

# **Core Strategy Area Profile**

Options for Consideration  
Consultation  
4th October – 24th December 2010

## **Highcliffe**



Prepared by Christchurch Borough Council and  
East Dorset District Council as part of the Local Development  
Framework

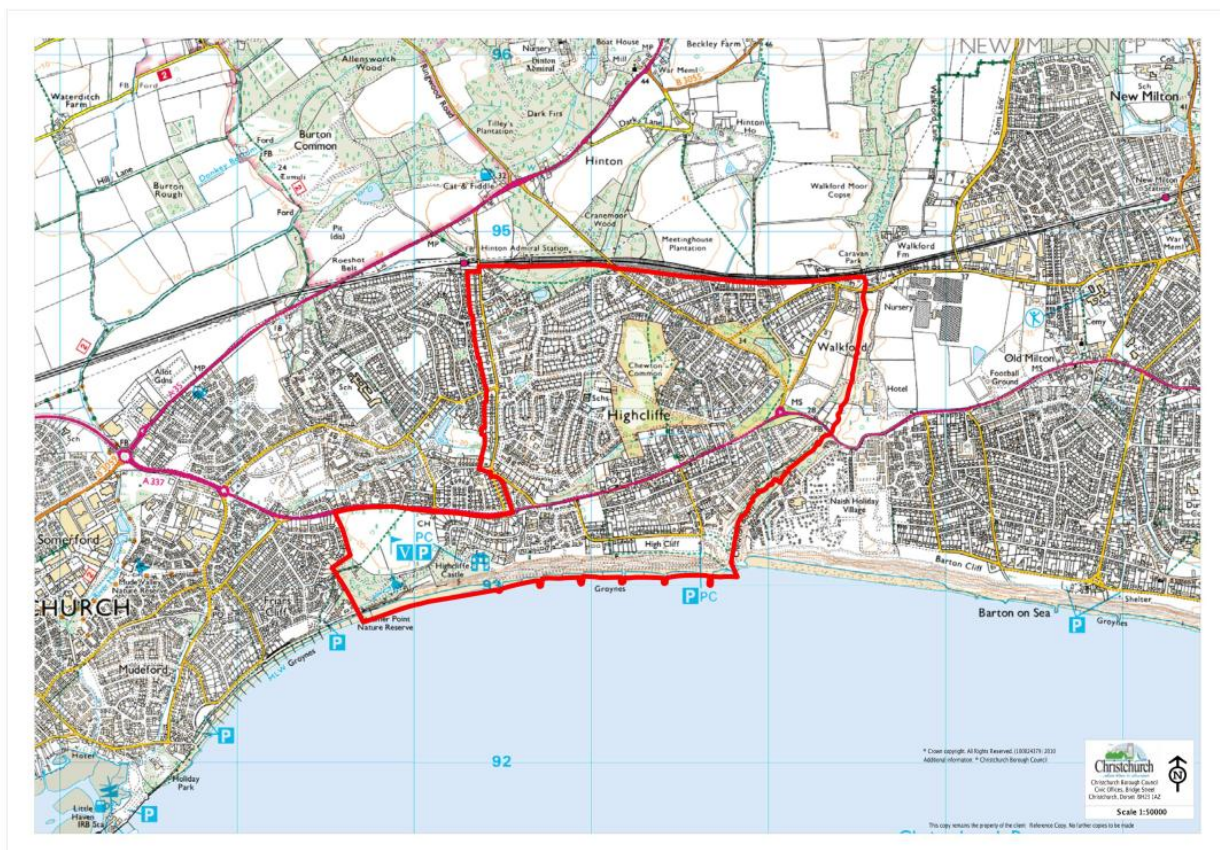
October 2010



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## 1 Area Overview

**1.1** This profile area is the most eastern neighbourhood of the Borough of Christchurch and consists of two administrative wards: Highcliffe and North Highcliffe and Walkford. The area is contained on its northern side by the Railway. The busy A337 runs through the area connecting Highcliffe with the A35 to the town centre and Hampshire to the west.



**Picture 1.1 Location Map**

**1.2** Highcliffe has developed as a small town with extensive suburban housing around a local commercial high street, designated as a district centre. The centre provides a range of convenience and comparison units and after Christchurch Town Centre is the second largest retail centre in the Borough

**1.3** The area has a strong separate identity within Christchurch as 'Highcliffe'. It is diverse in character and lacks architectural homogeneity, with modern housing estates blending in with mature and established residential areas.

