

AREA BASED POLICIES AND COMMUNITY ACTIONS

The following section of the neighbourhood plan contains policies related to wellbeing:

Priorities for Wyndham Way Study Area

Community Action Wyndham Way Study Area

Priorities for Portishead Town Centre

Policy PTC1: Protection of Portishead Town Centre Character and Vitality

Policy PTC2: Business Use of Upper Floors

Policy PTC3: Town Centre Housing

Policy PTC4: Keeping the Town Centre Accessible to Everybody

Policy PTC5: Shopfronts and Signage

UN SDGs

The policies in this section contribute to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



PLACE FOCUSED POLICIES AND CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

6.0 Portishead Town Centre and the Wyndham Way study area are at the heart of the town's economic, community and cultural life. The shaping and future of both areas bring together development themes covered by the Neighbourhood Plan, but also, in the case of the town centre, very specific and distinct issues and opportunities. The Neighbourhood Plan therefore sets out clear and distinct policies for the town centre and provides conditions to inform support for future proposals that may emerge from Placemaking Plan proposals for the Wyndham Way Study Area.

6.1 Our town centre remains a vibrant local hub but it faces challenges from alternative forms of retailing and has recently suffered the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes, together with changes in Government planning legislation, create a need for the Neighbourhood Plan to provide a locally distinct set of place specific policies to direct and guide its ongoing quality and long term vitality at the hub of the community. This may be reinforced by a future town centre strategy.

6.2 At the time of drafting the Neighbourhood Plan, the Wyndham Way Study Area is the focus of a regeneration

and development strategy, being led by North Somerset Council, in partnership with the landowners and Portishead Town Council. The Placemaking Plan work has included a distinct stream of community engagement which has been referenced in drafting town centre Neighborhood Plan policies.

6.3 Upon adoption, North Somerset's emerging guidance and policy framework will take the lead in setting the development agenda for the Wyndham Way study area. Neighbourhood Plan policy can inform how the proposals have regard to our community needs and priorities.

6.4 The Neighbourhood Plan can inform how the proposals have regard to our community needs and priorities. However, the Town Council's input is distinct and separate from its role as the "Qualifying Body" for the Neighbourhood Plan.



WYNDHAM WAY STUDY AREA

CONTEXT

6.5 North Somerset Council are leading a partnership with Portishead Town Council and Aberdeen Standard Investments (ASI), one of the key land owners, to work together to guide future development of land between the High Street, the Marina and the planned new transport hub, known as the Wyndham Way Study Area (WWSA).

6.6 The identified boundary of the WWSA reflects areas where change is considered possible and also where it could help to unlock potential wider benefits such as new routes and connections or improved use of previously developed, 'brownfield', land.

6.7 The WWSA forms part of Portishead town centre. Allocated sites within the WWSA include Old Mill Road (mixed use development), Gordano Gate (employment use) and Harbour Road / Gordano Gate (residential). There are further allocations beyond the WWSA boundary, and the High Street is designated as a Primary Shopping Area.

6.8 The study area contains existing employment and retail uses that make an existing contribution to the value and offer of the town centre and local employment

opportunities. These valued uses are protected by Neighbourhood Plan town centre and employment policies PTC1 and PPE1. Proposals that may come forward for these sites will only be supported where these uses and employment are retained.

6.9 The WWSA is adjacent to land reserved in the Local Plan for the construction of a new integrated transport hub for Portishead including a railway station. It will be essential that all proposals for the study area do not prejudice delivery of this facility and are fully connected to it.

