

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

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Background Paper 6

Climate Change



January 2020

Background Papers were prepared over 2018 and 2019 to assist the Neighbourhood Plan Team develop its thinking and proposals. On Climate Change, much of this background work has been overtaken by community proposals and initiatives over the past eighteen months which are incorporated into Final October 2020 Plan

6 CLIMATE CHANGE

6.1 Background

It has been clear for many years that, globally, human activity is bringing about an historic catastrophe. Unless we change our ways of life radically and rapidly (especially those of us living in the industrialised and rich parts of the earth) it is well-nigh certain that climate change, environmental destruction and mass extinction will lead to societal crisis and an overwhelming loss of human life in the coming decades.

The science of what is happening is unequivocal. The world has warmed by an average of about 1.2°C since pre-industrial times - a dramatic and sudden acceleration compared to historical patterns. The evidence is clear that this is due to the greenhouse gases (such as carbon dioxide and methane) that human activities have emitted, and are continuing to emit, at an increasing rate into the atmosphere.

Some consequences are already with us and are damaging people's lives around the world – floods, landslides, heat waves, droughts and forest fires are all happening more often and more devastatingly than in the past. Recent UK experiences are bad enough, but mild compared with those of people in the developing world. Ice-melt in mountains and the polar regions is bringing other problems such as sea level rise in the fairly near future. On top of all that, human activity is killing off much of the natural world on which we depend, and modern agriculture is destroying the soil without which we all starve.

All of this has been understood since the early 1990s when the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up to give world governments scientific advice, and since then there have been various and repeated international agreements to reduce carbon emissions. Despite the agreements, global emissions of greenhouse gases have risen from about 22 billion tonnes (CO₂ equivalent) in 1990 to 42 billion tonnes in 2018, and the rate at which the climate is getting worse has increased. The last main report from the IPCC set out the position clearly. Humanity has a very short period of time to make major changes to pretty much every aspect of our lives if we are to prevent the climate crisis becoming a climate catastrophe.

The IPCC has concluded that drastic reductions of over 50% in total global emissions are needed by 2030, and that the developed world (which has done most to create this disaster) needs to lead the way.

The consequences of failure are disastrous. We are approaching a tipping point which would lead to runaway climate change as disasters caused by global warming (such as more frequent & devastating forest fires & sea ice melting) release yet more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere thus accelerating the problem and leading to a pretty much uninhabitable planet for our children and grandchildren.

The Parish Councils of Pill & Easton-in-Gordano and Abbots Leigh accept the scientific conclusions. Humans – mostly humans in the world's rich countries - have brought the world to crisis. An emergency response is needed to prevent catastrophe, and failure will wreck the lives of current and future generations. Consequently, both Councils have declared a climate emergency. They are amongst hundreds up and down the country to do so, along with over half the principal local authorities in England (including North Somerset, Bristol, and almost all their near neighbours.)

Both councils recognise that action at governmental and international level will be needed if this campaign to save our planetary environment for future generations is to be successful. But both also believe that local and individual action has benefits:

- it makes a contribution to the needed effort which, although not sufficient of itself, is valuable;
- it puts pressure on governments to take necessary actions and helps to validate such actions to the wider public;
- it helps prepare the community for the changes which will come;
- it helps individuals deal with the despair which the threatened devastation of the lives of future generations can bring.

To give substance to these declarations, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council has set up an Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group, with representation from Abbots Leigh Parish Council. The Group includes both councillors and interested members of the public and it has in turn set up sub-groups to address public engagement, carbon capture and Biodiversity, food, energy, and transport

These groups have only recently begun work but it is anticipated that they will both make recommendations and initiate actions intended to enable our communities as a whole and individuals within them to make significant changes which will mean we play a useful part in the vital international effort to combat climate change and biodiversity loss.

6.2 The Neighbourhood Plan

Sustainability is the core theme of this Neighbourhood Plan currently in preparation by the two parish councils. Across the whole plan, policies – for housing, transport, environment, heritage and community - are being framed in way which ensures that they will contribute positively to either reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and/or the enhancement of local biodiversity.

