

South Somerset Climate Action

# A VISION FOR ILMINSTER AS A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY



**If something is sustainable we can  
go on doing it indefinitely;  
if it isn't — we can't.**

Jonathon Porritt

# A VISION FOR ILMINSTER

## AS A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

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*Each of the above sections is divided into 2 parts:*

#### ***For the Near Future –***

*Action to be taken in the next 3-5 years*

#### ***For the Longer Term –***

*Action to be taken in perhaps 5-10 years.*

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Briefing Prepared by Somerset Wildlife Trust for SSCA

## **South Somerset Climate Action**

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[www.southsomersetclimateaction.org.uk](http://www.southsomersetclimateaction.org.uk)

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## INTRODUCTION

### The need for vision

The Town Council are creating 'A Strategic Vision for Ilminster' – a vision that will influence almost every aspect of the town's development for many years.

The council presented its proposals to several meetings and took representations from a variety of groups including *South Somerset Climate Action* (SSCA) which has prompted the proposals outlined here. These proposals are the result of two well attended SSCA public meetings where the council's vision was discussed at great length and environmental and sustainability issues were raised.

In preparing this submission we have combined some of the Town Council's sections – and crucially we have added one on Energy. We think this addition and the combined sections makes it easier to focus on the essential issues of creating a more sustainable community.

### Climate dangers – the need for action

We now know that the climate is changing and why. The need for education is over – it is now time for action. There is a vital need to prepare Ilminster for such extreme weather incidents such as the floods and tornadoes recently experienced in Gloucester and Birmingham and to prepare the community for a low or zero carbon life.

### The need to change the way we live

*South Somerset Climate Action* think the Town Council's vision needs to address two key issues – climate change and sustainability. These issues require us to change the way we live. Such change will require strong leadership but can lead to a better, tighter community.

#### Over 11 years, WOKING COUNCIL *cut*

Energy consumption by	44%
CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions by	71%
Water consumption by	44%
Total energy & water savings	Almost £5 million

# OUR PROPOSALS

## 1 ENERGY

Councils at every level in the country are increasingly concerned to create sustainable programmes. Apart from climate considerations, when oil production is perceived to have peaked – which may happen at any time – all energy-dependent costs will rocket and a *transition* to a low energy economy will occur. Thus, there are now several councils which are anticipating the problem and aiming to become ‘Transition Towns’ before they are forced to do so. We think this needs investigating. This will also have the benefit of creating a useful network between councils working together towards this and similar goals.

### For the Near Future

#### *Existing and New Development*

- encourage insulation, draught-proofing and installing of solar energy systems particularly in council owned or managed premises
- ensure that all new-build development provides its own energy from embedded renewable resources
- use building materials with low embodied energy.

#### *Energy Saving*

- lights, street lights and floodlights to be switched off at midnight or before
- shop and office lighting are switched off out of hours
- heating in public buildings, libraries, schools be reduced to 18°C
- local Chamber of Commerce to work to minimise heat loss from buildings
- public transport be greatly improved to minimise vehicle use.

### For the Longer Term

#### *New energy sources\*- investigate the building of:*

- wind power
- district heating
- micro generation
- local power stations

\*funding now available for local ownership of systems

## 2 TRANSPORT

Aim to achieve a more human environment in the town centre; as well as seeking to reduce the use of cars by encouraging public and non-motorised transport.

### For the Near Future

#### *Pedestrians*

- design a shopping trolley scheme
- establish "Pedestrian Priority" in the centre of the town

#### *Cyclists*

- provide safer cycle routes in conjunction with 'safe routes to schools' scheme
- encourage people to come into the town on their bikes
- create better facilities for bicycle security – especially at schools and in town centre
- signing should be improved directing people to cycle paths
- develop dedicated cycle routes with interested bodies such as Sustrans - the sustainable transport charity.