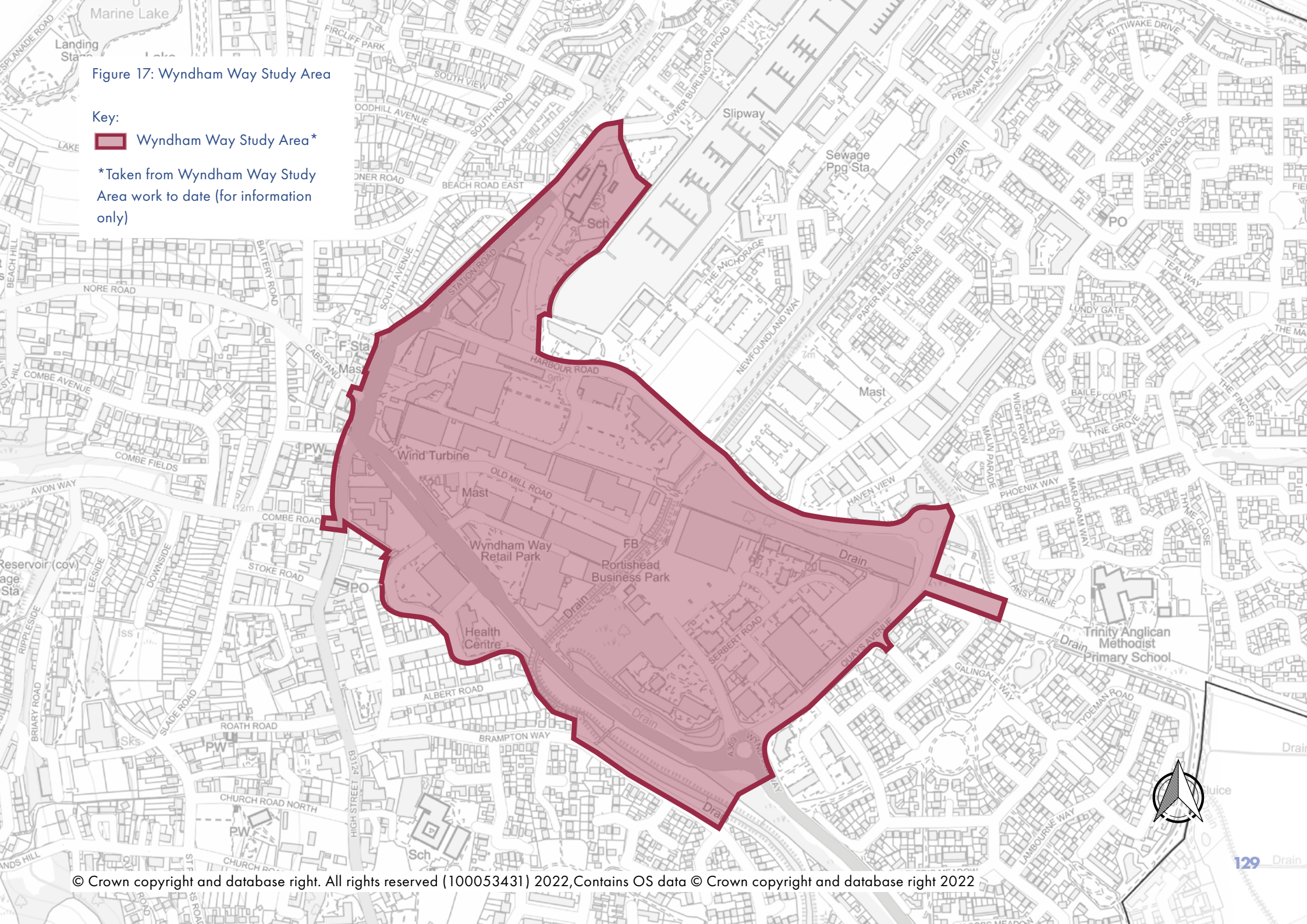
6.10 Work on the Neighbourhood Plan has identified some emerging priorities for the community for the Wyndham Way Study Area. These are summarised in the Wyndham Way Emerging Community Priorities Document (2022).

Figure 17: Wyndham Way Study Area

Key:

 Wyndham Way Study Area*

*Taken from Wyndham Way Study Area work to date (for information only)



Relevant Objective

O12 To deliver a connected, accessible, inclusive, attractive, vibrant and distinctive town centre at the heart of Portishead's community and economic life.

To provide input and policy support to enable and require North Somerset Council to secure the delivery of high quality, sustainable employment-led development and regeneration of land within the Wyndham Way Study Area.

Local Policy Context

| | |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CS1 | Addressing climate change and carbon reduction |
| CS10 | Transportation and Movement |
| CS20 | Supporting a successful economy |
| DM47 | Proposals for economic development within towns and defined settlements |
| DM22 | Existing and proposed railway lines |

WYNDHAM WAY STUDY AREA

The Town Council will continue to work in partnership with North Somerset Council and landowners to progress future plans for the Wyndham Way Study Area as defined in Figure 17.

In particular, regard will be given to:

- Addressing Portishead's community needs and aspirations for the area, evidenced by Neighbourhood Plan and North Somerset Council public consultation feedback relating to the Wyndham Way Study Area development framework and any subsequent adopted SPD.
- Ensuring the ongoing viability of existing valued employment and town centre retail uses within the study area is protected
- Ensuring proposals are fully integrated with proposals for Portishead Railway Station and contribute to delivery of sustainable transportation and active travel policies and North Somerset Council parking standards.

