

# **Core Strategy Area Profile**

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

## **Verwood**



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

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## 1 Area Overview

**1.1** The parish of Verwood contains the main town of Verwood itself, and the smaller village of Three Legged Cross to the south. It is located in the north east of the District and borders Hampshire to the east. It lies mainly in an area of heathland and close to the substantial wooded area of Ringwood Forest which is largely within the adjacent New Forest District Council area. The settlements lie within the South East Dorset Green Belt, the inner boundary of which is drawn tightly around the existing main urban areas of both Verwood and Three Legged Cross.

**1.2** The town has experienced a period of rapid growth in the last 50 years, with a population of 2,820 in 1961, which has grown to 14,792 by 2008. The highest periods of growth were during the 1970's and 1980's when the population of the parish grew by 74% and 67% respectively. More recently housing development and subsequent population growth has slowed, down to 32% between 1991 and 2001. However this figure is much higher than the County average at the same time (8%). The rate of development in the Parish this century has slowed significantly as the majority of the sites allocated in previous plans for significant housing development have been completed. Verwood is one of the largest towns in East Dorset.

**1.3** The town of Verwood, which contains the bulk of the population, employment and service facilities within the parish, is a relatively self-contained settlement to the north of the main urban areas of East Dorset and the Poole/Bournemouth conurbation. The main traffic and bus route to the town is via the B3081 which runs in a south-easterly direction to the A31 and Ringwood. This road is generally of good quality, but does experience high traffic flows at peak times and has a problematic junction with the main road serving the settlement of Alderholt at Bakers Hanging. The main route to the south, which passes through Three Legged Cross, is the B3072. This passes through West Moors as well as Three Legged Cross to reach the large settlement of Ferndown.

**1.4** There are two industrial estates within the parish, a substantial one at Ebblake on the eastern edge of Verwood, and one in a more isolated location at Woolsbridge, which lies on the C2 between Three Legged Cross and St Leonards. Both have a relatively good road access to the main highway network via the A31, but are relatively poorly served by public transport.

**1.5** The main shopping and community facilities are provided within Verwood. There is a range of facilities available, including a supermarket and a variety of smaller shops, banks and other financial services, doctor's surgeries and other medical services, a small sports hall, recreation ground and extensive sports pitches, and a new, purpose built community centre, known as The Hub, as well as a range of other community buildings. The town also has 4 schools (1 Middle and 3 First Schools), with a First School in Three Legged Cross. These facilities also serve a fairly wide rural hinterland.

## 2 Baseline Data

Area of the Parish	1,562ha	
	3,859 acres	
Urban Area defined in Local Plan (excluding Woolsbridge I E)	412ha	
Parish Population estimated mid 2008	14,792	
Population growth	2,820 in 1961	14,792 in 2008
Population Age Structure (2001 Census)	Verwood	East Dorset

0 – 15 years	2890 (20%) (20% 2008)	16.6% (16.5% 2008)
16 – 64 years	7730 (53%) (52.5% 2008)	53.1% (52% 2008)
65 and upwards	3920 (27%) (27.5% 2008)	30.2% (31.5% 2008)
Deprivation Data (2007)	See below	

Table 1

**2.1** Verwood and Three Legged Cross form one of the largest settlements in East Dorset. The town has a younger age profile than the District and County average, with nearly 20% of the population being aged 0 to 15, compared with only 16.5% in East Dorset and 17.1% across the County. It also has a smaller proportion of people aged over 60 than the County as a whole, and a significantly smaller proportion of this age group than the District (27% compared with 32%). However, from the data set out below in the Housing section, it is clear that there are areas within the Parish where there are concentrations of both younger people and older people.

## **2.2** Deprivation data (2007)

**2.3** Dorset is split up into 246 Super Output Areas (SOAs) which are census-based small areas within the County. These SOAs contain, on average, 1500 people. These areas have then been ranked across the County, with 1 being the most deprived and 246 the least. The deprivation indices are made up of a number of combined indicators, which are Income, Employment, Health Deprivation and Disability, Education, Skills and Training, Barriers to housing Services, Crime and Disorder, and Living Environment.

**2.4** Three Legged Cross is ranked 40, and Verwood Potterne and Woolsbridge is ranked 43. These two areas are amongst the most deprived in East Dorset. The remainder of the Parish is split into 8 SOAs, which are ranked as follows: Verwood Chiltern - 170, Verwood Newtown - 188, Verwood Noon Hill - 204, Verwood Town Centre - 214, Verwood Stephen's Castle - 221, Verwood Ebblake - 224, Verwood Emmanuel - 231, and Verwood Dewlands - 242. The last 3 areas are in the top 10% of least deprived areas in Dorset, and all of this group are within the top 50% across the County.

**2.5** This information indicates that there is a significant difference between the two settlements within the Parish in terms of access to facilities and services, and that this difference needs to be recognised, however it is considered that these deprivation issues may not be able to be tackled through the planning process.