### Baseline data

	<b>Highcliffe and Walkford</b>	<b>Christchurch Borough</b>
Area of the ward	362 ha	5,043 ha
Ward Population estimated mid 2008	6,700	45,824
<b>Population Age Structure (2008 Mid-Year Estimates)</b>		
0 – 15 years	750 (11.2%)	7,223 (16%)

16 –59 (F) / 16 – 64 (M)	2,640 (39%)	22,969 (50%)
60 (F) 65 (M) +	3,310 (49%)	15,632 (34%)
<b>Deprivation Data</b>		
Index of Multiple Deprivation (2007)	There are 30 Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Christchurch and Highcliffe ward has 4 SOAs within its boundary: Walkford (30), Chewton (29), Highcliffe (28) and Hintonwood (27). Hintonwood is the second least deprived area in the Borough and Highcliffe is in the bottom half of the least deprived of the 30 SOAs. Chewton has a higher deprivation score and is ranked 9 <sup>th</sup> most deprived in the Borough and Walkford is ranked 10 <sup>th</sup> .	Christchurch Borough is classified at 220 out of 354 UA/districts nationwide.

**Table 1.1**

## Strategic Issues

**1.4** The Highcliffe and Walkford ward has the highest percentage of elderly residents in the Borough, with a considerably high proportion of pensioners (65%). The large elderly population is likely to continue to grow, which will have implications for the provision of services for the elderly and their longer term care. The impact of this demographic will be a continuing low birth rate. However the concentration of ageing population may be balanced by the increase in working age population, associated with the projected housing growth and improved employment opportunities, which may increase demand on existing schools.

**1.5** The cost of housing is very high relative to income. This means that younger people and young families are unlikely to move here at present resulting in an unbalanced population.

## 2 Planning Policy Context

### Highcliffe District Centre

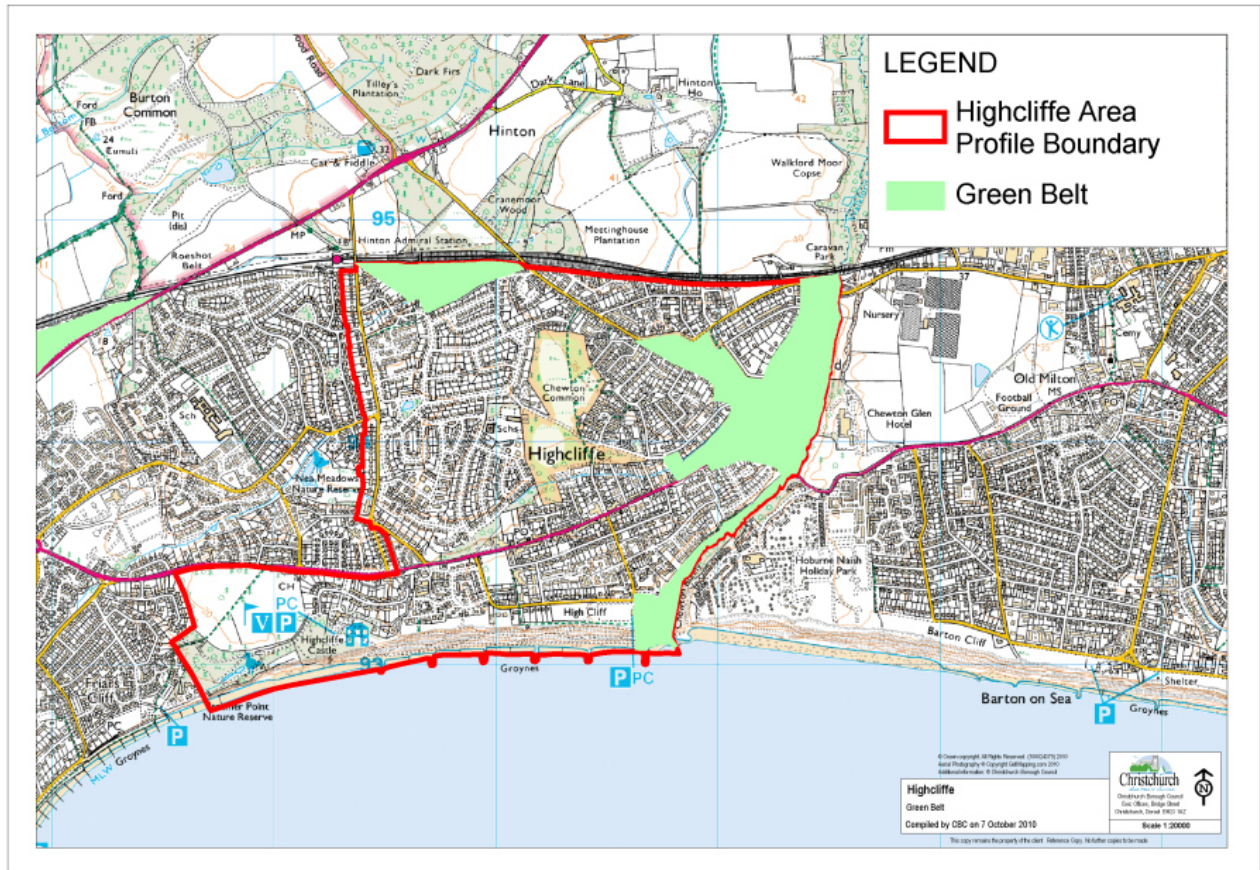
**2.1** Highcliffe District Centre, located along Lymington Road, performs the role of a commercial hub in the eastern part of the Borough, containing a fairly good choice of comparison and convenience outlets. The Local Plan designated a Shopping Core along Lymington Road (ES2) where loss of retail uses is restricted.