PORTISHEAD TOWN CENTRE

CONTEXT

6.11 Portishead High Street is the historic focus of the town's retailing and community services. It retains a vibrant mix of uses and a distinct character. It also retains its role as a vibrant focus of local shopping, services and community life. The Neighbourhood Plan aims to protect this vitality and support its ongoing resilience and potential for transformation to achieve long term viability as a community hub.

6.12 North Somerset Development Management Policies DM60 and DM47 (Town Centres) state that within defined boundaries of the town centre of Portishead (as illustrated on Figure 18), the vibrancy, vitality and community focus provided by the town centres will be maintained and enhanced. Proposals for main town centre uses within these areas will, in principle, be supported provided they contribute to the improvement of the town centre.

6.13 Emerging North Somerset Policy DP26 (Primary shopping areas) provides support for retail uses (Class Ea) and for other Class E uses, conditional upon their supporting town centre footfall and vitality and extend business hours within defined primary frontages (defined on the North

Somerset Local Plan Policies Map), but it resists inappropriate or overly large floorspace uses that could harm the character and vitality of the centre.

6.14 Policy DM47 also seeks to ensure that Portishead town centre will be maintained as the focus for town centre uses, requiring a sequential assessment approach to be applied to optimise the use of available town centres sites before out of centre.

6.15 Changes to the Town and Country Planning Act Use Class Order in 2020 and 2021 have consolidated the majority of high street uses within a new single use class E, enabling changes of use within the class through permitted development. This does not apply to proposed changes to the appearance of the frontage or building. New Class MA also enables vacant class E premises to be changed to residential accommodation through the simplified Prior Approvals process. This may make it easier for new ventures to bring new vitality to an ailing high street. However, it also removes layers of previous protection given to primary retail frontages, risking their loss.

6.16 Within the limitations of planning legislation, Portishead Neighbourhood Plan aims to protect the vitality, viability and character of our high street through supporting the protection and investment in active business and service frontages, but also by seeking to prevent harm to both neighbouring uses and character through inappropriate changes to frontages or service areas which do require permission.



Relevant Objective

O11 To support Portishead's economy and local employment, and support the continued development of a diverse, high value and low carbon economy.

Local Policy Context

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CS1 | Addressing climate change and carbon reduction |
| CS20 | Supporting a successful economy. |
| DM 47 | Proposals for Economic Development |
| DM 60 | Town Centres |
| DM 63 | Primary Frontages |
| DM 66 | Sequential Approach to Retail Development within or Adjacent to Town Centres |

