

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

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Background Paper 1

Housing



October 2019

Background Papers were prepared over 2018 and 2019 to assist the Neighbourhood Plan Team develop its thinking and proposals. Some of this background work on housing numbers and proposals has been overtaken by the development of the Final October 2020 Plan

SUMMARY

- In 2017 the population of the Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) was 5,698 of whom 88% lived in Pill/Easton-in-Gordano parish. There were similar portions of male and female residents in each parish and similar age distributions. The whole area was predominantly ethnically white and largely born in the UK.
- In 2011 there were 2,416 households in occupied dwellings, occupying 97% of the total dwelling stock. 80 dwellings were unoccupied (3.2%). 63 dwellings were over-occupied. In Abbots Leigh 93% of dwellings were in detached or semi-detached houses, by comparison with Pill/Easton where 67.5% were in houses and 29.6% in flats or terraces.
- Two thirds of the 2,496 dwellings in 2011 were occupied by couples, a quarter by one person households. Lone parent households made up 9% of all households.
- Ownership is the dominant tenure throughout (89% in Abbots Leigh, 76% in Pill/Easton) with some private rented throughout the area but 7% social rented in Pill/Easton.
- The bulk of Pill/Easton population (92.4%) live within the Pill Settlement Area whereas in the more rural and dispersed Abbots Leigh only 61% live within the Village.
- Local estate agents confirm a strong demand for housing throughout the Neighbourhood Area, fuelled by easy access both to Bristol and the M5. Pill is thought to have been on the up in terms of an active housing market.
- There is a need for affordable housing in the area and a 2016 Housing survey presents evidence of residents unable to buy/rent in the open market. 29 households would have a housing need within five years and nine within twelve months.
- Alliance Homes are the major social housing provider in Pill/Easton (297 properties).
- The Pill and District Community Land Trust has sought a site for a small development of affordable housing to be managed by Alliance Homes.
- The implications of a range of longer term housing development scenarios have been examined, with the conclusion that the preferred option is for the provision of 150-200 dwellings in small clusters of 10-20 dwellings adjacent to existing settlements.
- A strategy of modest growth of two projects offering up to 46 dwellings by 2026 has been adopted.
- The possibilities of the introduction of a Settlement Boundary for Abbots Leigh, widening of the Pill Settlement Area and alterations to the Green Belt will be developed in the context of the North Somerset Local Plan 2038.

HOUSING

5.1 The Neighbourhood Area: Social Structure

The population of Pill and Easton-in-Gordano is almost eight times that of Abbots Leigh. Although Abbots Leigh is almost twice the geographical size of Easton-in-Gordano the population of the latter is almost eight times greater. Pill/Easton is predominantly an urban settlement – and is an NSC designated local service centre - whilst Abbots Leigh is a rural parish with a central village of around two hundred dwellings but few facilities. The population of Pill/Easton has grown slightly since 2001 whilst Abbots Leigh has declined slightly. Abbots Leigh has a greater number of women and older people. Both parishes have a very largely British born, white population.

Table 1 Neighbourhood Plan Area Demography

	Abbots Leigh	Pill and Easton-in-Gordano	Neighbourhood Plan Area
Population			
2001	810	4,719	5,370
2011	799	4,828	5,469
2017	835	4,863	5,496
Gender (2017)			
Male	380	2,421	2,705
Female	455	2,442	2,792
Age (2017)			
0-17 years	163	942	1,066
18-64 years	426	2,702	3,023
65+ years	246	1,219	1,407
Ethnicity (2011)			
White	781	4,709	5,333
Asian	6	51	57
Black	1	8	9
Multiple	10	47	57
Other	0	10	10
Country of Birth (2011)	741	4,596	5,194
UK	9	25	32
Republic of Ireland	15	89	98
EU	34	118	145
Other country			

5.2 Dwellings and Households

Within the Neighbourhood Area the 2011 Census recorded 2416 households occupying 2496 dwellings. Table 2 below shows dwellings by dwelling type, together with the levels of over and under-occupation.

There were obviously large differences in the numbers of dwellings in each parish. Pill/Easton with 2,168 dwellings with almost three quarters of the Neighbourhood Area living in Pill/Easton. There were also marked differences between the two parishes in dwelling type, with a greater proportion of detached houses in Abbots Leigh but a larger proportion of semi-detached and terraced dwellings in Pill/Easton. Virtually all flats were in Pill/Easton.