The Neighbourhood Plan, and its three key principles – the need to protect the past, to address the future and to react to the immediate present – reflect the urgency of Climate Change Emergency. The Neighbourhood Plan will contain some policies which can be brought forward at once, but there are others which will only evolve over time. For both the here and now and for the future the Environment and Climate Emergency Group will have a role to play.

Local action must be set within a global, national and regional context, and the Neighbourhood Plan – which addresses issues which can be addressed through the planning system must have regard to such external influences. In developing our Plan, we have had regard to the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, North Somerset Council Core strategies and the latest NSC commitment to combatting climate crisis.

6.3 The National Policy Planning Framework

Chapter 14 of the NPPF – Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change - makes clear that the planning system should

'help to change places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience, encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure'

To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should provide a positive strategy for energy, consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable, or low carbon supply systems.

'Local planning authorities should support community led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside areas identified in local plans or other strategic policies that are being taken forward through neighbourhood planning'.

6.4 North Somerset Council Core Strategy 2017

A central aim of the Core Strategy is *Living within Environmental Limits CS 1-5*). In summary Core Strategy seeks to address climate change by

- Reducing unsustainable carbon emissions
- Making all buildings more sustainable
- Encouraging sustainable transport patterns
- Planning for a sustainable distribution of land uses

CS 1 Addressing Climate Change and Carbon Reduction sums it up:

Much of North Somerset is rural in nature having Green Belt, and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations. The importance of a network of green space for wildlife and habitat protection, recreation and environmental reasons cannot be understated and should be actively enhanced through new development. The Core Strategy approach seeks to encourage a network of green spaces through built-up areas including a range of scales of green space from large multipurpose areas to green 'stepping stones', corridors, gardens and green roofs.

CS 4 Nature Conservation confirms this message;

North Somerset contains outstanding wildlife habitats and species. These include limestone grasslands, traditional orchards, wetlands, rhynes, commons, hedgerows, ancient woodlands and the Severn Estuary. Key species include rare horseshoe bats, otters, wildfowl and wading birds, slow-worms and water voles. The biodiversity of North Somerset will be maintained and enhanced by

- *seeking to meet local and national Biodiversity Action Plan targets taking account of climate change and the need for habitats and species to adapt to it;*
- *seeking to ensure that new development is designed to maximise benefits to biodiversity, incorporating, safeguarding and enhancing natural habitats and features and adding to them where possible, particularly networks of habitats.*
- *seeking to protect, connect and enhance important habitats, particularly designated sites, ancient woodlands and veteran trees;*
- *promoting the enhancement of existing and provision of new green infrastructure of value to wildlife;*
- *promoting native tree planting and well targeted woodland creation, and encouraging retention of trees, with a view to enhancing biodiversity.*

Elsewhere the NSC points to flood prevention, the importance of trees, the role of the Green Belt in enhancing biodiversity. In our Environment and Biodiversity Background Paper 3 the interconnected nature of the ecological framework of our area and this too is re-emphasised in Core Strategy 4.

The traditional hedgerows, stone walls and the extensive network of rural road verges, with scrub and grassland habitats, function as wildlife corridors, as well as refuges for

wildflowers, invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and birds. Hedgerows, areas of livestock grazing and features such as ponds, wetlands, scrub and woodland edges are all important to bats.

Old orchards and urban public and private open spaces, such as parks and urban gardens, are also important for biodiversity. Commons are also a valued resource, often comprising semi improved grassland which can be important for wildlife and recreation. Trees are very important for wildlife, providing food and shelter, nesting and roosting sites for birds and bats and habitats for invertebrates.

Local Initiatives: the declarations of climate emergencies by the Parish Councils of Pill & Easton-in-Gordano and Abbots Leigh mean that both are committed to developing policies that will lead to actions with one or more of three effects:

- a) reductions in carbon emissions
- b) enhancement of biodiversity
- c) increased carbon capture

The Environment & Climate Emergency Working Group described above is intended to ensure that appropriate policies are developed and tested as time goes by.