**2.2** The 2008 NLP Retail Study suggests that between 9,685 to 11,200 sqm of additional A1 comparison floorspace need to be provided in the Borough in the next 20 years. Although the main focus for retail growth will be Christchurch Town Centre, primarily due to better development opportunities and accessibility, Highcliffe District Centre will need to accommodate 770-835 sqm of A1 comparison floorspace. The priorities for the centre should be limited growth in predominantly small to medium sized units.

### Green Belt

**2.3** The ward is protected by the Green Belt from the north and east. The open land provides contrast to the compact urban area of Highcliffe and acts as transition space between the clusters of residential development and the wider countryside, located to the north of the railway line.

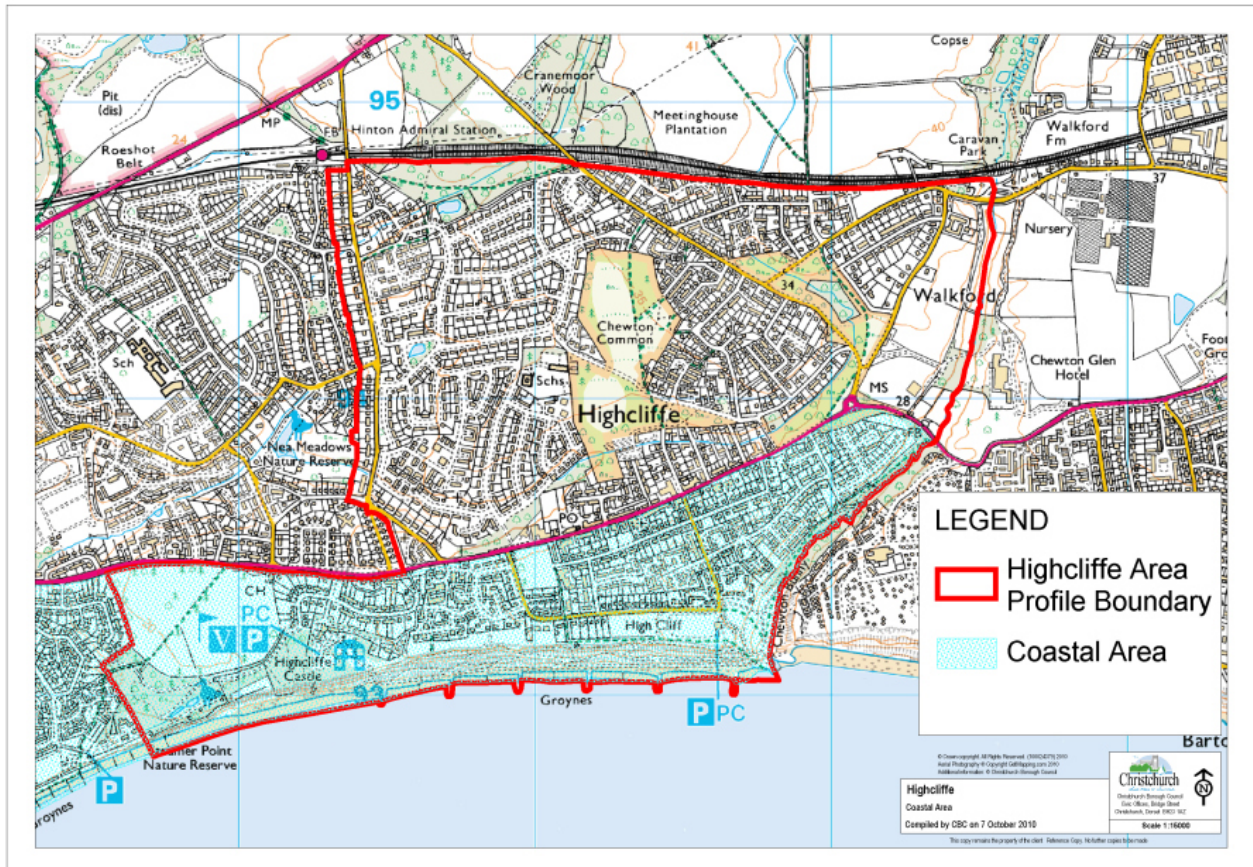




Picture 2.1 Highcliffe and Walkford Green Belt

## Coastal Area

**2.4** The cliffs and adjoining areas to the south of the ward are designated as a Coastal Area (Local Plan Policy ENV9). The policy affords protection against inappropriate development that could detract from the visual dominance of the cliffs, the defining landscape characteristic of the area, and ensure new development is of an appropriate scale and design.