## **2.6** Health Issues

**2.7** From the figures in the 2001 Census, just over 16% of the town's population has a limiting long term illness or disability, lower than the figure for Dorset (19%), and over 71% of Verwood and Three Legged Cross' population consider themselves to be in good health. Across Dorset just 68% fall into this category. 9.3% of the population are providing unpaid care, which is slightly lower than the County average of 10%.

**2.8** Verwood, with its relatively younger population than the rest of the District, with less of a proportion of older people than the District as a whole, and with generally healthy people, should have lesser health needs than the rest of the District as a whole. It also appears to be well-served by health facilities within and close to both settlements.

## **2.9** Strategic Issues

- Verwood has a generally younger age profile than the average for the District as a whole, and has a birth rate that exceeds the death rate, which is not typical across the District. This younger age profile is reflected in the general health of the Parish, which has more people who consider themselves to be healthy than the County average. The area is well served by health facilities, other than hospitals, which are fairly inaccessible by public transport.

- The two settlements of Verwood and Three Legged Cross are relatively self – contained settlements separate from main urban area of the District adjacent to the conurbation and set within the Green Belt.. Employment opportunities within the Parish, particularly within Ebblake Industrial Estate and Woolsbridge Industrial Estate are good. However, the public transport links to the surrounding areas are limited in the evenings and weekends which results on a high dependence on the car for access to facilities. The area is well serves by First and Middle schools, but there is no Upper School, and children have to travel some distance to reach these schools. Shopping facilities are not sufficient for the size of the population, although there are limited opportunities to improve this situation, and there is a full range of shops in the nearby settlement of Ringwood, over the boarder in Hampshire.
- Three Legged Cross is part of the Parish, but is isolated from the main urban area of Verwood. It has relatively high levels of Deprivation, a large proportion of Social and private rented housing, with a high proportion of lone parents, households in unsuitable accommodation and a relatively young population. This isolated settlement has a number of social issues, but is constrained by the Green Belt and its close proximity to areas of internationally protected heathland which severely limit any development potential to address these matters.
- Verwood and Three Cross are relatively ‘young’ settlements, with the vast majority of the dwellings being built in the last thirty years.

## 3 Planning Policy Context

### 3.1 Natural Environment

- The settlements have areas of protected heathland (Dewlands Common and Stephens Castle) very close to the existing urban area which suffer pressures from recreational use by residents. There is a larger, more remote area of protected heath between Verwood and Three Legged Cross (Lower Common). Cranborne Common, another area of heathland, lies to the north. All the heathlands have the highest level of international protection and are designated as Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites. The River Crane, which runs to the south of Verwood, is an Site of Special Scientific Interest. Bugdens Copse and Meadows, within the heart of Verwood, is also an SSSI.
- The main issue affecting development potential in Verwood and Three Legged Cross is the close proximity of the European protected Heathlands.

### 3.2 Flooding

- The area is little affected by potential flooding. There is a narrow floodplain associated with the River Crane to the south of Verwood. The settlement of Three Legged Cross has no main river within it, although the Woolsbridge Industrial Estate does lie partially within Flood Zone 3 of the Moors River to its east.
- The impact of the flood risk has a negligible impact on the area.

### 3.3 Historic Built Environment

- Verwood and Three Cross are relatively ‘young’ settlements, with very few properties which pre-date the last century. There are no Conservation Areas and very few Listed Buildings within the area. The only feature of historic interest is the presence of the remains of the Verwood potteries. Verwood was the main Dorset pottery-making area, with kilns dating from medieval times. The last pottery ceased production in 1952. A recently opened Heritage Centre in the middle of Verwood is dedicated to this trade.

Verwood does contain two small areas designated as Special Character Areas in the East Dorset Local Plan. These are centred on Church Hill and Dewlands Way, and Manor Road. The Church Hill area is centred on the parish church and its surrounding open space, with a number of older,

substantial dwellings in the immediate vicinity. The Manor Road area is characterised by post-war dwellings set well back from the road along a regular building line with generous front gardens marked by mature evergreen hedging.

- The only strategic issue related to the need to re-assess the effectiveness of the Special Character designations to the two small areas of the town.

### 3.4 Green Belt

**3.5** The South East Dorset Green Belt surrounds both settlements and the inner boundary of the current Green Belt is tightly drawn around the edge of the existing built up area. Two areas of land were safeguarded from development in the East Dorset Local Plan, adopted in 2002. These are land off Doe's Lane and land off Cooper's Lane, Verwood. The land within both sites lies within 400m of protected heathland and is therefore unsuitable for residential development. It is proposed in the Core Strategy Options consultation document that the majority of the sites be included in the Green Belt and the inner Green Belt boundary will be revised accordingly. Part of the land with existing residential development will be included within the urban area.

**3.6** The Core Strategy Options for Consideration Document proposes for consultation additional residential development on the edge of the existing settlement of Verwood which will necessitate an amendment to the existing Green Belt boundary in these locations if the sites are to be finally allocated for development.

## 4 Existing Community Facilities

**4.1** Verwood is the larger of the two settlements and provides the majority of the services and facilities within the parish.