POLICY PTC1 - PROTECTION OF PORTISHEAD TOWN CENTRE CHARACTER AND VITALITY

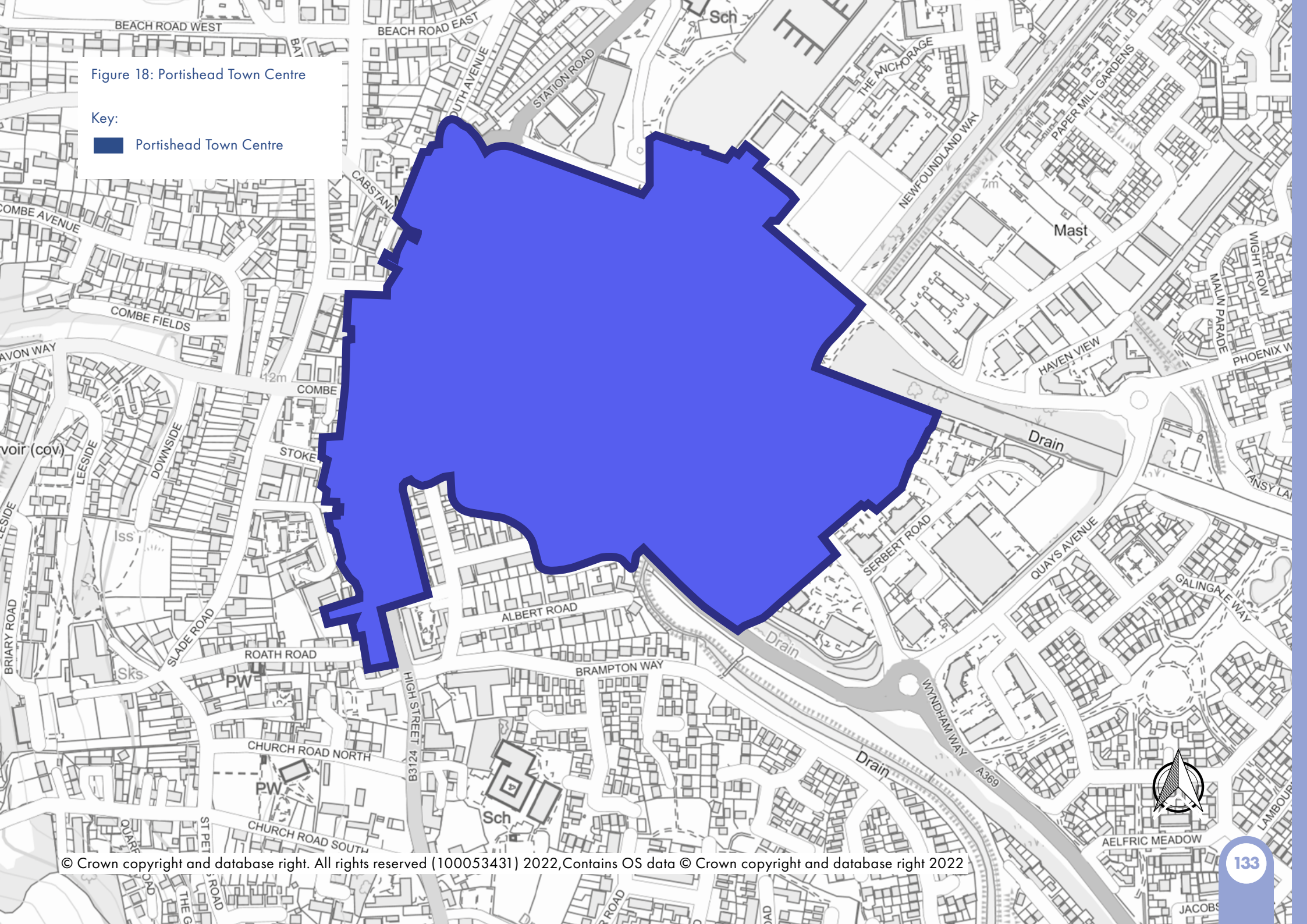
Within Portishead Town Centre (defined by North Somerset emerging Local Plan (policy DM60) and illustrated in Figure 17, proposals for development including changes of use and operational development will be supported where they:

- Conform with North Somerset Local Plan Policies DM60 (Town Centres)
- Contribute to the continued development of a diverse, high value and low carbon economy
- Protect or increase the viability and quality of retailing, commercial and community service ground floor frontages, and the vitality of the evening economy
- Conserve or enhance the character of the town centre and, where appropriate, the Town Centre Conservation Area.

Figure 18: Portishead Town Centre

Key:

■ Portishead Town Centre



BUSINESS USE OF UPPER FLOORS

Context

6.17 Portishead town centre is characterised by terraces and groups of largely two storey buildings. Ground floor frontage uses provide the primary activity and vitality. However, upper floors make a meaningful contribution to business, service floorspace and also residential accommodation.

6.18 Visual surveys undertaken as part of evidence for the Portishead Community Character Statement 2021 have estimated Portishead High Street contains about 6000 sq.m of upper floor space. Surveys concluded that just over 50% of the space over shops was used for offices or residential and the remainder appeared currently under-used. This could amount to about 3000 sq.m of underused space that could be harnessed to deliver greater local economic, community facility benefit or to contribute to addressing the local need for smaller and cheaper places to live, in a highly sustainable location.

6.19 The Neighbourhood Plan aims to encourage owners to optimise the value of their upper floor space through supporting new business and service uses.

6.20 North Somerset Council has published a shopfront design guide that includes a section with guidance to inform the change of use of upper floor use.

Relevant Objective

O11 To support Portishead's economy and local employment, and support the continued development of a diverse, high value and low carbon economy.

Local Policy Context

CS1 Addressing climate change and carbon reduction
CS12 Achieving High Quality Design and Place Making
CS20 Supporting a successful economy
DM 47 Proposals for Economic Development
DM 60 Town Centres
DM 63 Primary Frontages
North Somerset Shopfront Design Guide SPD 2019

POLICY PTC2 - BUSINESS USE OF UPPER FLOORS

Proposals that make greater use of upper floors of town centre premises, including for offices and small businesses uses (within use class E) will be supported where they:

- Do not conflict with the operations of neighbouring existing uses
- Have independent pedestrian access
- Incorporate appropriate measures to manage refuse and servicing
- Incorporate accessibility measures to optimise inclusivity
- Sustain or enhance the vitality of Portishead town centre
- Maintain or enhance the quality of the host building.