Table 2 Dwellings 2011

	Abbots Leigh		Pill/Easton-in-Gordano/	
Detached	234	71.3	663	30.6
Semi-detached	73	22.3	801	36.9
Terraced	13	4	430	19.8
Block of flats	3	0.9	212	9.8
Shared	2	0.6	33	1.5
Other	3	0.9	29	1.3
TOTAL	328	100	2168	100
Occupied	309	94.2	2107	97.2
Unoccupied	19	5.8	61	2.8
Over-occupied (rooms)	2	0.6	61	2.9
Over-occupied (bedrooms)	1	0.3	44	2.1

Abbots Leigh, with a slightly higher average **household size**, had a slightly lesser share (12.7%) of all dwellings than its share of population. Differences in household type were less than differences in dwelling type. In both parishes there were broadly similar proportions of households with dependent children, lone parent and multi-person households, in Pill/Easton there were proportionally more single person households in Pill/Easton than in Abbots Leigh. In both parishes there were a significant number of lone parent households.

In terms of **tenure** (Table 4), in both parishes ownership was the dominant tenure (89% and 76%) but in Pill and Easton-in-Gordano there was a significant social rented sector (14%) as well as some private rented housing (8%). Abbots Leigh has virtually no social rented and only a small private rented sector (6.5%). In both parishes households with couples dominated (70% and 60% respectively) but in Pill and Easton-in-Gordano there were more one person households (28%) and also more lone parent households (8%).

Occupancy is high at 94.2% in Abbots Leigh and 97.2% in Pill, but there is some over occupation, with 61 dwellings in Pill over occupied in terms of all rooms and 44 dwellings over occupied in terms of bedrooms.

Table 3 Households

	Abbots Leigh		Pill/Easton-in-Gordano/	
One-person household	67	21.7	597	28.3
Couple	218	70.5	1276	60.5
Lone parent household	23	7.4	193	9.2
Multi-person household	1	0.3	41	1.9
TOTAL	309	100	2107	100
H'holds with dependent children	87	28.2	541	25.7
Households with children 0-4	24	7.8	204	9.7
Average H'hold size	2.4		2.3	

Table 4 Tenure

	Abbots Leigh		Easton-in-Gordano/Pill	
Owner occupied	275	89	1601	76
Shared ownership	0	0	2	0.1
Social rented (LA)	3	1	144	6.8
Social rented	1	0.3	155	7.4
Private rented	20	6.5	176	8.3
Rent free	10	3.2	29	1.4
TOTAL	309	100	2107	100

There are wide differences in the type and tenure of housing between the two parishes. In Abbots Leigh 71% of households lived in detached housing spaces, and 22% in semi-detached housing by comparison with 31% and 37% in Pill and Easton-in-Gordano. Only 4% of households were in terraced housing in Abbots Leigh by contrast with 20% in Pill and Easton-in-Gordano). 19% of households in Pill lived in blocks of flats.

5.3 Settlement Housing 2011-2017

Growth within the Green Belt has been heavily constrained and the bulk of housing in the Neighbourhood Plan Area lies within the Pill Settlement Area (see Map 1 below) which, like the Royal Portbury Dock, is not included in the Green Belt.

North Somerset Council has provided parish profiles giving details of the way in which the two settlements vary in terms of the proportion of the parish population living within or outside settlement boundaries. The figures are shown in Table 5 following.

The numbers are useful but should be treated with caution. The current Pill Settlement figures are now dated because the hundred or so houses built on the former Ham Green Hospital site are not included. In Abbots Leigh the settlement figures relate to the area within what was locally known as the 'Village Fence'

Table 5 Settlement Population and Households 2017

	Abbots Leigh	Pill and Easton-in-Gordano
Parish Population mid 2017	835	4,863
Main settlement area population 2017	456	4,478
Settlement area Population as % of parish population	54.6%	96.7%
Parish Households 2011	309	2,107
Settlement Households 2017	190	1,947
Settlement Households as % of parish households	61%	92.4%