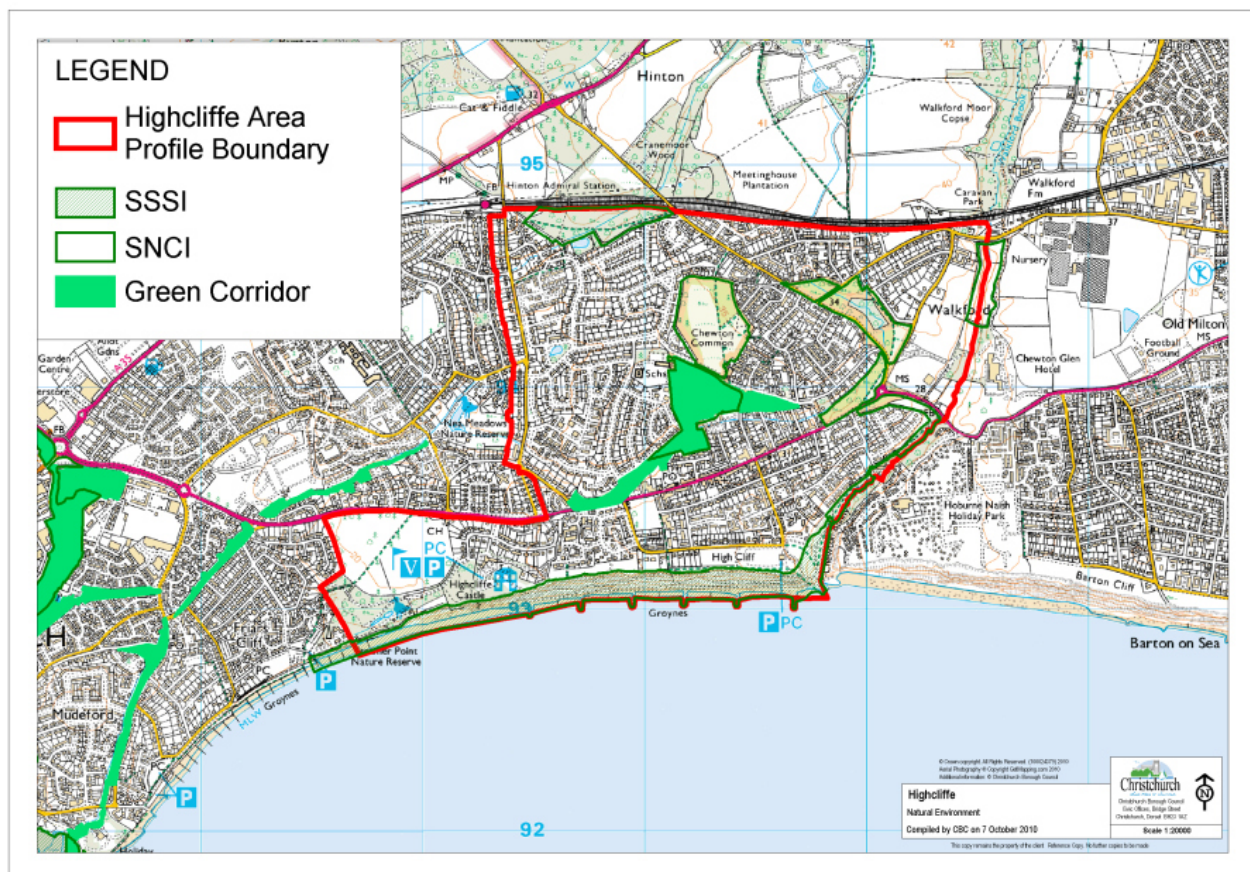


Picture 2.2 Highcliffe and Walkford Coastal Area

## Natural environment

- 2.5** A significant proportion of the ward is protected by Nature Conservation designations.
- 2.6** In Highcliffe, beaches are a vital part of the landscape, drawing in a considerable numbers of visitors annually. The cliffs along Christchurch Bay have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (the Highcliffe to Milford SSSI), because of the unusual rock formations and fossils found along its length.
- 2.7** The built up area of the ward is pepper-potted by densely wooded commons. These have been designated as Sites of National Conservation Interest (SNCIs) and are recognised for their local nature conservation importance. They are linked loosely together to provide the basis of a landscape structure to the neighbourhood.
- 2.8** The Walkford Brook SNCI, a discreet area of farmland around the Walkford Brook on the eastern boundary of the Borough, provides relief from the densely developed residential areas of the Highcliffe/Walkford neighbourhood.
- 2.9** The Steamer Point woodland area is managed as a Nature Reserve, providing an educational resource for the Borough.





Picture 2.3 Highcliffe and Walkford Natural Environment

## Built Environment

**2.10** Highcliffe is a fairly recent part of the Borough. The 1910 survey illustrates the settlement as a cluster of village buildings along the crossroads on Lymington Road. The early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw accelerated development and now Highcliffe is a well-established residential area.

**2.11** The housing varies considerably in character from high density flats on the sea front, modern housing estates in Saffron Way and adjoining roads, to collections of houses with large gardens in Hinton Wood Avenue and Chewton Common.