TOWN CENTRE HOUSING

6.21 The Portishead Local Housing Needs Assessment 2021 identified a severe shortage of smaller and affordable market housing to buy or rent. Portishead is also not capable of expanding to meet housing need on greenfield sites. Policies must therefore optimise the opportunities for housing to meet local needs to be delivered on previously used land and through the appropriate re-purposing of existing sites and buildings.

6.22 As town centres move away from a largely retail led economy, new approaches to their vitality and resilience have recognised that balanced amounts of appropriately located residential accommodation can make a positive contribution to town centre attractiveness and vitality. Under-used floorspace within Portishead High Street may present an opportunity to provide small and affordable housing contributing to meeting local needs.

6.23 However, protection of the viability and operations of existing businesses is paramount. It will be vital that development of particularly residential accommodation does not conflict with existing business uses that affect viability and resident amenity.

6.24 Upper floor residential accommodation must be self-contained. Entrances and stairs should be accessed from the front of the property and must not compromise the existing ground floor uses. Servicing arrangements must not harm high street accessibility or character or existing access. This should be located at the rear of properties and not on the private forecourts that characterise the high street. Within the town centre, under-used back land plots provide potential to accommodate such infrastructure and parking.

6.25 Accommodation must provide an acceptable standard of accommodation, meeting government space standards for small dwellings. They must also meet building regulation standards for quality of light and ventilation.

Relevant Objective

O11 To support Portishead's economy and local employment, and support the continued development of a diverse, high value and low carbon economy.

Local Policy Context

CS20 Supporting a successful economy

POLICY PTC3 - TOWN CENTRE HOUSING

Change of use of existing town centre floorspace to residential will be supported where:

- It is restricted to the use of upper floors
- It would not result in the loss of an existing viable town centre use
- It would contribute positively to the vitality and diversity of the town centre
- It would not cause conflicts with existing neighbouring commercial or community facility town centre uses
- Internal space meets current Government space standard guidelines.
- There is a good quality of natural light and ventilation
- It has a separate dedicated access
- It provides adequate accessible space for the storage of refuse and recycling
- Accommodation conforms with North Somerset Council Car Parking Standards.

Proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have had regard to the North Somerset Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted 2019).

KEEPING THE TOWN CENTRE ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYBODY

Context

6.26 The 2011 census found that 18.5% of the North Somerset population had a limiting long-term illness (LLTI) and that 33% of households in the district contained one or more persons with a LLTI. There is forecast to be a 54% increase in Portishead's community of people over the age of 65 during the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan. Unless our buildings, streets and spaces are designed and adapted to meet changing access needs, many local people will be excluded from our community and its everyday activities.

6.27 Maximising the viability and attractiveness of Portishead town centre is inextricably linked to providing an inclusive and accessible public realm, connecting to inclusive accessible shops and services. This includes maintaining accessible frontage forecourts as much as accessible entrances and internal spaces.

6.28 Outside trading and hospitality has boomed during the pandemic. It has enhanced street life and is likely to become a permanent feature of our high street.

6.29 Outside trading and dining requires planning consent where it changes the use of the external space. Maintaining safe access along the high street for all pedestrians and in particular people with sight and mobility impairment is essential. The Town Council will support proposals that demonstrate this has been achieved. It also encourages high street businesses to utilise outside forecourt space with consideration to all members of the community.

Relevant Objective

O11 To support Portishead's economy and local employment, and support the continued development of a diverse, high value and low carbon economy.

Existing Policy Context

- CS12 Achieving High Quality Design and Place-making,
- DM32 High quality design and place-making
- DM33 Inclusive Access into Non-residential Buildings

POLICY PTC4 - KEEPING THE TOWN CENTRE ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYBODY

Development proposals for new shopfronts and community facility premises will be supported where they provide inclusive and step-less connections between the public realm and the premises.

Proposals to change the use of outside frontage spaces to enable external hospitality or trading will only be supported where;

- they maintain at least a 2m clear footway access,
- are operated within hours to avoid harm to neighbouring residents and
- associated outdoor street furniture makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the town centre.