**4.2** Sports and Recreation - The Town has one dedicated sports hall, adjacent to the supermarket in Pennine Way, which is limited in size and does not provide the range of facilities needed for the population. There is no swimming pool, with the nearest being in Ringwood and Ferndown, which also have larger sports halls as well. Outdoor sports facilities are largely provided for at Potterne Park, to the south of the town, where there are numerous sports pitches, tennis courts, netball courts and modern changing facilities, as well as children's play facilities. There is a Bowls Club adjacent to the Memorial Recreation Ground on the northern side of the settlement. The Memorial Ground also contains an equipped children's play area.

**4.3** Three Legged Cross contains a recreation ground, which until recently was isolated from the majority of the village. A new children's play area has been constructed on land linking the playing field to the Verwood Road, with a pedestrian crossing, to enable safe access to the two areas from the majority of the village. There is also a private sports facility (Magpie Football ground) to the east of the village of Three Legged Cross, which is currently unused but which could be brought back in to use.

**4.4** There are a number of small, informal open spaces across both settlements, some with equipped children's play areas which are largely as a result of the policy of this Council to require developers to provide such facilities within new housing areas.

**4.5** Verwood is well served with access to areas of extensive informal recreational space in that the northern end of the Moors Valley Country Park extends into the southern end of Potterne Park and there are footpath and cycleway access into the Country Park from some of the residential areas along the southern boundary of the settlement too. Stephens Castle and Dewlands Common are also extensively used areas of informal open space, but there is a serious conflict between this usage and these areas international importance for nature conservation.

**4.6** Both settlements have schools with sports facilities, but currently there is little dual usage of these, with the exception of some use at Emmanuel Middle School.

**4.7** The PPG17 Open Space Study undertaken for the Council in May 2007 considered the facilities within Verwood and Three Legged Cross and recognised shortfalls in provision in the following areas:

- Verwood – There are insufficient facilities for children and young people,
- There should be more dual use arrangements with the local schools to make more use of their generally good sports facilities,
- Access standards are not met for active sports space and there is a need for more synthetic/multi use sports areas at Potterne Park.
- The Sports Hall is too small for the population.
- There is a need for allotments
- There is a need to improve access to informal spaces/open countryside around the settlement that is not heathland.
- Three Legged Cross – The village currently has sufficient open space facilities against the recognised standard, except for a small under provision for children and young people.
- The dual use of the school facilities could make these more accessible to children who live at that end of the village.

**4.8** Health – There are currently two Doctor's surgeries within Verwood, one in Station Road in a purpose built Medical Centre, and one in Lake Road. This is the second surgery to its main Practise in Cranborne to the north. Both surgeries offer a wide range of primary care services, including minor operations.

**4.9** There is also a surgery in Church Road, Three Legged Cross. This is a smaller facility which is part of the West Moors Group Practice.

**4.10** There are three dental practices in Verwood, and none within Three Legged Cross, although a practice in West Moors serves this area. The Lake Road practise in Verwood, which is adjacent to the Doctor's surgery, offers services to NHS patients.

**4.11** The settlements are fairly well served by a range of other medical facilities such as hearing aid centres, a chiropodist, opticians, a physiotherapy clinic and two pharmacies. There is also a recently-constructed Social Services Day Care Centre close to the town centre which provides a wide range of facilities to local, mainly elderly residents.

**4.12** The nearest major hospitals are in Bournemouth, to the south, and Salisbury to the north.

**4.13** There is a purpose built DCC Social Services Day Care Centre in Verwood which provides facilities for the frail elderly in the area, as well as providing for the needs of adults with learning difficulties.

**4.14** Education – Verwood is served by three First Schools (Hillside, Trinity and Verwood First Schools) and Emmanuel Middle School, and Three Legged Cross has a First School. Trinity First School is a recently constructed Church of England Voluntarily Aided school with links to Salisbury Diocese. There are also a number of pre-schools and nurseries/play groups within the area. The settlements do not contain an Upper School and older pupils from the area attend either Queen Elizabeth School (QE) in Wimborne or Ferndown Upper School. A number of Verwood pupils also attend the Middle School to the north of the town in Cranborne, as well as schools in Hampshire (Ringwood and Fordingbridge).

**4.15** According to the Education Authority the First and Middle Schools within the settlements are operating at less than capacity, although the Cranborne Middle School would like to raise its intake. QE School is at capacity, and with the potential for additional housing development within the Wimborne area it is likely that the school catchment areas will have to be re-drawn which could enable more Verwood pupils to go to Ferndown Upper, which is currently at below capacity. The capacity of the Ferndown Upper School will also be dependent on the amount of new development that could take place within its existing catchment area.

**4.16** Policy V8 of the East Dorset Local Plan identifies an area of land off Coppers Lane, Verwood for a new Middle School on land adjacent to the newly constructed Trinity First School and the supporting text of the Plan comments that land has been reserved adjacent to the Howe Lane Schools for an Upper School if or when the need arises. If a significant amount of new housing takes place within the town and/or the Local Education Authority carry out a review of the education system across East Dorset, then there may be a need for an Upper School to be built in Verwood.