**2.12** Despite the lack of homogeneity in design and style, there are areas within the ward, which are protected by local policy. The Chewton Farm Estate, containing large, attractive properties in considerable plots, has been granted a special status in the Local Plan to restrict inappropriate backland development (policy H11).

**2.13** There are a number of listed buildings in the ward, most prominently the Grade II listed Highcliffe Castle, which gives the area local distinctiveness and is a popular tourist attraction.

## Strategic Issue

**2.14** In the light of increasing pressure for housing, the design and density of new development needs to be carefully considered. It is also vital to ensure that the increasing demands for public access to the cliffs and use of Highcliffe Castle do not have a harmful effect on the integrity and character of the area.

## Flooding

**2.15** The Highcliffe and Walkford ward is not affected by flood risk.



## 3 Existing Community Facilities

### General Community Facilities

**3.1** Highcliffe has a limited selection of leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities. However, the residents have good access to such facilities outside the Borough, particularly in Bournemouth and Poole. Also Christchurch town centre offers a range of leisure facilities including theatre and cinema at the Regent Centre and health clubs. The Highcliffe district shopping centre performs the function of the community hub with a couple of restaurants and a public house. General evening economy uses are scarce and mostly located in the district centre. It appears that the expansion of such uses, especially restaurants in the secondary core on Lymington High Street should be supported, to enhance the vitality of the centre.

**3.2** Both the post office and the library are located on Lymington Road.

**3.3** The ward does not have a petrol station and there may be potential to accommodate one.

### Health facilities

**3.4** There is a GP surgery (The Highcliffe Medical Centre) and a pharmacy in the district centre, both located on Lymington Road.

### Education facilities

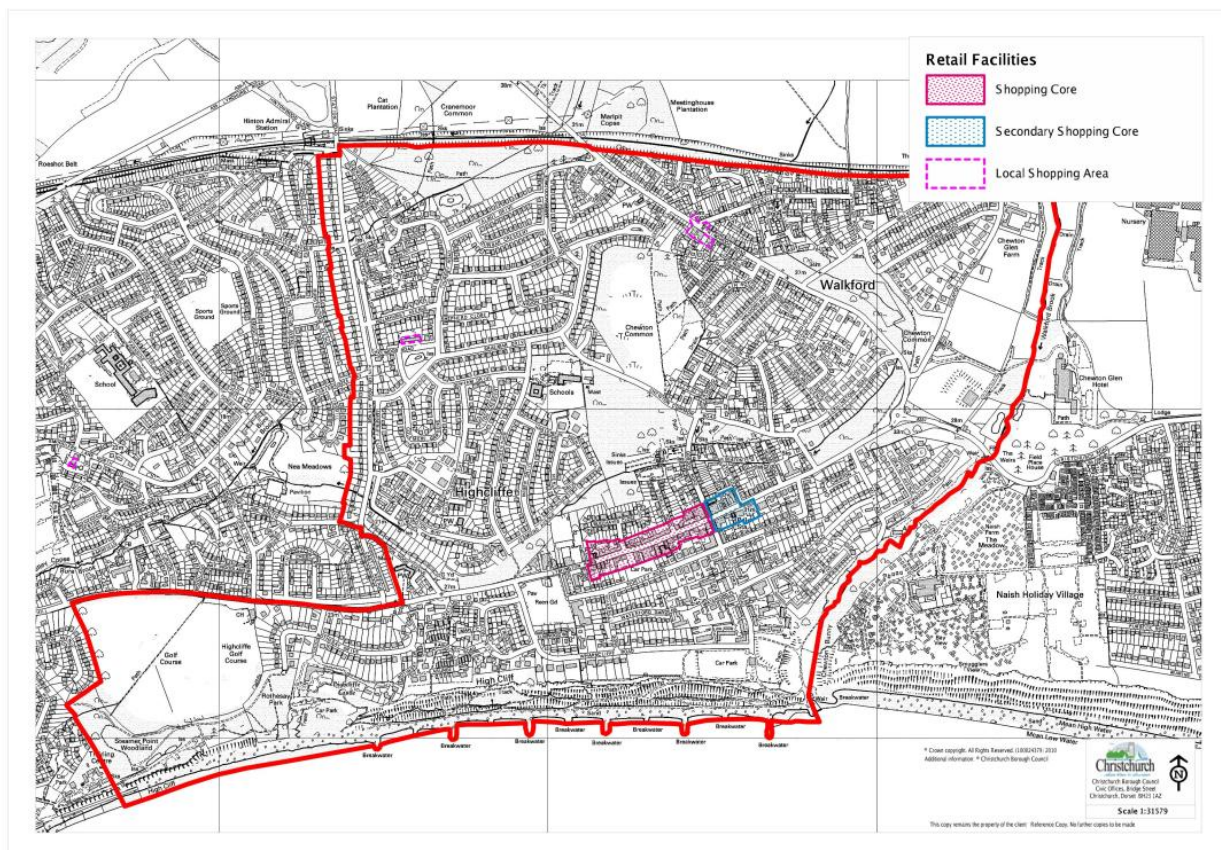
**3.5** There is a primary school in the area (Highcliffe St Mark's CE Primary School) but no secondary school. Due to the demographic profile of the area, no deficiency has been identified.