Businesses which utilise external private forecourts are encouraged to sensitively locate seating and goods to provide accessible connections to the public pavement and to install cycle and buggy parking as well as opportunities for customers to sit.

SHOPFRONTS & SIGNAGE

Context

6.30 Shopfront design quality and the amount, location and quality of commercial signage is a key factor in protecting, enhancing and celebrating the town centre's distinction and character.

[North Somerset Council's Shopfront Design Guidance \(2019\)](#)⁵⁷ provides detailed district wide advice on how good design quality and appropriate signage should be incorporated into high streets.

6.31 The heritage and distinctive character of the town centre, recorded in the Portishead Community Design Statement 2021, make a significant contribution to its attractiveness as a local destination and its lasting vitality. The Design Statement identifies pairs of shops on the High Street built in the Victorian period as making a particular contribution to the town centre's quality. Changes in shopfronts and proposals for new signage on these buildings will be of particular importance.

6.32 The Neighbourhood Plan supports the use of upper floors for town centre businesses that complement ground floor uses. Signage for these uses must be limited to small signs at ground floor

level, associated with the entrances. Wall mounted and projecting signs above ground floor fascia level are harmful to character and will not be supported.

Relevant Objective

O11 To support Portishead's economy and local employment, and support the continued development of a diverse, high value and low carbon economy.

Local Policy Context

CS12 Achieving High Quality Design
DM32 and Placemaking
DM63 High Quality Design and
 Placemaking
North Somerset Shopfront Design Guide
SPD 2019

POLICY PTC5 - SHOPFRONTS & SIGNAGE

Shopfront and town centre business planning and advertisement applications will be supported where they conserve or enhance the existing quality of the shopfront and signage.

Proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have had regard to the North Somerset Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted 2019).

Proposed signage for upper floor uses must be limited to small signs at ground floor level, associated with their dedicated entrance. Projecting signs above ground floor level are harmful to character and will not be supported where they are judged to be harmful to the character of the town centre or the host building.

TOWN CENTRE COMMUNITY ACTIONS

Article Four Direction

6.33 Where protection of town centre Class E uses is considered to be critical to protecting the vitality and viability of Portishead Town Centre, the Town Council will work with North Somerset Council to test the feasibility of, and potentially implement, an Article Four Direction within the central core of the town centre. This may remove current Use Class MA Prior Approval/Permitted Development rights to change the use of vacant town centre frontages to residential use.

Town Centre Strategy

6.34 The Town Council will work with local stakeholders to test the feasibility of and potentially lead the development of a vision and strategy to guide and support the long-term vitality and viability of Portishead town centre.

6.35 It would be a freestanding strategy and not part of the Portishead Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan provides planning policy support towards delivery of a strategy, the Strategy could consider the future priorities for the town centre

in greater detail and address initiatives and projects beyond the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Key Short Term Town Centre Recovery and Enhancement Projects

6.36 The Portishead Community Design Statement has identified potential areas for improvement in the appearance and public realm quality within the town centre. Some improvements may be possible as short term or “quick win” investments. They have the added potential to contribute to rebuilding lost customer footfall and vitality following the impacts of COVID-19.

6.37 Prior to and without prejudice to the production of a longer-term vision and town centre strategy, the Town Council will work with local stakeholders to identify, prioritise and plan implementation of short term and “quick win” enhancement projects within the town centre.

WHAT IS ARTICLE FOUR?

New use Class MA permits vacant smaller business premises including shops, restaurants, offices and health services, now in Class E, to be changed to residential use without planning permission and with greatly reduced restrictions.

An Article Four Direction is a planning tool that enables Local Authorities to remove permitted development rights when they would cause unacceptable harm. The NPPF allows their very restricted use to remove Class MA rights to avoid wholly unacceptable impacts to essential core primary shopping, that would seriously undermine vitality and viability.