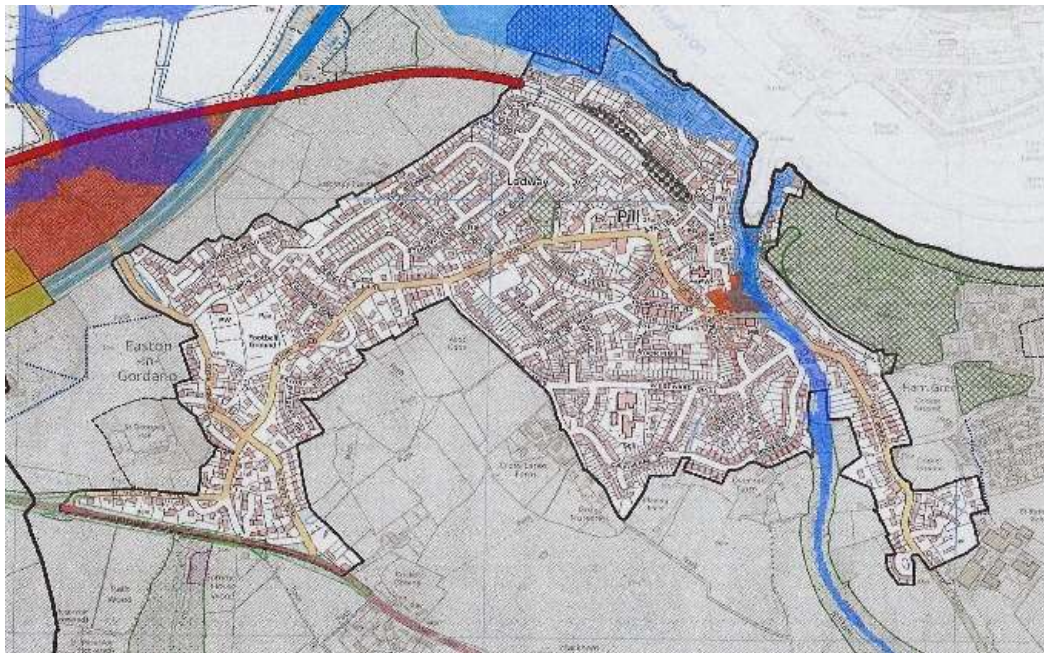
Source: North Somerset Council, Parish Profiles 2017

Excluding the 1,200 sq.km. of the Royal Portbury Dock area dock area, the 2,900 sq.km. of Pill and Easton-in-Gordano parish is geographically constrained and concentrated, with 96.7% of the parish population and 92.4 of the households living within the Settlement Area (see Map 1)

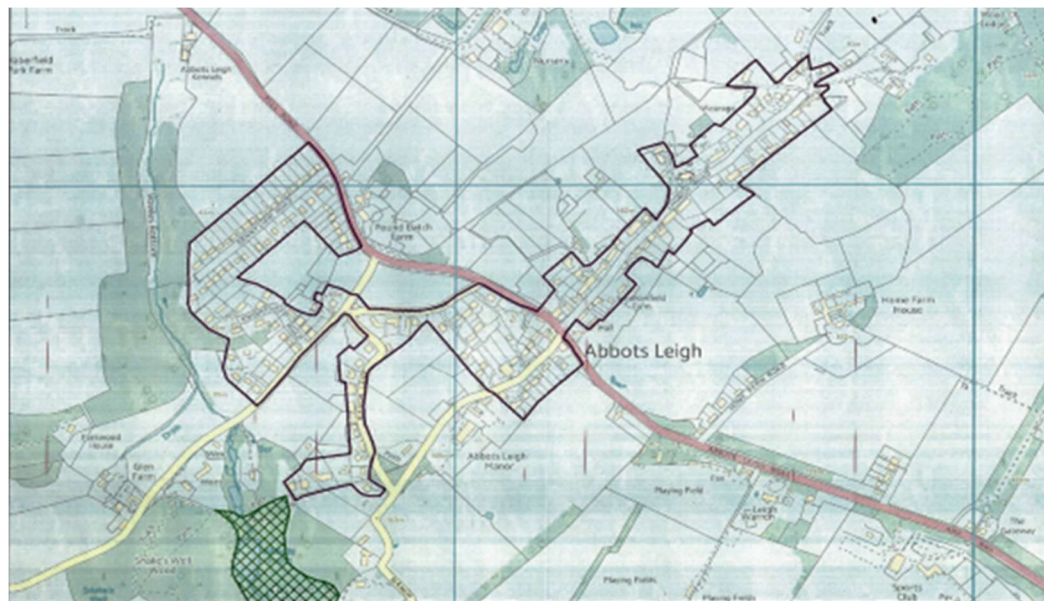
Abbots Leigh lying entirely within the Green Belt, has as yet no formal settlement boundary being currently defined as 'rural'. The majority of dwellings in the parish lie with a notional boundary as shown in map 2 below. Abbots Leigh is a much larger, more rural parish than Pill/Easton and the parish has a number of outlying areas – Home Farm Road, Ashbourne