6.5 Energy

The policy ambitions under energy were in part developed in an open public workshop held in late 2018 and run by The Centre for Sustainable Energy. Following the meeting, people who had been present discussed the outcomes with friends and neighbours and reported back at a follow-up meeting some weeks later.

Renewable energy

Practical means to install sources of renewable energy with the parishes should be investigated and, as far as possible, installed. These might include:

- rooftop solar photovoltaic systems on both domestic, community and business premises.
- Ground-mounted solar arrays, especially on brownfield or industrial land. • wind turbines at appropriate locations.
- installation of renewable heat systems, such as air-source heat-pumps. These might be of particular interest in conjunction with solar pv systems and to those properties currently relying on oil-fired central heating.
- All new-build properties in the neighbourhood plan area to be required to install renewable energy systems from the beginning.

Approaches to encourage such installations, which might include the involvement of a community energy society or bulk purchase schemes to enable householders to access photovoltaic systems cheaply, should be sought.

Encouragement and advice should be provided to householders, community organisations and the owners of business premises to improve the energy efficiency of their properties.

Methods that might be used include:

- information leaflets
- public meetings involving expert advice
- specific advice to individual property holders from appropriate experts. These might include community organisations or advisers linked to renewable energy system installers
- all new properties in the NP area to be built to high standards of energy efficiency
- Improvements to loft insulation; cavity wall insulation; internal and external solid wall double glazing; installation of LED lighting; installation of battery technology (potentially, the use of electric vehicles as energy storage systems), methods to shift energy demand and/or improve the local use of renewably-generated energy. b)

Climate Change and Biodiversity: All possible means to increase the level of tree cover and biodiversity within the Neighbourhood Plan area should be encouraged and, where practical, directly implemented.

Approaches should include:

- Tree-planting schemes, including the creation of new woodland or orchards and planting in private gardens and public open spaces.
- Allowing suitable areas of land to regenerate naturally.
- Management of roadside verges and other public land to encourage wildflower growth, with associated benefits for insects and other wildlife
- Encouragement and advice to private landowners (including householders and organisations such as churches, schools, community buildings) private landowners (including householders and organisations such as churches, schools, community buildings) to allow lawns to become wildflower meadows
- Encouragement and advice to private landowners (including householders and organisations such as churches, schools, community buildings) to take steps to provide suitable habitat to encourage other wildlife such as birds and mammals. These steps might include the provision of boxes for nesting birds, or the interlinking gardens to enable easy movement for hedgehogs etc
- Only in exceptional circumstances should planning permission be given to allow the covering of gardens to provide hard standing

Food: Steps will be taken to encourage both the local production of food, and the use of food that is locally produced. Such steps might include:

- Encouragement and advice to private landowners (including householders and organisations such as churches, schools, community buildings) to make use of available land for food production
- the development of schemes to enable people with no access to appropriate land, to make use of any such land made available to grow food. These might include the creation of small 'clubs' of people to share the management of allotment plots.
- The development of schemes to ensure that food that is locally grown is used optimally and not wasted. (For example, spare produce from the Allotments, from the Community Orchard, or from fruit trees in private gardens)

- work with local shops to increase the amount of food grown relatively close to the NP area that is available for purchase
- work with local shops to increase the amount of organic, Fairtrade and vegetarian/vegan food that is available for purchase, along with public information campaigns to help people understand the environmental benefits of such food.
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Transport: The central aims of Transport policy ambitions will be to ensure that local people have access to jobs and the services they need whilst reducing air pollution and carbon emissions from transport, making it easier for people to walk and cycle safely and making it safe for children to play outside by encouraging

a) the use of public transport, walking and cycling and reduce reliance on private cars

b) the adoption of electric vehicles In line with those aims, policies will be adopted to

- provide electric vehicle charging points centrally in the village
- encourage the formation of car sharing clubs
- investigate the provision of community transport
- work with local providers to improve the availability, reliability, frequency and cost of public transport
- improve local facilities for these walking and cycling and encourage people to use these facilities
- impose a 20mph speed limit in most parts of Pill and Easton-in-Gordano, and on side roads in Abbots Leigh