APPENDIX 1: LOCAL EVIDENCE BASE LIST

All of the locally produced evidence base documents are available to view online at: www.portishead.gov.uk

To request a paper copy of an evidence base report, please contact the Town Council office by emailing:

office@portishead.gov.uk

or calling:

01275 847078

ENVIRONMENT

Portishead Community Character Statement (NDP Steering Group and Place Studio, 2022)

Portishead Local Key Views Report (NDP Steering Group and Place Studio, 2022)

Portishead Green and Blue Infrastructure Evidence Base Report (NDP Steering Group and Place Studio, 2022)

Portishead Local Green Space Evidence Base Report (NDP Steering Group and Place Studio, 2022)

Portishead Locally valued Non-Designated Heritage Assets Report (NDP Steering Group and Place Studio, 2022)

Portishead Renewable Energy Study – Task 1 – Proposed Scope of the Renewable Energy Study (Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2021)

WELLBEING

Portishead Community Facilities Evidence Base Report (NDP Steering Group and Place Studio, 2022)

Portishead Housing Needs Assessment (AECOM 2021)

Local Housing Needs Local Data Analysis (NDP Steering Group 2021)

PROSPERITY

Employment and Business Survey Analysis 2021 (NDP Steering Group 2021)

AREA BASED POLICIES AND COMMUNITY ACTIONS

Wyndham Way Study Area: Emerging Community Priorities (Place Studio and NDP Steering Group 2022)

APPENDIX 2: THE PORTISHEAD PRE-APPLICATION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL

The aim of this Protocol is to do all possible so that new development in Portishead Neighbourhood Area helps to shape good quality places to live and work and as a means of working towards improved outcomes for the current and future communities. One particularly effective way of achieving this is through early, planned engagement with the community via the Town Council.

Use of this Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of Portishead Town Council on the merits of any final application, even if a good engagement process has been agreed and followed.

Context

National Planning Policy and Guidance: The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) makes several mentions of the considerable value of pre-application involvement, for example in paragraph 39:

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private

resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

The Planning Practice Guidance Note Design: process and tools (2019) also highlights the importance and benefits of early engagement:

“Communities can effectively shape both design policies and development through a collaborative process of meaningful participation. Early engagement and linking engagement activities to key stages of design decision-making and plan-making can empower people to inform the vision, design policies and the design of schemes.”

“It is important that local planning authorities or applicants demonstrate how all views are listened to and considered.”

[North Somerset Council – Statement of Community Involvement \(2019\)⁵⁸](#): The SCI explains the Council’s policy on consultation and involvement in the preparation of planning policy documents and planning applications.

[The 10 Commitments for Effective Pre-application Engagement⁵⁹](#) published by a

group representing planning, industry and community groups states that:

“Early, collaborative discussions between developers, public sector agencies and the communities affected by a new development can help to shape better quality, more accepted schemes and ensure improved outcomes for the community. These discussions also avoid wasted effort and costs.”

Whilst there is an emphasis on early and positive pre-application engagement in ‘major development’ proposals, it is the view of Portishead Town Council that, for their community, the above should also apply to smaller developments in the town because these can have at least as much impact as larger ones. Portishead Town Council fully supports and endorses all of the above and will play its appropriate role in delivering high quality pre-application engagement with themselves and the wider Portishead community as proposals come forward.

Process

Drawing from the 10 Commitments and other guidance on best practice, potential applicants should work with Portishead Town Council to fulfil the following principles:

- 'Day One' contact: By far the best results for all emerge when contact is made with our Town Council, and through us with our local community, at the very start of any process; consulting people late with already prepared schemes is not productive.
- Agreed Process: A key aim of this early contact is to discuss and agree the nature, scope, timetable, information and so forth of the engagement – i.e. the process to be followed.
- Applicant Leadership but Shared Responsibility: Although it is the applicant's role to lead and fund engagement, the Town Council will offer as much support as possible to any agreed process; for example by providing local information, contact details for local groups, advice on meeting places, access to newsletters and so forth.
- Openness and Transparency: Building

trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having a process that is as open as possible on all sides, though the Town Council will respect any issues of clear commercial confidentiality.

- Agreed Community: A project may have an impact on a limited number of people or on the whole town. The details of those to be involved will need to be discussed and agreed for any project, as will the potential ways to contact and engage them.
- Agreed Scope: There will also need to be agreement about the scope of the engagement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.).
- Proportionality: The nature and scale of engagement will be balanced in appropriate proportion to the scale and likely impact of any proposals.
- Final Reporting: The applicant should submit, with any final application, a thorough report describing and summarising the outcomes of the engagement, demonstrating how the proposals have (or have not) responded to results. If they have not, a short note should be included to explain this. If the process has been

followed fully, Portishead Town Council will endorse this report; if not they may submit their own evaluation of it.

