

**DRAFT PORTISHEAD TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PLANNING
& REGULATORY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21st NOVEMBER 2018**

PRESENT:

- In the Chair** - Councillor Burden
- Councillors** - Councillors Cameron, Cottrell, R. Cruse, Koops, Lord, Mason, Mitchell, Oyns and Terry.
- Clerk of the meeting** - J. Duffy, Town Clerk

There were 13 members of the public present plus Mr. Michael Reep, Planning Policy Manager at North Somerset Council. There were no Press present.

PL672 APOLOGIES (Agenda item .1)

Councillors Clark and M. Cruse

Clerk's Note: Councillor Pasley's apologies were registered with the Assistant Clerk.

PL673 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda item .2)

There were no declarations of interest recorded in the Declaration of Interests Register.

PL674 WELCOMING/INTRODUCTIONS TO MEETING (Agenda item .3)

Councillor Burden welcomed everyone and asked them to note that there were no fire drills planned and that the meeting was being audio and visually recorded for inclusion on the internet.

The purpose of the meeting is to seek the Committee's approval to establish answers to the questions raised in the Local Plan 2036 Issues and Options consultation and to formulate responses assisted by the public to the four discussion topics.

PL675 OUTLINE OF ISSUES & OPTIONS CONSULTATION (Agenda item .4)

Mr. Reep provided a PowerPoint presentation explaining the background to the Issues and Options consultation. A copy of the PowerPoint is included with these minutes under appendix A.

Mr. Reep explained that all Planning Authorities have to produce a Local Plan to guide the new development in the future, based on the need for housing, jobs and basic infrastructure.

The current framework in North Somerset includes a Core Strategy, a Site Allocations Plan and a Development Management Plan, these are valid until 2026.

The main document for making the changes is called the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP). The JSP is being jointly prepared by North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Bath & North East Somerset and Bristol. The JSP forms a high-level strategic plan, setting out the number of houses, jobs, key infrastructure and the role and function of the greenbelt across the whole West of England region. The four authorities have produced a document which has now been submitted to examination.

There are 12 strategic development locations across the four authority areas, with four of these areas in North Somerset. They are Nailsea, Backwell, Churchill and Banwell. All four sites are outside the greenbelt.

For North Somerset the JSP identifies the total number of houses as 25,082 over the next 25 years. The numbers are still at the examination stage and hearings are likely to be held in May 2019. The findings from the hearing will be taken forward to the Local Plan. Issues and Options is the first stage of the process and identifies the key issues and what choices can be pursued. Eventually a full plan will set out the proposed allocations and choices.

Portishead has seen a lot of growth recently and there is little scope for further growth as the town is tightly constrained by greenbelt. A Town Vision will identify the key issues for the town going forward. North Somerset Council are keen to ensure that its Local Plan reflects the objectives and aspirations of Portishead. North Somerset Council hopes to see that the Town Vision form part of the Issue and Options document as the principle guide for how the town wishes to move forward. This will be the same for Nailsea, Clevedon and Weston-super-Mare. There needs to be an agreed set of objectives for the town.

Mr. Reep ran through the key constraints for Portishead.

- The settlement boundary, should it be reviewed? There is currently little scope for development but could the boundary be flexed to allow for pockets or parcels of development. Is the Settlement Boundary fit for purpose and what opportunities are there to adjust or amend it?
- The big constraint is the greenbelt, which wraps around both Bristol and Portishead. It is a planning tool that protects the countryside

from development. There is debate through the JSP as to the role of the greenbelt.

- Flood plain constrains development in North Somerset. You can mitigate for development within the floodplain but it can be costly. Development in the floodplain should be avoided.
- Other constraints include environmental designations. Around Portishead these include the internationally important mud flats along the Severn Estuary. There are the Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI) which are of national importance and the local wild life sites and nature reserves.

There are other constraints which limit the opportunities to flex the Settlement boundaries. Through the Town Vision and the work North Somerset Council are doing on the Issues & Options document the town can consider what its needs are going forward. There are four key issues for the Town to consider; residential mix, transport, employment land, environmental protection.

North Somerset Council are consulting on the Issues and Options document until 10th December 2018.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Agenda item .5)

PL676 DISCUSSION TOPICS (Agenda item .6)

Cllr Burden opened up the meeting to allow discussion from both councillors and the public.