Avenue, Blackmoor Road, parts of the Pill Road and a few houses in Ham Green. The proportion of parish population living within the Village settlement is 54.6% (households 61%).

Map 1 Pill Settlement Area



Map 2 Abbots Leigh Village



There has been little growth in the number of households over the past decade. Between 2007 and 2017 completed development sites **within** the Settlement Area of Pill/Easton produced only 60 new dwellings. In Abbots Leigh the figure was 5 new dwellings. Settlement expansion **outside but adjacent to** Settlement or Village boundaries produced only five dwellings across the whole Neighbourhood Area - a reflection of the stringent application of Green Belt policy.

5.4 Housing Demand, Housing Need and the Housing Survey

Demand: There is strong demand for housing throughout the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The belief that housing supply in North Somerset may be insufficient to meet national or regional housing targets has led to speculative proposals from developers for major projects from 1000 to 3000 dwellings at Chapel Pill and at Martcombe and there other smaller sites where landowners/developers hold land with hope value. The West of England Joint Spatial Plan explicitly excluded the Easton/Pill corridor as one for development.

Interviews with Portishead estate agents Hunters, Goodman and Lilley, West Coast Properties and Ocean confirm an active housing market. Close to the employment market of Bristol, offering easy access both to the city and to the M5 (and quite close the M4), with a re-opened railway in the pipeline, with good links into Wales, and with a historic heritage and a pleasant environment it is no surprise that neighbourhood of Abbots Leigh, Pill and Easton represent an attractive buying opportunity. Hunters confirm their estimate of current average value ranging from £1,090,000 in Abbots Leigh, to £737,000 on the Pill Road, to £505,000 on St.Katheine's Ham Green to £428,000 in Pill.

Abbots Leigh has the strongest housing market links to Bristol. Housing at St. Katherine's Park (at Ham Green) sells quickly. Estate agents confirm that the reputation and attractiveness of Pill, traditionally a less appealing location, has risen sharply in the last couple of years. In part this is because there is relatively little movement out – Pill has a strong sense of identity and community with many families keen to remain there even if not in the same property – but partly also to movement in from Bristol and Portishead. The probable opening of the Portishead rail line, with a station at Pill, is already thought to be giving impetus to the housing market.

It is also the case that existing owners tend to extend rather than sell property and many local planning applications seek improvements and extensions – sideways or upwards. Infill is there to be exploited and many of the properties with larger gardens offer potential for one or more dwellings.

Need: There have long been concerns about the availability of affordable housing for local people in Pill and Easton. There are some over occupation as measured in rooms (see Table 2), there are significant numbers of families with dependent children and children under 4 (Table 3), there is a shortage of affordable housing for rent, and Pill West electoral ward lies in the most deprived 25% of wards in England. Recognition of the situation encouraged the formation of the Pill and District Community Land Trust in 2017. In order to provide more evidence on housing need the Trust undertook, in conjunction with North Somerset Council, a housing survey.

The Housing Survey: The aims of the survey were:

- To give an indication of the affordable housing need, tenure and house size for people with a local connection in the two parishes
- To investigate the housing need and aspirations of older residents in the parishes
- To establish the general level of support for a small development of affordable housing for local people with housing needs.

