjoys the following policies will apply:

- a) The land at the transition between industrial and residential areas is critical to the skyline to the North and East of the Village. As such development will be limited so as to reduce visual impact.
- b) Development proposals within areas of high landscape value will only be supported where the character and integrity of the landscape can be protected, and impact mitigated.
- c) The following parcels of land are designated as Local Green Spaces
  - The Playing Field
  - The Village Green
- d) Development proposals should maintain and enhance the connectivity of all green corridors and not result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including local wildlife sites, aged or veteran trees and hedges. Development proposals for new dwellings should demonstrate how they have incorporated appropriate measures to ensure the connectivity of any green corridor and the freedom of movement for species on or through the site.
- e) As appropriate to their location and the scale development proposals should be designed to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity and nature conservation.
- f) As appropriate to their location and the scale development proposals should include natural landscaping using native species and incorporate existing hedgerows, wetland areas and other wildlife features where it is practicable to do so.

#### Justification for Policy L1

One of the key attributes that attracts people to Portbury is its rural setting. Despite the proximity to Royal Portbury Dock and the M5 in the North there is a high level of tree screening that masks the impact of these features from street level in the Village. It is only when some height is gained, along Mill Lane for example, that the extent of the industrial landscape becomes clear. Light pollution from both the

Docks and M5 is significant even at street level in the Village. To the South the landscape is clearly rural and is acknowledged to be of high value. One of the key objectives of the Parish Council therefore is to protect the skyline to the North and East as much as is possible so that the industrial areas and M5 do not dominate the setting of the Village and its outlying properties. 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 without harming the commercial ambitions of the Docks owners and Shareholders. 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 local streetscape. This buffer zone underlines the importance of having a transition zone between industrial and residential areas. Policy will establish this zone formally. To the South of the M5 the village playing field forms a further natural buffer area and provides a natural corridor via the public footpath from the Priory Road area of the Village to the Church and School. This facility has been used by villagers since the 1970's and apparatus has been procured and installed by voluntary groups, and adopted by the Parish Council to provide childrens' play opportunity. Noise levels from motorway traffic are significant at the playing field and would thus render development particularly challenging and the resulting residences would be very unappealing and may suffer from a high turnover of occupiers.

#### 8.4 Design considerations

Landscape sensitivity assessment shows that land situated further away from the Docks and M5 have the greatest value. It is here that land transitions to agricultural holdings. The road layout tells the story of the development of Portbury, sitting on the main road between Bristol and Portishead. Whilst there is a definite "Village Boundary" within which the majority of residences are concentrated, it is important to recognise the "ribbon style" of the key arms of the Village along Mill Lane, Caswell Lane and Sheepway. The field patterns surrounding Portbury have changed little over many centuries and are well defined, in the main by mature hedgerows and areas of forestation. This contributes to the overall rural feel which is characteristic of the landscape in this area away from the main urban centres.

##### Policy L2 – Rural Environment - Design Considerations

- a) Any new development will be expected to respond positively to the key attributes of the neighbourhood area and the key local design features of the village. Development will not be supported where it is of poor design that has a significant adverse impact on the character of the area and/or its surroundings. To ensure good design is achieved development should be designed to take account of the local character assessment of Portbury. See annexe 8.
- b) Incremental growth is the preferred strategy for any housing development in the Village. A maximum of 25 houses is considered to be acceptable in any one scheme representing a growth of 5%.

- c) The density of development will be limited to 25 dwellings per hectare which is approximately the current level of housing.
- d) Development on infill sites and previously used land will be generally supported.

#### Justification for policy L2

Portbury has seen several phases of development since the 1950's and 1960's when Mill Close and the whole of Priory Road and Priory Walk were created, along with the Village Green. Later, incremental building activity on the High Street, Caswell Lane, Forge End and Hillside has produced a wide range of design styles interspersed by a number of older properties some dating back to the 1600's. 10 Buildings are listed. Even on Priory Road there is a variation of style and layout which has produced an interesting streetscape with wider areas in its centre which provide a feeling of space. The character of each area of the Village consequently varies considerably and there are sufficient, older cottage style properties to give Portbury a sense of its heritage as a close-knit farming community. Street names give us a glimpse of this, namely Mill Lane, Forge End, Priory Road and Station Road. The Parish Council has attempted to preserve this mixed pattern and style of development by supporting a variety of applications for new build and extensions of different styles, avoiding where possible a pastiche approach to design.