6.1 Transport

The current strategy to address the town's access to the Primary Road Network places heavy reliance on the re-establishment of the rail link to Bristol. Do you think that this strategy is the correct one, or should it be amended to place greater emphasis on highway capacity improvements?

In no particular order the following points were raised:

- The infrastructure deficit from all the development in Portishead particularly with regard to transport.
- Will the Railway happen? In reality, is the money there for a single line track.
- The key site for employment growth in this area is Severn Side. People from Portishead will be looking for employment within that area over the plan period. How do we improve the transport links to that area knowing that currently you have to travel through J19?

- Consider pushing for a North bound services area at Clevedon (J20) on the M5 which will relieve pressure on J19.
- Consider revisiting a scheme suggested by Avon County Council, namely that there is a 2nd crossing of the river Avon at primary road level.
- People are working at the port. There should be a regular bus service linking Portishead to Severn Side.
- There should be a North bound services at J20 which would relieve congestion on the J19 services. Portbury Dock should be forced to have a dedicated road rather than use the J19 roundabout.
- Could the railway line be used to run a metro bus route instead of the train, creating a more flexible and attractive option linking to existing services in and around Bristol.

The meeting discussed the proposed Portishead Railway line including the route and costs.

- The hope of a railway has allowed Highways England to disregard making improvements to Junction 19 in the belief that the railway will resolve the congestion issues.
- The lifting of the Severn Bridge tolls will lead to increased volumes of traffic on the motorways and local road networks.
- Has there been a traffic survey to evaluate where people are traveling to and from?
- Creating employment opportunities in Portishead will reduce the demand on J19.
- A direct highways link between Nailsea and the M5 at junction 20 could have an effect on the opportunity to put a services in at Clevedon, (more likely to have a positive effect).
- The suggestion of a bridge (the River Avon) has a lot of merit. It wouldn't just be for car traffic, but for public transport and would be more flexible than the railway option.
- Bristol Port company will not give up their heavy rail system, a light rail or tram system would need to work in conjunction with their track.
- It was felt unlikely that residents of Nailsea would drive back towards Clevedon to join the motorway network to travel North bound towards Bristol. Therefore, the local road network will be unable to cope with additional vehicles from the development in Nailsea and other sites across the district. (Airport traffic)
- Concern over the adverse effect on the highways network in Portishead from other development outlined within the plan.

- Footpaths and cycle paths should become bridleways to allow their use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians. They should be linked up across the district to create a network. The positives to this scheme would be to improve health and encourage tourism using multi users' paths. Developers would pay for these paths via contributions.
- The current resilience of the road network is poor within the district. A bridge over the Avon could go some way towards improving resilience. Roads could be widened to reduce the need for travel through small villages.
- The compulsory purchase of the old light railway line between Clevedon and Portishead to create a bridle path.

6.2 **Employment Land**

The Greenbelt is now tightly drawn around most of the developed areas of the Town. To what extent, if any, should this be relaxed to allow existing businesses to expand and to attract new?

- Portishead will become a dormitory town due to a lack of employment and business premises being developed.
- If employment is increased within the town it would reduce out commuting.
- Successful businesses are moving out of the town as they cannot expand within the town. It is not offices necessarily but multi-use space. This type of employment land should be encouraged. Be ambitious with allowing businesses to expand and consider amending the greenbelt.
- greenbelt needs to be looked at to allow for additional employment land.
- Employment land is being converted into housing already within Portishead, plus the threat to the land at Old Mill Road. The greenbelt could be moved to accommodate employment land but it would be extremely likely that the land in question would fall within another parish.
- Portishead has a variety of small spaces for start up companies, but not the medium size employment spaces. Why have the developers not converted some of the larger offices? A mix of sizes are preferable.

Cheviot Meadows and its change in designation was briefly discussed.

- Portishead has tried to resist the change of use from employment land to residential land.