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

Key Findings were:

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

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

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

5.5 Housing Provision

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

The Pill and District Community Land Trust: Pill and District CLT Ltd is a Community Land Trust set up under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. There is a legal definition of a CLT to which PDCLT conforms - it is owned by the Community, run by a Board elected by the Community, operates for the benefit of the community, and is not run for personal profit

The first project of the Pill & District CLT Ltd is to provide affordable housing for people with a strong local connection to the area. Future projects could involve taking on other assets important to the community. The Board has (2017-2019) been seeking sites and engaging in discussion with landowners about their willingness to collaborate with a PDCLT project.

5.6 Housing Targets and Settlement Boundaries.

Housing targets established in Neighbourhood Plans must be consistent with national, regional and local housing policies – the National Planning Policy Framework, the North Somerset Council Core Strategy and Local Plan and Development Management Policies.

Neighbourhood Plans can set higher housing targets than the minimum required but cannot make plans for lower levels of housing.

In North Somerset a new Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) up to 2036 had been under development for some years. In August 2019, however, after Examination in public, the Inspectors indicated that they regarded the JSP as unsound. There is, therefore, as yet no formal strategic guidance as to the numbers of houses by 2036 that the Neighbourhood Plan should take into account. Any proposals in our Neighbourhood Plan must relate to the Local Plan 2018 which only goes up to 2026.

5.7 Local Options

Nevertheless the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group decided to examine the implications of three long-term housing scenarios:

Scenario1: Minimal Growth: no development except for brown field sites or Green Belt exception development such as that which might be put forward by the local Community Land Trust.

Scenario 2: Modest growth: Up to 150 new dwellings either within existing settlements or adjacent to boundaries – not as a single development but as a few small clusters (6-10 small sites of 15-20 dwellings), complementing and fitting in with existing housing. Sites would be adjacent to existing housing with access to local roads but no direct access to the A369, would preserve local walking and cycling routes and offer access to local shops and facilities.

Scenario 3 Major growth

Proposals have been made for for ‘Pill Green’¹ - a 70 acre 1,000 dwelling development in the Green Belt comprising a mix of two and three storey housing, some at higher densities. The development would offer two vehicle access points onto the A 369 with a single vehicle access towards Pill Centre, also a number of pedestrian access points. The proposal suggests access to employment opportunities in Bristol and elsewhere and a small area onsite for employment use, a mixed use local centre providing shops and commercial units, a small foodstore and apartments/office space on upper floors. The development presumes access to Priory Fields open space with sports provision located on the Village Green and would offer a new primary school on site with secondary education at St. Katherine’s School and elsewhere.

5.8 Assessment of Scenarios

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has assessed the three scenarios in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), North Somerset Council Core Strategy, the NSC Issues and Options Consultation Paper on the 2036 Local Plan, and community expressed views on the different proposals.

The factors against which the three scenarios have been assessed include

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Contribution to north Somerset affordable housing provision
- Vehicle traffic on the A 369 and on the Pill Loop
- Local walking and cycling routes
- Landscape sensitivity
- Environment and Biodiversity
- Open space
- Heritage assets
- The Local Economy
- Climate Change
- Access to local services
- Place making and Impact on existing communities

Scenario 1 Minimal Growth

This might meet the need for some local affordable housing but would make a minimal contribution to wider housing provision. There would be little impact on traffic, little environmental impact, and no threat to local open space. Improvements to low carbon initiatives could still be made. Local retail services would not benefit and other local services would not be stretched. Community views are divided Some wish to retain the area as it is

¹ Consultation Comment 15796321/2 submitted to the West of England Joint Spatial Plan Examination by Barton Willmore on behalf of Gallagher Estates.

and would not welcome any development growth at all but a majority accept the need for at least some housing growth².

Scenario 2 Medium Growth

This offers a strategy involving several smaller sites. It would not generate the economies of scale of a 1000 dwelling development, but NPPF (para 68) makes clear that small sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting need and can be provided relatively quickly. Scenario 2 is consistent with much of the argument of CS 32 (Service Villages) in the NSC Core Strategy. Nevertheless all Scenario 2 sites lie within the Green Belt unless the boundary of the Pill Settlement Area is widened and a new settlement area is established for Abbots Leigh. Scenario 2 is consistent with many of the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, for example those relating to small sites and the importance of walking and cycling.