#### *Motor Bikes and Scooters*

- incorporate more facilities for motor bikes/scooters

#### *Buses*

- encourage use of buses, eg for short shopping trips
- establish express services between towns as proposed by SCC in 1999 - buses keep to the main roads with a few stops near villages
- establish small bus services to serve Ilminster's housing estates and the outlying villages

#### *Facilities for the Disabled, Elderly and other Non Car Users.*

- create more disabled parking bays

### For the Longer Term

#### *Pedestrians*

- redesign pavements to facilitate the use of shopping trolleys

#### *Cyclists*

- create two way cycle routes throughout town – even on one-way roads
- restrict use of some country lanes to bicycles, farm traffic & residents' cars



## TRANSPORT (Continued)

- support plans to extend the Cycle Route North to Taunton and beyond as part of Sustrans Coast to Coast Cycle Route

### *Motor Bikes and Scooters*

- create a town centre priority parking scheme

### *Buses*

- furnish stops with shelters and cycle racks
- encourage buses to carry bicycles, folding ones inside
- create facilities for coaches to park in the town or drop off points at bus stops or in car parks



### *Facilities for the Disabled, Elderly and other Non Car Users.*

- create dropped kerbs for wheelchair access
- create shuttle or rickshaw taxi service for shopping.

### *Recreation*

- extend cycle routes of varying length and difficulty
- develop and maintain a coherent network of footpaths, rights of way and bridleways

### *Attitude to Major Road Development*

- seek to make large-scale improvements to public transport using funds allocated for the dualling of the A358. [London's Congestion Charge was introduced at the same time as a huge increase in public transport]
- investigate a separate cycle route along A358
- anticipate the need for alternative fuel supplies and charging facilities for electric vehicles



### 3 TOWN CENTRE & SHOPPING

Our aims here are to encourage a more pleasant pedestrian environment by reducing car use and food miles, and extending the opportunities to buy local produce: meeting needs locally will mean a reduction in traffic.

#### For the Near Future

- establish loyalty cards for local shops to encourage people to shop locally
- aim to reduce waste generally
- make locally produced & organic produce easily available
- recycling centres needed in town – for plastics and cardboard as well as bottle banks etc
- expand existing schemes of providing food/goods delivery service to outlying villages/hamlets to reduce shopping trips into town
- develop the plans in progress to enlarge Thursday market
- create shop mobility programme based at Tesco car park

#### For the Longer Term

- reconsider pedestrianisation – see also Transport
- establish car parking within easy reach of town centre.



## 4 COMMUNITY

Energy consciousness should be of prime concern in the provision of any new facilities — in the construction process, the materials used and especially in minimising energy required to operate the building.

The active participation of the community could increase social cohesion.

### For the Near Future

#### *Facilities*

- award grants for insulation, draught-proofing, low energy light bulbs, & possibly double glazing and solar water heating.

### For the Longer Term

#### *Facilities*

- establish grants to help organisations to buy insulation, draught-proofing and low energy light bulbs, and possibly double glazing and solar water heating

#### *Health*

- investigate building a cottage hospital and maternity unit in the town
- new health centre would have consultants attending from Taunton/Yeovil hospitals so reducing journeys to hospitals.

#### *A New Secondary School*

- *work towards a new comprehensive school involving the pupils & parents in its planning and architecture*



## 5 ENVIRONMENT

The desirable end must be towards local production and creating a more satisfying environment.

### For the Near Future

#### *Food Production*

- sustain and expand allotments schemes for private food production.
- vegetables from local farms eg Greenway, Lower Sea Farm.
- explore County Farms potential for local produce, engagement with schools in town, providing produce for Thursday market
- create scheme to use vegetable/fruit/plant waste for compost on allotments

### For the Longer Term

#### *Sports Centre*

- develop sustainable sports centre facilities including a swimming pool

#### *Young People's Facilities*

- *set up a café in Play Area at recreation grounds, serving healthy & local foods*



## 6 HOUSING & EMPLOYMENT

Creating low energy housing, local jobs and local energy generation are the key issues.

### For the Near Future

- enforce Local Authorities' right to set own standards
- work towards making all new buildings zero energy
- employ the Merton principle in new development (In simple terms - the London Borough of Merton has developed the principle that in the designs of new buildings at least 10% of the energy required should be provided from sustainable sources. Some councils have adopted higher standards.)
- encourage sustainable refurbishment of older houses
- examine particular problems of making listed buildings energy efficient
- support schemes which provide low cost housing which are zero-rated
- advertise energy efficiency drive as is done for recycling
- make individual advice and guidance more available



### For the Longer Term

- on the Horlicks site, create a flagship development generating its own heat and power
- scrutinise planning applications in terms of energy efficiency
- charge owners of energy efficient housing a lower tax
- land currently used for business and providing employment should not be granted change of use to residential status
- build car free housing estates
- encourage local employment



## CONCLUSION

Some of the above proposals could be adopted with little fuss and to obvious advantage. Others might be electorally difficult. Yet increasing numbers of people are aghast at the slow pace of political change. We think the Council has the opportunity now to become a beacon of change. Reducing the Town Council's carbon footprint will soon be a matter of law, not just the wishes of a vocal minority.