#### 8.5 Local amenities

Car parking within the Village is key among the issues raised by residents, both through surveys and frequent direct contact via social media. The lack of space is a limiting factor for both Community activities and the business situated in close proximity to the Village Hall. Flooding at the Village Hall poses a natural threat that brings with it financial risk to properties and businesses alike in that area and there is a need to invest in infrastructure to deal with this. The Village Green is a fundamental asset of the Village, along with its War Memorial and is owned by the Parish Council. It is known from surveys that there is latent demand for a Village Shop although the financial viability of this has not been tested.

#### Policy S1 – Enhancing Services and Amenities

Any funding from future North Somerset Community Infrastructure Levy, s106 contributions and other sources will be sought in order to invest in key areas of infrastructure in the Village – including:

- a) Any development close to the Village Hall or Church must include space for additional designated off-street car parking for these community facilities.
- b) Improvement to land drainage in the vicinity of the Village Hall, including the possibility of a balancing pond.
- c) Improvement to the pathway across and around the village green. These pathways are in need of upgrade to improve disabled access.
- d) One reserved building plot/site will be provisionally allocated as a retail site for a potential Village Shop.

## Justification for policy S1

A key constraint of the current Village Hall building is the lack of perimeter land within its title. 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 contravened 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 landowners 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.

A similar situation is evident at the Church where there is no car park, any visitors must use spaces outside the school, or along Church Lane. This conflicts with use by the school and its visitors and thus weekday activities at the Church are limited. It should be noted here too that much of the parking on Church Lane is taken up on weekdays by "car-clubbers" who leave a car parked for the whole day, or perhaps several days, whilst sharing a car for their onward journey. Whilst not wishing to discourage this sustainable way of driving to the workplace, it does have a significant impact on weekday activities in the Village based at the Church.

The area to the South of the Village 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. More houses anywhere in the Village will put pressure on the existing rainwater gully system and given the more regular incidence of excessively heavy rain due to global warming there is the prospect of more flooding which impacts upon buildings in this area and also causes major traffic congestion.

The Village Green was created in the 1970's following major housing development on the High Street and Priory Road. The centre of the green was used as a disposal area for trees from an existing orchard that were taken down. Over the ensuing years a path has developed across the green along a desire line going directly between High Street and Station Road. This path has been the subject of subsidence due to the rotting of the dumped tree roots. Now that the subsidence has stabilised the centre path can now be properly established with consolidating material and edge boards. This would also provide the opportunity to bring the path up to disabled access standards.

Demand for a Village Shop has been identified through a large number of survey responses. A previous shop and sub-post office closed in the 1980's and has been converted into a residence. The nearest retail outlet within sensible walking

distance of the Village is at Gordano Services where a grocery outlet is available along with a newsagent. This business is 1 mile away from the Village Centre and requires a walk along a busy road with no pavement, or alternatively a route through 2 fields. Given the limited range of goods available and the unattractiveness of the walking route, it is not seen as a true “local” shopping opportunity. Local businesses still deliver newspapers and milk on a daily basis to the village indicating that there is a level of demand for local supply. It is felt that a general-purpose shop selling goods that would be attractive to elderly residents, along with a range of items that might attract passing trade, could be a viable economic proposition. Whereas development in the Village cannot guarantee the interest of a suitable operating owner or business, if a site is first reserved for a building interest can then be investigated. If no suitable operator were to come forward then this site could then revert to alternative use.