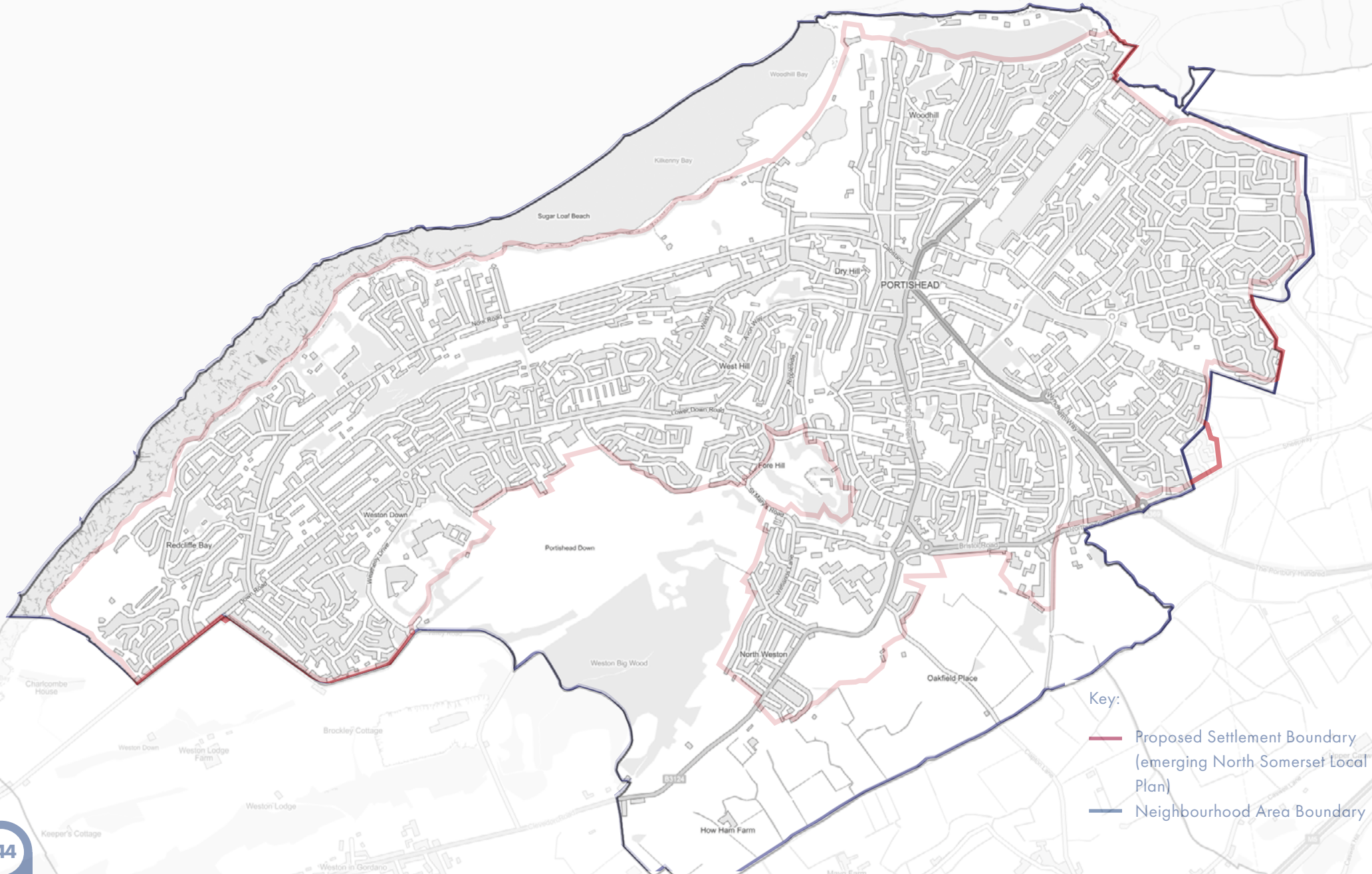
Initial contact should be made at the very outset with the Town Council via:

office@portishead.gov.uk

The Town Council commits to doing all possible to arrange an initial meeting as soon as possible following this contact.

There is considerable benefit for applicants in also sharing any process with North Somerset Council, as planning authority, and securing their agreement to it. As per the opening proviso, endorsement of an engagement process and results does not necessarily mean support for the resulting proposals.

APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED PORTISHEAD SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY (EMERGING NORTH SOMERSET LOCAL PLAN)



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5. **National Planning Practice Guidance** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#:~:text=A%20policy%20in%20a%20neighbourhood,and%20supported%20by%20appropriate%20evidence.>
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