- The use of brown field sites should be considered over greenbelt sites.
- There may be justification for pushing the greenbelt back for employment land and a great deal of thought must be given to how that land is protected for employment use (only) in the future.
- Concern was expressed that altering the greenbelt for employment land could open the floodgates for residential development within the greenbelt. How do you protect the land under the current legislation for employment use only?
- There is little brownfield land left in Portishead.
- Where is the natural boundary once you push back the greenbelt and how do you protect it?
- Does Portishead want to be a dormitory settlement with employment going out to Bristol and Severn Side? Portishead needs space for employment, but there is not much space left in the town to expand. Where are the businesses going to go? The town needs to keep a range of businesses and a skilled workforce.
- If employment moves out of the North Somerset area it will take the business rates with it. It is not in North Somerset's interest to be covered in housing. Going forward all business rates will go to the local authority in which the business is located and will offset the Council Tax.
- Concern was raised that the town could lose really important recreational land if the greenbelt is altered. This would have an impact on the quality of life for young people within the town.

Mr. Reep shared the Town Council's concerns regarding greenbelt with regards to changing a designation and then achieving the wrong outcome. He suggested that the realignment of the greenbelt is not completely dismissed and gave the example of Royal Portbury Dock and Court House Farm, which was taken out of the greenbelt but safeguarded purely for port use. This was evidence based for a specific port use and could be proved to a Planning Inspector at a Planning Enquiry. There is a risk but it may be worth taking. Alternatively, the land can be protected by taking ownership of it.

6.3 Residential Mix

Given the limited allocation of additional residential growth identified for Portishead, how can the imbalance of property mix be addressed over the next Plan period?

- There is an imbalance in the residential mix in Portishead.
- Where will low-cost housing (affordable) go? Without pushing the boundaries, there is simply not the available land for additional residential housing.
- What are the alternatives? A town needs a full range of ages from the very young to the old? What is the least worst option? Allow selected development for affordable housing on redesignated greenbelt land.
- Developers state that 'affordable home' are affordable by Portishead affordability rates, which are higher and not realistic for local first-time buyers and families.
- There is no Social Housing being built in Portishead.
- Care must be used when using the title 'affordable housing', other titles were suggested including 'social housing', 'shared ownership', housing association', 'starter homes', 'self-build' and 'sub-market'.

Mr Reep explained that on sites over 10 dwellings, 30% should be affordable. This is a matter for negotiation and viability. A target for affordable housing could be set for Portishead within the Town Vision and could be aspirational.

- A change in the greenbelt could accommodate additional housing but with the 30% affordable would come the 70% market value houses. It is highly unlikely that a development could be 100% affordable. There needs to be a mix of housing so the town has a healthy mix of people.
- There is a risk that a ghetto could be created by building 100% affordable in one location.
- Is Portishead satisfied by the limited amount of growth identified for the town? Should there be a period set aside where there is no development in the town? Should there be limited identified growth.
- Has the town met its allocation for affordable homes within the current local plan? Mr. Reep will investigate the numbers.
- The residential mix is changing with families pooling resources and households now featuring extended families. Could the planning system accommodate conversions and extensions to reflect these changes in lifestyle.
- Do we need a breathing space for the town to deal with the existing growth or do we want to push the greenbelt and get more housing?

- Does the town want the additional 70% that will come with the 30% affordable?
- How many second homes are there within the town? Should second home ownership be looked at along with houses bought up for investment but left unoccupied?
- No new housing growth up to 2036 might be an unrealistic ambition and unfair on future generations. Development should be small scale and tightly controlled with many caveats.
- Any growth, be it employment or housing should be supported by additional infrastructure e.g. schools, doctors and dentists.

The meeting discussed current pupil numbers at Gordano School and whether the numbers would reduce going forward.

Mr. Reep was asked to explain what caveats and constraints could be used to protect in perpetuity the greenbelt, if the town should choose to develop small pockets. He explained that the Government states that greenbelt land is very important and should only be changed in exceptional circumstances, such as when going through the Local Plan process. This needs to be evidence based and the greenbelt should only be used for clearly defined purposes which will be included within policy. Portishead needs to state the principles it wishes to explore with North Somerset and identify the risks and opportunities during the Issues and Options process.

- Could a site be allocated purely for 100% affordable housing, in perpetuity.
- Could there be divergent thinking on the type of social housing (affordable housing) specified for a site? Could consideration be given to different types of architectural styles.

6.4 Environmental Protection

The natural environment of the Town is something that is valued by old and new residents alike. Many of the areas that contribute to this will come under severe pressure from development over the Plan Period. What extra measures should the Town be considering to protect these areas?