**4.17** General Community Facilities - Verwood has a substantial, modern, purpose-built Community Centre (The Hub) located just off the main town centre adjacent to other community facilities such as the Social Services Day Care centre, medical centre and police station. These facilities are served by public car parks within the complex as well. The Hub contains a multi-use 300 seater main hall, a café, a 100 seater smaller hall and a variety of flexible other rooms/spaces. It also has a pleasant south facing garden and seating area. The centre has capacity for more events to take place within the building.

**4.18** Verwood also contains a variety of other halls and rooms available to the public, the largest of which is the Memorial Hall in the town centre adjacent to the Recreation Ground. To the north of this building is the British Legion, which is currently going through a change its ownership and structure. There are other facilities available in the Methodist Church and Parish Church Halls. The town is well represented by a variety of different church denominations.

**4.19** Verwood Town Council is based in a recently extended building in Vicarage Road which offers a range of facilities to local residents, including access to a range of District Council services.

**4.20** The town also contains a small library and a purpose-built youth centre, as well as a recently established potteries Heritage Trust building in the town centre, which also contains a small café.

**4.21** The newly- refurbished town green, known as Ferrett Green, hosts a regular monthly Farmer's Market, and a small scale indoor market has just been re-established in the Memorial Hall.

**4.22** The town contains 3 public houses, although a fourth has recently been closed and is being redeveloped for shopping and residential uses. There is also a Social Club at Black Hill, associated with the previous industrial operator on that site.

**4.23** Verwood has a purpose-built police station and fire station.

**4.24** There are no allotments in the town, and it is understood that the Town Council are actively seeking a location for the establishment of allotments for the settlement.

**4.25** There area wide range of community groups that meet in Verwood and Three Legged Cross, ranging from mother and toddler groups, through to youth groups such as Scouts and Guides, and services specifically for the elderly.

**4.26** Three Legged Cross is served by a fairly modern village hall. The public house in the village centre has recently closed, although there is another one on the edge of the parish adjacent to the Woolsbridge Industrial Estate. There are a number of small shops and services within the village, including a post office.

## 5 Accessibility Mapping

## 6 Community Strategy Issues

**6.1** Verwood Town Council launched the preparation of a Town Plan, in April 2010. A preliminary feedback on the topic areas of Housing and Traffic and Transport have indicated that local residents like the variety of properties that Verwood offers, but want to control future development to prevent the building of more flats and not to allow the re-development of gardens for housing, and that all properties should be in keeping with the rest of the area. On transport residents like the free parking in the town,

but want a more frequent bus service direct to Ringwood and Bournemouth, especially in the evening, want speeding traffic controlled, consider that there should be more cycle routes, especially to Ringwood, and request that a rail link is reinstated.

### 7 Retail Provision

**7.1** The town has two main shopping areas. The older centre around the town green (Ferrett Green) has grown as the town developed, and offers a variety of small shops and services. A new car park has recently been developed within this area and new shops and offices have been built in the last couple of years which help to link the facilities on Vicarage Road, Manor Road and Ringwood Road. A large supermarket with a small recreation centre and smaller shops was developed in the early 1980's at a second site away from the established town centre, centrally placed on the planned road network and with extensive car parking. There are a small number of shops and other services scattered throughout the town, although the large residential area on the eastern side of the settlement is poorly served by facilities.

**7.2** A Retail Assessment carried out for the Council by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners in May 2008 considered that the town centre shopping area was quite good, although it relies mainly on small, independent shops. When compared to the national average it has a low proportion of comparison retail units, whilst conversely there is a high proportion of service and miscellaneous uses. The convenience provision is in line with the national average. The Report concluded that the future direction of the main shopping area should be:- 'Verwood - limited growth in predominantly small to medium sized units (200sq gross or below) suitable for small independent shops and services.'

**7.3** The Council is in discussions with the Morrisons supermarket group about the possible future expansion of their premises in Pennine Way, and the possible re-location of the Sports Hall that is attached to this retail site.

**7.4** The near-by towns of Ringwood, Ferndown, Bournemouth and Poole also provide alternative locations for many local residents to acquire the goods and services they require.

**7.5** The need for other facilities will largely be dependant on the level of growth within the town. There will be continued infilling within the existing settlement boundary. There is also an opportunity to allow for further residential development on the edge of the existing settlement to support existing facilities.

### 8 Housing

**8.1** The vast majority of Verwood's housing is modern, with much of the development having taken place in the last thirty years. The developments have been predominantly detached and semi detached dwellings, of both single and two stories. Relatively few flats have been built in recent years, although there are now a few blocks close to the town centre, and the scale of development across the whole settlement is generally low density. There is no strong unifying design theme to the housing in Verwood, and the developments in the last few years have tended to reflect the standard house types of volume housebuilders, rather than reflecting any local vernacular style. Because the dwellings are generally recent, there are no serious problems of outworn housing, or any significant numbers that lack basic amenities. The proportion of both vacant and second/holiday homes in Verwood/Three Legged Cross is small - overall 98% of dwellings have permanent residents.

**8.2** Dwellings estimated mid 2009 – 6207 (Census 2001 – 5705)

**8.3** The data presented in this section has been taken from the Dorset Housing Need and Demand Survey (Fordham Research 2008).