### Sport and recreation facilities/ Green Infrastructure

**3.6** There is a lack of sports/recreation facilities to accommodate the needs of children and young people. At present the St Marks CE Primary School playing fields offer such facilities. The recently opened play facilities in the Highcliffe Recreation Ground ('the HiGH5 play park'), addressed the deficiency, however more facilities need to be provided.

### Retail facilities

**3.7** Highcliffe district centre does not have a high proportion of convenience outlets but is served by a Tesco Express, Somerfield, as well as a newsagent, green grocer and several butchers providing some degree of choice. Residents also have access to a large Tesco superstore in New Milton and Sainsbury's at Lyndhurst Road.



Picture 3.1

**3.8** There are 48 comparison retail units within the centre, occupied by a range of small independent shops covering a variety of goods, public houses, café's restaurants, take-aways and other services. There is minimal representation from national multiples (Lloyds Pharmacy being the only one). In addition there are two local shopping parades in the area.

**3.9** The Ringwood Road Local Shopping parade has 8 ground floor non residential units including a general store and hairdressers. The Lakewood Road Shopping Parade currently has 4 non residential units (a hairdresser, dry cleaners and two empty units).

## Issues from Place Survey 2008

**3.10** The Christchurch Place Survey 2008 was a postal survey of residents and the analysis was broken down into 7 neighbourhood areas. Main issues relating to Mundeford and West Highcliffe are set out below:

- Residents identified the top three priorities for improvement in the ward as the level of traffic congestion (56%); activities for teenagers (51%) and road and pavement repairs (48%).
- This indicates that the proportion of respondents that felt activities for teenagers need improvement by neighbourhood area is higher than the Borough average of 46%.
- Also the need for road and pavement repairs was higher than the Borough average of 39%.

## 4 Housing

**4.1** The area is almost exclusively residential; the shopping streets, school sites, beach car park and Highcliffe Castle being the limited exceptions to this.

**4.2** The housing stock is varied, with 20th century developments dominating the townscape. With the exception of areas surrounding Lymington Road, the overall development pattern is suburban, with small clusters of older cottage groups and modest flat developments.

**4.3** The data presented in this section has been taken from the Christchurch Housing Need and Demand Survey (Fordham Research 2008). Please note that for the purposes of this area profile study, the data for the Highcliffe and North Highcliffe/Walkford wards have been amalgamated to reflect the boundary of the profile area.

## Tenure

**4.4** Most of the housing in the ward is owner occupied, with a very high number of owner-occupiers without mortgage (65.3%). The number of affordable housing and privately rented units is average compared to the other wards in the borough.

Tenure of Housing	Highcliffe and Walkford		Christchurch Borough	
	No.	%	No	%
Owner Occupied (no mortgage)	2247	65.3	10,660	49.6
Owner Occupied (with mortgage)	711	20.7	6,844	31.8
Social Rented	311	9.0	2,616	12.2
Private Rented	174	5.0	1,380	6.4
Total	3444	100.0	21,500	100.0

**Table 4.1**

## Dwelling Type

**4.5** Highcliffe and Walkford have a high percentage of flats with the central/southern area of the ward having the highest proportion of flats in the whole borough (51.7%). The densely populated central area is in stark contrast to the spread, low rise areas in North Highcliffe and Walkford.

Dwelling type	Highcliffe and Walkford		Christchurch Borough	
	No.	%	No	%
Detached House	626	18	4,157	19.3
Semi detached house	231	6.8	3,260	15.2
Terraced house	375	10.9	3,753	17.5
Detached bungalow	1096	31.8	4,980	23.2
Semi or terraced bungalow	58	1.8	880	4.1
Flat	1058	30.7	4,471	20.8
Total	3,444	100.0	21,500	100.0

**Table 4.2**

## Household Type/size

**4.6** Over 88.4% of households are composed of adults without children, and of these, 66.3% are of pensionable age, which is considerably above national average and reflects the general trend in the Borough. This indicates that there is no future demand to provide for more schools, should the number of households continue to grow without children and more care facilities would have to be provided.