## 8.6 Transport and Traffic

The single most reported issue in the Village surveys and in regular “mailbags” is that of traffic through the Village and parking issues. Portbury’s streets provide links to the M5/A369 junction for routes onwards in all directions. The main traffic issue arises from commuters travelling from the Clevedon Bristol Road (B3130) towards the M5. The narrowness of Mill Lane as it approaches the High Street causes a major constriction to traffic during busy periods. Additionally, the speed of traffic approaching Portbury from either the A369 or the B3130 have been of such concern that a 20mph speed limit was introduced in 2018. Despite this traffic speeds remain unacceptably high and are a safety concern for children and parents walking to the School. A similar situation occurs on the routes that link to Portishead, along Sheepway and Caswell Lane. Speeds approaching the Village are of similar concern and the safety of pedestrians and cyclists along the Sheepway is heightened due to this also being the route for the X3 and X4 bus services.

Street parking is an issue in the Village as a whole, there is insufficient off street parking to accommodate the current level of car ownership. Most families now possess at least 2 cars and with the number of younger residents now living at home until their mid to late twenties there are often 3 or 4. Priory Road, 57 houses, was built to a general standard that provided one garage space and one off-street space which is less than desirable. There is little or no space for visitors anywhere in the Village and overflows from the Priory Inn or local events leads to cars being parked such that access for safety vehicles is compromised. The Village is also used by people who “car share” for journeys elsewhere via the M5/A369 connection. This means that during the day many street parking spaces are occupied, again in some cases parking illegally in passing places.

### Policy T1 – Traffic and Parking

Any funding from Community Infrastructure Levy, s106 contributions or other sources will be sought to ease traffic speeds and parking congestion by;

- a) Establishing gateway features at each of the entrances to the main village in order to assist in traffic calming.
- b) Raising the necessary traffic orders and carrying out subsequent works to install traffic calming on the High Street and Caswell Lane.
- c) Raising the necessary traffic orders and carrying out subsequent works to implement parking restrictions at Church Lane, adjacent to the School.
- d) Raising the necessary traffic orders and carrying out subsequent works to install double yellow lines in passing places on Caswell Lane.

In addition, the following planning and design principles will be followed.

- e) Applications for the conversion of garage space into other accommodation will not generally be supported unless it can be shown that sufficient, alternative, off-street car parking space is also provided.
- f) New housing schemes shall be laid out so as to provide houses with a minimum 1 off-street parking space for each bedroom.
- g) Street design shall aim to achieve a design traffic speed of 20mph.

#### Justification for Policy T1

Traffic speed measurement data has shown that Mill Lane in Portbury is one of the worst 10 spots in North Somerset for transgression of speed limits by vehicles. This arises due to the length of the approach roads to Portbury and the natural tendency for drivers to pick up speed on open roads. The routes through Portbury are heavily used by commuters from surrounding areas, an estimated 20,000 cars pass in each direction through the village each day. Despite the imposition of a 20mph limit within the main residential centre, preceded by a stretch of 30 or 40 on approach, it is still evident that average speeds are well above 30mph and in some cases as reckless as 50mph. The absence of a clear village boundary on the High Street approach reduces the “awareness” of motorists to the fact that they are approaching a residential zone. Bends on the other approaches mean that the village is somewhat screened from full view on approach. There is also a problem with motorists speeding out of the village, the junction of High Street and Caswell Lane is a particularly critical point where cars begin to speed up at the point where the footpath reduces to an advisory “painted” lane on the road itself.

Portbury is highly dependent on travel to be able to access 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 shops for supply of the range of retail requirements 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, these policy actions are aimed at keeping the situation stable whilst looking for longer term opportunities for change.

## 9.0 Overview of potential Development sites

Annexe 7 contains details of the sites currently registered with North Somerset Council during the most recent cycle of consultation on the Local Plan. This section provides an objective assessment of each one based upon the policies above and residents' responses during our own consultation. The result is given in tabular form and indicates that there are a significant number of constraints to development throughout the Parish and each site would need careful consideration prior to proceeding with any serious development proposal.

Each site is shown with its reference number as recorded with North Somerset Council, with the exception of the site on Caswell Lane which was submitted during the later stages of local plan consultation and as yet has no such number.