Ilminster could become a more vital and dynamic centre and be better prepared for substantial increases in energy costs (see page 4).

Councils that work from a vision of their town's total needs will help their communities to enjoy a more satisfying and sustainable environment – true quality of life.

Pedestrians, especially children and old people, as well as cyclists, feel vulnerable because it is increasingly obvious that the balance between humans and vehicles is wrong. Unless traffic is constrained, death, injury and damage (like the recent impact on the Market House) will increase.

A strong emphasis on public transport and cycling could transform the town's centre to one more sympathetic to people socialising and enjoying Ilminster's beauty as well as shopping.

When drafting the final version of 'The Strategic Vision' councillors may care to note the Appendix prepared by the Somerset Wildlife Trust. This body has 20,000 members in Somerset and knows the impact of our towns, transport systems - indeed our way of life - upon the whole of the environment.

Some of our suggestions may be shown to be inappropriate. Valid points may have been missed. Yet we trust that this document will provide ample food for thought.

We know that councillors have to consider many views and balance conflicting interests: we hope that these suggestions prove to be in everyone's interest.

We again thank the Mayor and her councillors and congratulate them on their initiative.

Members of *South Somerset Climate Action* would welcome the opportunity to help in any way we can.

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## APPENDIX

### Government Planning Policy Briefing

#### **Sustainable development is now part of the purpose of the planning system.**

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1), published by Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in 2006, sets out the overarching planning policies on delivering sustainable development through the planning system.

It states (section entitled "Protection and enhancement of the environment"):

*"Development plan policies should take account of environmental issues such as **mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change through reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the use of renewable energy** . . ."*

So that is **existing policy** and already quite a strong requirement to afford weight to climate change. But then in December of last year DCLG issued a consultation document on a proposed supplement to PPS1 on Planning and Climate Change the eventual effect of which is likely to make climate change an even stronger consideration in planning.

While the document is only emerging policy, unusually it does set out transitional arrangements that presumably apply right away.

It states (paragraph 1.16):

*"Where revisions to RSS or DPDs are inconsistent with the Key Planning Objectives in Planning and Climate Change the Department expects RPBs and LPAs to put work in hand to ensure consistency before their adoption"*

A DPD is a Development Plan Document and would therefore include the Local Development Framework (the replacement for the Local Plan and Structure Plans), which presumably the Town Plan

consultation is linked to. LPA is the Local Planning Authority, which in this case would be South Somerset District Council rather than the Town Council directly.

The **Key Planning Objectives**, set out in Planning & Climate Change, are (para 6):

*"Regional Planning Bodies and all **planning authorities** should prepare and deliver spatial strategies that:*

- Make a full contribution to delivering the government's **climate change programme and energy policies**, and in doing so contribute to global sustainability;*
- In enabling the provision of new homes, jobs, services, and infrastructure and shaping the places where people live and work, secure the highest viable standard of **resource and energy efficiency and reduction in carbon emissions**;*
- Deliver urban patterns of growth that help secure the fullest possible use of **sustainable transport** for moving freight, public transport, cycling, walking; and, overall, **reduce the need to travel, especially by car**;*
- Secure new development and shape places resilient to the effects of **climate change** in ways consistent with **social cohesion and inclusion**;*
- Sustain **biodiversity** and in doing so recognise the distribution of **habitats** and species will be affected by **climate change**;*
- Reflect the development needs and interest of communities and enable them to contribute effectively to **tackling climate change**; and;- Respond to the concerns of business and encourage competitiveness and technological innovation."*

The consultation document on the Planning Policy Statement: **Planning and Climate Change** Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 is at: [http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/142/ConsultationPlanningPolicyStatementPlanningandClimateChangeSupplementtoPlanning1\\_id1505142.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/142/ConsultationPlanningPolicyStatementPlanningandClimateChangeSupplementtoPlanning1_id1505142.pdf) **PPS1** is at: [http://communities.gov.uk/pub/9/PlanningPolicyStatement1DeliveringSustainableDevelopment\\_id1507009.rtf](http://communities.gov.uk/pub/9/PlanningPolicyStatement1DeliveringSustainableDevelopment_id1507009.rtf)

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