**4.7** The following table provides a breakdown the types of households in the profile area.

Type of Households	Highcliffe and Walkford		Christchurch Borough	
	No.	%	No	%
Single Pensioners	981	28.5	4,585	21.3
2 or more pensioners	960	28	4,299	20
Single non-pensioners	338	9.8	2,352	10.9
2 or more adults - no children	762	22.1	6,485	30.2
Lone parent	45	1.3	677	3.1
2 adults + 1 child	94	2.7	1,347	6.3
2+ adults and 2+ children	261	7.6	1,755	8.2
Total	3,444	100.0	21,500	100.0

**Table 4.3**

Household size	Highcliffe and Walkford		Christchurch Borough	
	No	%	No	%
One person	1319	38.3	6,937	32.3
Two People	1562	45.4	9,190	42.7
Three people	184	5.4	2,297	10.7
Four people	378	10.1	3,076	14.3
Total	3444	100.0	21,500	100.0

**Table 4.4**

## Overcrowding / Under-Occupation

**4.8** Whilst overcrowding is relatively uncommon in Christchurch (in the Highcliffe ward amounting to merely 0.8%), the incidence of 'under-occupation' is much higher. The profile area, at 48%, has the second highest rate of under-occupation in the Borough.

## Households in Unsuitable Housing

**4.9** Housing can be unsuitable because of its size, type, location, condition or cost. Unsuitably housed households in the profile area amount to 3% of all households, which is below the borough average (4.7%).



## Housing Need

**4.10** Housing need is defined as the number of households who lack their own housing or live in unsuitable housing or who cannot afford to meet their needs in the market. Only 0.4 households have been classified as being in need.

## House Prices

**4.11** House prices are high relative to income in Christchurch, and with many people of high income retiring or choosing to live in the area, this has raised property prices. It has led to a very high affordability gap for those on lower incomes living in the area. Based on the figures presented below, for a person with an average salary of £25,000, they will need to find 12x their salary to buy a mid range terraced property. For those on lower incomes, the situation is far worse, and the need for affordable housing is therefore acute and growing annually.

**4.12** Land Registry average prices for Christchurch Borough (July-September 2009)

Dwelling type	Average Price
Detached	£318,622
Semi-detached	£224,140
Terraced	£302,078
Flats/Maisonettes	£163,966

Table 4.5

## Special needs and Older Persons Households

**4.13** Households with Special Needs are those where improvements are required to accommodation and services to allow those residents to remain in their own homes.

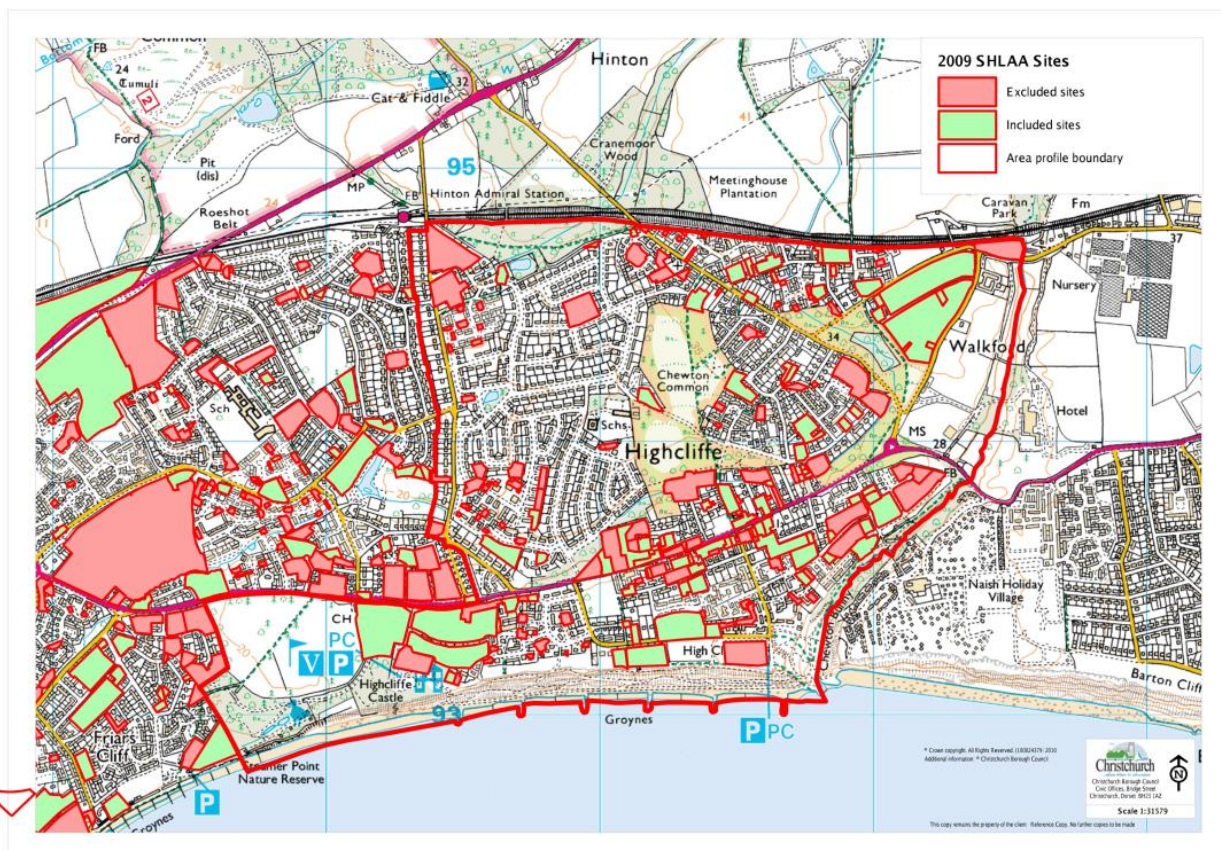
Special needs households	Highcliffe and Walkford		Christchurch Borough	
	No.	%	No	%
Special needs	700	20.5	4,983	23.2
Non-special needs	1,513	79.5	16,517	76.8
Total	2,744	100.0	21,500	100.0