**8.4** Tenure by Ward (Fordhams)

Ward	Owner Occupied (no Mortgage)	Owner Occupied (with Mortgage)	Social Rented	Private rented	Total
Three Cross & Potterne	220 (24%)	325 (35.4%)	268 (29.2%)	105 (11.4%)	918
Verwood Dewlands	889 (46.7%)	852 (44.7%)	105 (5.5%)	60 (3.1%)	1906
Verwood Newtown	388 (33.9%)	631 (55.1%)	20 (1.7%)	107	1146
Verwood Stephen's Castle	1,002 (47.7)	962 (45.8%)	64 (3.1%)	74	2102
East Dorset	18344 (48.8%)	13,504 (35.9%)	3135 (8.3%)	2617 (7.0%)	37600

Table 2

**8.5** As can be noted above, there are discrepancies in housing tenure between Three Legged Cross and Verwood, with Three Legged Cross having a very high proportion of its residents living in rented accommodation. This figure for the village, of 40.6% in rented accommodation, is significantly higher than the average for East Dorset as a whole. In contrast, those living in rented accommodation in Verwood is below the District average. However, the figures in the Fordham Study are at odds with the 2001 Census data for rented accommodation, where the figure is 6.7% public sector rented and 5.1% private sector rented.

#### **8.6** Housing Density (2001 Census)

**8.7** The 2001 Census gives an average household size of 2.46 for Verwood and Three Legged Cross, which is larger than the District average, at 2.32. This difference can be explained by the greater proportion of family houses in the area than the District as a whole and a generally higher proportion of young people in the settlements compared with the District as a whole.

#### **8.8** Dwelling Type (Fordhams)

Ward	Detached House	Semi Detached House	Terraced House	Detached Bungalow	Semi or Terraced Bungalow	Flat
Three Cross and Potterne	25.9%	13.7%	17.6%	22.2%	2.9%	17.7%
Verwood Dewlands	49.9%	9.0%	1.8%	30.8%	3.6%	5.0%
Verwood Newtown	31.9%	20.6%	13.2%	23.3%	4.8%	6.2%
Verwood Stephen's Castle	29.6%	4.8%	7.9%	50.5%	1.3%	5.8%

East Dorset	30.9%	11.5%	9.1%	33.5%	5.1%	9.9%
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Table 3

**8.9** There is a considerable mix of house types across the two settlements, with Dewlands ward having a much higher percentage of detached houses than the District average, and Stephen's Castle having a very high proportion of detached bungalows. Three Legged Cross has a greater proportion of flats than Verwood or the District as a whole.

### 8.10 Household Type (Fordhams)

Ward	Single Pensioners	2 or more pensioners	Single non-pensioners	2 or more adults – no children	Lone parent	2+ adults 1 child	2+adults 2+ children
Three Cross and Potterne	4.6%	13.5%	11.1%	34.8%	10.9%	13.2%	11.9%
Verwood Dewlands	13.5%	19.5%	3.8%	38.8%	0.8%	7.9%	15.7%
Verwood Newtown	18.4%	11.6%	13.4%	25.7%	6.4%	13.1%	11.3%
Verwood Stephen's Castle	12.5%	32.9%	5.9%	26.9%	1.6%	8.0%	12.2%
East Dorset	16.4%	20.7%	8.6%	34.8%	1.9%	7.7%	9.9%

Table 4

**8.11** In general Verwood and Three Legged Cross have a younger age profile with more family households than the District average, although there are differences across the settlements with Three Legged Cross having a high proportion of lone parents and a low proportion of single pensioners.

### 8.12 Household size by Ward (Fordhams)

Ward	One Person	Two People	Three people	Four or more People
Three Cross and Potterne	15.7%	41.3%	21.8%	21.2%
Verwood Dewlands	17.3%	44.0%	14.1%	24.6%
Verwood Newtown	31.8%	27.5%	21.8%	18.8%
Verwood Stephen's Castle	18.45	55.7%	10.9%	14.9%
East Dorset	25.0%	44.6%	13.0%	17.4%

Table 5

**8.13** The most interesting figure in this table is the proportion of two person households in Stephen’s Castle, at more than 50%, is much greater than the remainder of the area and the District as a whole. This ward also has a high proportion of pensioners and of detached bungalows, as set out in the tables above.

**8.14** Overcrowding/under occupation (Fordhams)

Ward	Overcrowded	Ok	Under occupied
Three Cross and Potterne	4.5%	59.0%	36.4%
Verwood Dewlands	1.2%	39.5%	59.3%
Verwood Newtown	1.1%	64.5%	34.5%
Verwood Stephen’s Castle	0.8%	40.8%	58.4%
East Dorset	1.0%	51.6%	47.4%

Table 6

**8.15** The situation in Three Legged Cross is again different to that in Verwood, with a much higher proportion of overcrowding than the Parish or District average.

Ward	In unsuitable housing	Not in unsuitable housing
Three Cross and Potterne	10.4%	89.6%
Verwood Dewlands	1.2%	98.8%
Verwood Newtown	4.6%	95.4%
Verwood Stephen’s Castle	2.3%	97.7%
East Dorset	4.1%	95.9%

Table 7

**8.16** The situation in Three Legged Cross is again at odds to the rest of the Parish, and of a much greater proportion than the average of the District.