Half a dozen small clusters of development located on the fringe of existing housing would add some traffic to the A 369 at each end of the Pill Loop and would generate traffic within Pill, but none of the possible sites feed directly onto the A 369. Small sites adjacent to existing housing would offer good walking or cycling access to Pill centre and would not impinge on Rights of Way or local paths. Smaller sites would not affect high landscape sensitivity standards and could be selected to avoid environmental or heritage damage. Local services could cope with a modest increase in households and local retail outlets would also gain some benefit.

Scenario 3 Major growth (1,000 dwellings at 'Pill Green')

The 1000 dwelling 'Pill Green' development is located in the Green Belt, lies outside the Pill Settlement Area and is contrary to NSC Core Strategy 6. The Green Belt plays a crucial role in protecting open countryside and prevents urban sprawl spreading from Bristol to the M5.

The claim that the development provides good access to Bristol is contradicted by evidence of the existing load on the A 369 (Background Paper 2). Two additional vehicle access points onto the A369 would only cause further delay/congestion. Accessing Pill Centre by the narrow St, George's Hill or the Haberfield junction or using the residential, Rudleigh Road and Church Path Road, the Pill Green development would also add traffic to the Pill Loop

Walking and cycling to work or to the centre of Pill would be easy for those Pill Green residents on the inner parts of the development and hence would benefit the local retail centre but other residents housed near the A369 would be more likely to make use of cars. .

Major development would threaten NSC Core Strategies on Nature Conservation (CS 4) and Landscape (CS 5) and CS 5 and the case for Pill Green makes no reference to the fact that the land above Crockerne Drive and Brookside has been assessed as of high landscape sensitivity³. Pill Green would threaten the Markham Brook NSC designated wildlife site and its designation as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest.

Land at Martcombe makes a crucial contribution to the interconnected ecological framework of of woodlands, pasture and grassland which characterise the area⁴. Whilst avoiding Priory Fields, the Village Green and the Allotments, the site would take up much of the open space between Pill and the A 369. The proposed development would make use of existing Rights of

² As evidenced by local surveys and opinions expressed at the Plan Consultation Exhibition.

³ North Somerset Council. Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, 2018 pp 45-47

⁴ See background paper 3 and the independent WildService Ecology consultancy report).

Way and footpaths but the character of these pathways would be lost and local surveys show how these footpaths are appreciated for their peace and quietness for local walking.

The 'Pill Green' development would represent a 50% increase on the 4,800 population of Pill/Easton and, with an aim of self sufficiency, would be unlikely to integrate well with the existing populations. The example of the Ham Green Redrow development illustrates the extent to which incoming population does not always mix easily with the existing community, and whilst Pill Green claims to complement the traditional housing design and styles of Pill there is more likely to be a divergence of culture and community than an intermingling and integration.

There is no assessment in the Pill Green case of the extent to which local services could cope with a 50% increase in population. It is true that local services could cope with a modest increase in households and local retail outlets could also gain some benefit from population growth, but health services are stretched and admissions to St Katherine's School would be difficult given the latter's new partnership within the Cathedral Trust and its commitment to providing significant places for Bristol children (currently running at 70% of intake). 1000 dwellings requires 420 primary school places and in later years swells secondary school numbers.

Whilst the Joint Spatial Plan is now redundant, it is significant that its 2016 paper for consultation concluded that the Easton in Gordano/Pill corridor is '*a very constrained location in terms of transport, Green Belt, heritage, landscape and ecology*'. The corridor was therefore explicitly excluded as a development possibility⁵.

5.9 Implications

Scenario 1 fails to meet the first strategic objective of this Plan – to contribute to addressing North Somerset housing demand and meeting local housing need through a mix of tenure, size and affordability.

Scenario 2 makes a modest contribution to meeting housing need and provides a framework for development which respects but does not dominate existing communities. The scenario is consistent with many of the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (e.g. those relating to small sites and the importance of walking and cycling) and also with NSC Core Strategy,

Scenario 3 runs counter to Green Belt and Landscape Quality policies and would threaten the biodiversity and the ecological framework of the area, would further damage air quality and would exacerbate traffic congestion on both the overloaded A369 and the Pill Loop.

⁵ Joint Spatial Plan: Towards an Emerging Spatial Strategy October 2016, Table 2.