- The constraints for the town include; the greenbelt, the RAMSAR designation on the coast, the Environmental Protection area between Portishead and Portbury (nature reserve or flood plain), the low-lying flood plain land around the town and Weston Big

Wood environs. If landscape designations are removed there are very few areas left that could be developed.

- A plan document from 1988 called Gordano Valley - The Future for Wildlife provided a lot of technical ecological details. The suggestion was made that the document should be updated to provide a future approach to protect the land in and around Portishead.
- Kilkenny Fields is protected under the Core Strategy as a Local Green Space which is the equivalent of acting like greenbelt designation.
- The town should maintain the protections outlined already, unless there are ecological reasons to amend.

These Minutes summarise what was said during the meeting and were views expressed by the speaker.

PL677 SUGGESTED RESPONSES (Agenda item .7)

Question 1 Agree that Weston should be the main growth area but that there is a real need in the north of the District to provide opportunities for people wishing to live and work nearer Bristol and the growth area of south Gloucester.

Question 2 Clevedon No comment recommended

Question 3 Nailsea and Backwell Note the proposal but think the proposed transport improvements are very unlikely to be forthcoming and might adversely affect Portishead.

Question 4 Portishead **Response needs more work by the working group**

Question 5 Greenbelt **Response needs more work by working group**

Question 6 Central Parishes No comment recommended

Question 7 Mendip Hills No comment recommended

Question 8 Settlement Hierarchy **Response needs more work by the working group**

Question 9 Settlement Boundaries **Response needs more work by the working group**

Question 10 Vision for Banwell No comment recommended

Question 11 Banwell Garden Villages No comment recommended

Question 12 Banwell Employment 13 14 15 16 & 17 No comment recommended

Question 18 No comment recommended

Questions 19 to 26 Nailsea and Backwell. Express concerns that the highway proposals will exasperate Portishead's transport issues

Question 27 Urban living. Option 3 recommended

Questions 28 .29 Urban living in Weston and the A370 Corridor. No comment recommended

Questions 30 to 37. All about Weston. No comment recommended

Question 38 Bristol Airport and Dock. Recommend a specific policy regarding RPD to support intensification within its existing footprint and to propose enhanced transport links to Avonmouth and Severn side. Regarding the airport we welcome this facility for both employment and its ease of access for our region

Question 39 Transport. Recommend the need for new thinking about Portishead's transport links particularly its possible connection to the main growth employment growth area within the sub-region. Also, that all new cycle path proposals should be designed for multi-use by people and horses.

Question 40 Self Build Policy. Welcome a policy to encourage self-build as it will provide a local need and encourage variety of design and type.

Question 41 Affordable Housing. **General comment to be expanded upon** is that we need a better balance of housing mix to allow for affordable housing.

Question 42 Woodland neighbourhoods /Greenbelt. Consider this is not relevant to the town

Question 43 Health impact assessment. Recommend that we welcome the integrated policy towards health impact

Question 44 Climate change. Recommend that this should be embedded within the entire strategies of the plan. *(I am concerned that the plans locations and strategies should make the best use of the districts resources)*.

Question 45 Renewable and Low Carbon generation. Recommend that this be encouraged in all appropriate locations

Question 46 Large scale Renewable energy. We acknowledge the wide-ranging opportunities with the district and consider that any proposals should be dealt with on its merit.

Question 47 Carbon reduction.

Question 48 Flood risk. *Recommend that very little if any development be considered in the flood zone around Portishead.*

Question 49 Previously developed land in countryside Recommend that this should be encouraged if in otherwise sustainable locations.

Question 50 Holiday accommodation in countryside Recommend no comment

Question 51 Minerals assume that there will be no proposals for minerals to be worked in or near the Town

Question 52 Electric vehicle charging points Recommend that these should be widely available throughout the district

Question 53 Green infrastructure. Portishead and its surrounding areas contain considerable environmental assets that must be protected and enhanced over the plan period. These include the RAMSAR designated coastline to the north, the wildlife corridor and nature reserve to the east and ancient woodland of Weston Big Wood and the national nature reserve of the Gordano valley.

Question 54 General request for new policy areas **Response needs more work by the working group**

The Planning and Regulatory Committee will formulate a response to the Issues and Options consultation on behalf of Portishead Town Council.

The next Planning & Regulatory committee meeting is being held on 5th December 2018.

Meeting closed 9.47pm

Signed:
Planning & Regulatory Chairman
on 9th January 2019