**8.17** Households currently in need (Fordhams)

Ward	In need	Not in need
Three Cross and Potterne	6.1%	93.9%
Verwood Dewlands	0.6%	99.4%
Verwood Newtown	3.3%	96.7%
Verwood Stephen’s Castle	0.8%	99.2%
East Dorset	1.9%	98.1%

Table 8

**8.18** Three Legged Cross and Verwood Newtown both demonstrate a much higher than the District average level of households currently in housing need.

## 8.19 Special Needs households (Fordhams)

Ward	Special needs	Non-special needs
Three Cross and Potterne	14.7%	85.3%
Verwood Dewlands	17.0%	83%
Verwood Newtown	12.6%	87.4%
Verwood Stephen's Castle	14.2%	85.8%
East Dorset	18.6%	81.4%

Table 9

**8.20** These figures indicate that the requirement for Special Needs housing in the Parish is similar to, or below average, that of the whole District.

## 8.21 Older persons households

Ward	Older person only households	Other households
Three Cross and Potterne	18.1%	81.9%
Verwood Dewlands	33.1%	66.9%
Verwood Newtown	30.0%	70.0%
Verwood Stephen's Castle	45.4%	54.6%
East Dorset	37.1%	62.9%

Table 10

**8.22** There is a significant range of the proportion of elderly persons in each Ward across the Parish, with Three Legged Cross having a relatively low proportion, and Stephen's Castle having a high proportion compared to the District average.

## 8.23 Key worker households

Ward	Key worker households	Non-key worker households
Three Cross and Potterne	12.7%	87.3%
Verwood Dewlands	9.4%	90.6%
Verwood Newtown	9.5%	90.5%
Verwood Stephen's Castle	5.6%	94.4%
East Dorset	9.3%	90.7%

Table 11

**8.24** Key workers are defined in the research as being those employed in the following categories:

- Nurses and other NHS staff
- Prison/Probation staff

- Teacher
- Junior and retained fire fighter
- Police officer
- Social worker, educational physiologist, therapists

**8.25** Three Legged Cross has a higher proportion of key workers, which probably reflects the relatively younger age range within the village, than the District average, and Stephen’s Castle has a much lower proportion, which reflects the fact that there are a large number of pensioner households within this Ward.

**8.26** House prices

**8.27** Average house prices within Verwood, based on April - June 2008 figures, are set out below.

Post code district	Detached	Semi – detached	Terraced	Flats	Overall average
Verwood and BH21	£362,396	£299,207	£202,100	£153,377	£303,990
Three Legged Cross	£305,352	£0	£190,833	£155,850	£280,574
<b>average</b>	<b>£342,301</b>	<b>£299,207</b>	<b>£200,410</b>	<b>£154,084</b>	<b>£297,679</b>
Dorset	£359,666	£237,966	£209,024	£168,079	£265,534
England and Wales	£338,378	£196,539	£174,332	£204,003	£219,262

Table 12

**8.28** Overall average house prices are higher than the County average, and significantly higher than the national average, however, there are variations within the settlement, with figures for Three Legged Cross generally being much lower than those for Verwood, with the exception of flats.

**8.29** Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2009

**8.30** The Council’s 2009 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2009 has identified potential for an additional 184 units within the existing urban area over the next 15 year period, which may rely on an intensification of the density of development to achieve this figure, and a potential for 610 dwellings on Greenfield sites within the same period.

**8.31** Strategic issues

**8.32** As has been set out above, Verwood was a major growth area in East Dorset from the 1970s into the 1990s when the population increased from 3,510 in 1971 to 13,530 in 2001. However the vast majority of the sites allocated for housing in Verwood in the Verwood, Three Legged Cross and St Leonards and St Ives Local Plan 1999 and the East Dorset Local Plan 2002 have now been developed and those remaining are largely affected by the Heathland 400m exclusion zone which restricts development. The settlements both lie within the Green Belt where the boundary is currently drawn tightly around the existing main urban area. The settlement of Verwood will require additional development to support the range of existing facilities in the town and there are difficulties meeting this need solely within the existing built up area due to the proximity of the protected Dorset Heaths with their 400m exclusion zone for housing.

**8.33** The evidence in the Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand (2008) identifies a significant requirement for new dwellings in within Plan area, and East Dorset in particular, to meet the need for housing that is more affordable to the local population. This need cannot easily to met within the existing urban area without changing the character of these areas, to the possible detriment of the environment

of existing residents, and due to the close proximity of the heathlands. This unmet local need can be partially accommodated by rolling back relatively small areas of the Green Belt in sustainable locations to allow for residential development.

**8.34** Verwood Parish has a younger age profile than the majority of the District, but its proportion of elderly people has increase this decade. This could lead to an increased need for specialist elderly persons' accommodation, which is currently limited in Verwood, other than some public sector housing.

**8.35** Generally the quality of the dwelling stock in the Parish is good, which is due to its recent construction, and it is unlikely that this will be an issue in years to come.