Table 4.6

**4.14** It can be seen from the table above, that there is a significant number of special needs households in the ward. With an ageing population, there is and will increasingly be a higher demand for special needs accommodation and retirement flats for the elderly with support services. These will need to be provided by the private and housing association sectors.

## Potential for residential development

**4.15** It is projected that Highcliffe and North Highcliffe/Walkford will be able to accommodate 292 dwellings by 2024 (2009 Christchurch Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment).



Picture 4.1 Highcliffe and Walkford: 2009 SHLAA Sites

## Strategic Issues

**4.16** The demographic profile suggests that the priority for the area should be to deliver smaller units, to accommodate single and two person households and reduce the under-occupation rates. The large percentage of under-occupied properties and high property prices may restrict the rate of future household formation in the ward.

## 5 Employment

**5.1** Highcliffe has got the lowest employment rate, with the largest proportion of retired people (31% of population working; 0.7% unemployed; and 65% retired).

**5.2** The main employment sites in the Borough are located outside the profile area, which is not envisaged to make significant contribution to overall Borough land requirement.

## 6 Transport

**6.1** The A337 Lymington Road severs the ward into two areas. The route is heavily trafficked, and can suffer congestion during peak rush hours. Two other busy side roads (Hinton Wood Avenue and Ringwood Road) link the A337 to the A35 north of the railway.

### Car ownership

**6.2** Car ownership levels in the area profile area are high with 79.5% of households owning a car (56.7% own one car; 26.8% own two cars; and 6% own three or more cars (Christchurch Housing Need and Demand Survey Fordham Research 2008). This is because the pattern of development leads to a higher need to travel within the area.

## Public transport services

**6.3** Hinton Admiral Railway Station, on the London-Weymouth line offers high speed connections to Southampton, London and Bournemouth. The journey time between Christchurch and Bournemouth takes 8-10 minutes.

**6.4** Bus service provision in the ward is satisfactory but could be improved on. There is a regular bus service run by Wilts and Dorset, the X1 / X2, linking Bournemouth to Christchurch Rail Station, Christchurch town centre, Mundeford, Highcliffe and New Milton and Lymington. The service is of moderate frequency (every 30 minutes) during day times, but does not provide evening or more than a low frequency service on Sundays. In addition, a local company, Shamrock Buses operates the C2 service via Aston Mead, Christchurch Hospital, Stanpit, Mundeford, Bure Road, Somerford and Highcliffe. The service is a low frequency (three services per day in each direction, at approx. 1.5 hour frequency in each direction) but it provides for some local shopping opportunities.

**6.5** Possibly the worst served area is the North of Highcliffe and Walkford where only an hourly Wilts and Dorset services is offered, weekday daytimes.

## 7 Core Strategic Messages

### Housing

**7.1** House prices are very high relative to income, which results in low rates of new household formation. A high percentage of the housing stock is under-occupied, with one or two person households occupying spacious properties.

**7.2** The District Centre and surrounding area along Lymington Road have potential for residential development at higher density. The provision of smaller units in this highly accessible area, close to local facilities may help to alleviate the issue of under-occupation by releasing more properties onto the market.

**7.3** New housing will need to be of a high design standard respecting local traditions, densities and layouts.

### Transport

**7.4** The A337 suffers from severe congestion and the pollution levels are particularly high in this area. The road severs the District Centre into two parts, which has a negative effect on the vitality of the shopping centre.

**7.5** There is very high car ownership and dependence on the car for most activities. Public bus services are adequate but there is room for improvement.

### Demographics

**7.6** The increasingly ageing population in Highcliffe will mean that social services and service providers will need to plan for the particular needs of this community, whether this be care homes, warden assisted housing or housing association bungalows. There will also be fewer younger people and those of working age to support the residents, local facilities and the local economy in the future.

### Community/Recreation Facilities

**7.7** There is a lack of community facilities in the area, with scarce evening economy uses scattered sporadically in the ward.

**7.8** There is likely to be an increase in demand for services and facilities for the elderly, such as community meeting spaces, medical and social care.

**7.9** With the opening of the HIGH5 Children's Play Facility, the deficiency in play facilities has been somewhat addressed. However, more facilities for children and especially younger people may need to be provided in the future.