**8.36** The quality of the housing in Three Legged Cross is of a lower standard than that of Verwood, with a higher proportion of unsuitable or overcrowded housing than the District as a whole. This may reflect the fact that a lower than average number of people in the village own their own homes, and are reliant on the rented sector, where their needs are not fully met. However, this issue is unlikely to be dealt with spatially as the settlement lies in close proximity to protected heathland in the Green Belt, and therefore has limited development potential for new housing, or re-development potential of existing housing stock if it would lead to an increase in housing numbers.

## 9 Employment

**9.1** Verwood parish contains two significant centres of employment – at Ebblake Industrial Estate on the eastern edge of the town of Verwood, and the slightly larger Woolsbridge Industrial Estate between Three Legged Cross and St Leonards. These two estates are the second and third largest in area terms within the District and comprise of relatively modern buildings and were only established in the 1970s and 1980s. There are also employment opportunities within the commercial centre of Verwood in the area around Ferrett Green, in the shopping area off Pennine Way and in the centre of Three Legged Cross where there is a range of small retail outlets and a small industrial site. There are a number of small employment sites in the rural area surrounding the main settlements which have been established, for example, on former agricultural holdings and in converted buildings. Verwood lies within the Bournemouth Travel To Work Area (TTWA)

**9.2** Ebblake Industrial estate lies adjacent to the County border with Hampshire and is surrounded by the main built up area of Verwood. The open land to the east, which lies within Hampshire, is mainly designated as SSSI. It therefore has no opportunities for expansion, other than by redevelopment of existing premises within the site.

**9.3** The Woolsbridge Industrial Estate lies in open countryside between Three Legged Cross and St Leonards and is currently entirely surrounded by Green Belt. It has the Moors River SSSI to the south, and the MoD Petroleum Depot to the west. This Estate is not in a very sustainable location as there is currently little option, other than the car, to access the site for employees. Access to the site by public transport is limited to an hourly bus service from Verwood to Ringwood and a more limited service to and from Bournemouth. However, it has good lorry access directly onto the A31 Trunk road network with easy access to markets in the east. There may be the opportunity to intensify the level of development on the Rollalong site (which is currently the subject of a planning application to increase the floorspace on the site) to provide a wider range of employment choices within the Estate, or for a limited expansion of the estate to take place by revising the Green Belt boundary. This would be dependant on an improvement to the accessibility of the site by employees to increase its sustainability.

**9.4** The residents of Verwood and Three Legged Cross are proportionately younger than that of the District as a whole, and this is reflected in the economic activity rates of the population. Of those who are economically active the majority (58.6%) are in full time employment, which compares to 55.6% across the District as a whole. Of those who are economically inactive, 59.5% are retired, compared with 61.5% across the District, however, the proportion of those who look after family/home is 20.4% of the inactive population compared to 17.9% at a District level. (Census 2001)

**9.5** The skills level of Verwood residents is generally high, with 45.4% in high skilled occupations and only 14.8% in low skill occupations. This compares with 43.4% and 15.2% respectively across the District as a whole.

**9.6** Strategic issues

**9.7** Verwood is a net exporter of workers with about 2,850 coming in and 3,800 commuting elsewhere. In commuters were largely from other parts of East Dorset, Hampshire, Bournemouth and Poole. The destinations of the out commuters are largely the same (Census 2001). The transport policies will need to examine how this commuting pattern can be accommodated in the future. There may be opportunities for the re-development of some of the older buildings on the two industrial estates in the area, an intensification of use of others, or an expansion of Woolsbridge Industrial estate to provide more employment opportunities within the Parish which could help to reduce the net export of workers from the settlements.

## 10 Transport

**10.1** Verwood lies on the outer edge of the network of towns which forms the south east Dorset conurbation. The main traffic and bus routes lie south-eastwards (towards Ringwood) and southwards (to West Moors and Ferndown). The B3081 provides an adequate link to the A31 to the south east between Ringwood and Ashley Heath. However, the southerly B3072 to Three Legged Cross, West Moors and Ferndown is generally of poorer quality and with some congestion along it. The roads north and west are much more lightly used, although both the B3081 towards Cranborne and Shaftesbury and the C104 towards Alderholt carry increasing flows of traffic and are largely unimproved. The C2 passes east-west through Three Legged Cross, and the settlement is grouped around the staggered junction of this road with the B3072. The C2 is the main access route to the Woolsbridge Industrial Estate.

**10.2** Car ownership

	• Verwood	• East Dorset	• Dorset
• % of households without a car	• 8.3	• 11.6	• 16.96

Table 13

- The level of households without a car is significantly lower than the District and County average. However, of more significance is the fact that almost half of the households in Verwood have two or more cars, compared to just 37% across Dorset and 29% nationally.

**10.3** Public transport services

**10.4** Verwood and Three Legged Cross are not well served by public transport. This may reflect the high car ownership in the settlements. There are two hourly bus services to either Poole (the 37 via Ferndown) or Bournemouth (the 36 via Ringwood) which operate Monday to Saturday. These buses do not run very early in the morning, nor in the evenings beyond 6 o'clock. Only the No. 36 serves the Woolsbridge Industrial Estate, and neither bus operates within the Ebblake Industrial Estate. The 36 also goes to the RoyalBournemouthHospital.

**10.5** There are a number of once a week rural bus services which pass through Verwood and Three Legged Cross to serve the local markets in Ringwood and Salisbury, and also to Christchurch. These routes generally only have one bus a day when they do run, which is not suitable for commuters.

**10.6** Transport infrastructure improvements

**10.7** The East Dorset Local Plan identifies the need for a number of highway improvements to serve the growth of Verwood. The majority of the major schemes have been completed, and were partially funded by developer's contributions from schemes in the settlements. The final remaining scheme of any significance is the West Moors bypass. This scheme is currently being evaluated through the South East Dorset Multi Modal Study, which is considering network improvements across the whole South East Dorset conurbation. If this scheme does not go ahead, the developer contributions collected towards it can be put towards improving pedestrian and cycling facilities and to improve traffic management measures along the B3072. As part of a package of measures to reduce traffic growth, Dorset County Council are currently investigating improvements to the suburban cycle network linking West Moors, Verwood and Three Legged Cross to Ferndown.

**10.8** Other transport improvements set out in the Local Transport Plan for the Verwood area include a junction improvement at Baker's Hanging on the B3081, which is justified on the grounds of improving road safety, and the realignment of the B3081 at Romford Bridge, including the provision of a footway.

**10.9** Public Transport improvements.

**10.10** No public transport improvements are proposed.

**10.11** Implementation

Scheme	Delivery Timescale	Partners	Costs and Funding
B3081 Baker's Hanging	After 2011/12	DCC	Unknown
Southern Verwood Cycle route	After 2011/12	DCC and EDDC	Unknown
B3072 Verwood to Three Legged Cross to West Moors cycle way/footway	After 2010	DCC and EDDC	Unknown
B3081 Romford Bridge – realignment and footway	After 2011/12	DCC	Unknown

Table 14

**10.12** Strategic Issues

- Verwood and Three Legged Cross are located on the outer edge of the main built up area of East Dorset and are not well served by public transport, and have a correspondingly high car ownership. There is a significant outflow of workers who commute from the settlement to the surrounding areas on a daily basis and the majority of these people are likely to be travelling by car. Transport policies will need to consider these commuting patterns and consider alternatives which will be attractive persuade people to find an alternative to the car.
- Bus services are not available in the evenings, nor do they directly serve the nearby town of Ringwood. Consideration should be given to amending the bus route to directly travel from Ringwood to Verwood, and to increase the bus service to evenings too. This issue is supported by initial feedback form the launch of the Town Plan.

## 11 Core Strategic Messages

**11.1** Verwood and Three Legged Cross are two settlements on the edge of the main urban area, and are very different in character.

**11.2** Three Legged Cross, the smaller of the two settlements, is an area with a relatively high level of deprivation, and has a number of housing issues, such as a high proportion of residents in unsuitable or over crowded accommodation compared the District average. It is located close to a number of Internationally protected Heathlands which limit its potential for additional development to address some of its issues, as well as being within the Green Belt.

**11.3** The village is well served by local facilities such as a school and local shops. It also has sufficient recreational areas within and adjacent to the village.

**11.4** It has, however, a much different age structure and household structure than the average across the District, with a generally younger age profile, and more lone parents and families than the District as a whole.

**11.5** Access to services beyond those available within the village will need to be considered, with particular emphasis on bus links and the provision of footways/cycleways to Verwood to the north and West Moors to the south.

**11.6** Verwood is a relatively self-contained town which in general has a younger age profile than the District as a whole, but it does contain areas, such as Stephen's Castle Ward, where over 45% of the households are elderly persons, which is much higher than the District average. Issues are likely to arise over care and support for these residents in the future, along with the need for specialist types of elderly persons housing, which is not well represented in the town at present.

**11.7** The settlement is constrained by the nearby heathlands, which will reduce the re-development potential within the existing town, where there are considerable amounts of low-density housing. The town is currently contained within the Green Belt and its remaining Local Plan allocations are adversely affected by the Heathland exclusion zone. Other mechanisms will have to be considered to provide for additional development to serve the needs of the settlement, which could include rolling back the Green Belt boundary in limited locations to allow for additional residential development.

**11.8** There are two substantial employment areas within the Parish, but there is a net outflow of employees to work from the area. Both Industrial Estates are poorly served by alternative means of transport other than the car. Transport policies will have to consider how alternatives can be provided. Employment policies will have to consider whether there are opportunities to widen the employment base within the area to capture more of the workforce within the locality.

**11.9** Verwood is well served by open recreational areas, but there is a need for a larger sports hall. Consideration should be given to the opportunities to provide this facility in conjunction with the expansion of the Morrisons supermarket to provide additional convenience shopping in the town.

**11.10** The town is poorly served by public transport, and transport policies should examine how this deficiency can be addressed. There is also a need for additional footway and cycleway links to Ringwood to the south east and Three Legged Cross and West Moors to the south.