

# 10. Policies and Proposals for St. Leonards and St. Ives and Avon Castle

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## Introduction

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- 10.1. This Chapter of the East Dorset Local Plan sets out the particular policies and proposals which will apply to St. Leonards and St. Ives during the period covered by the Local Plan up to 2011. The policies and proposals in this Chapter have been taken almost entirely from the Verwood, Three Legged Cross and St. Leonards and St. Ives Local Plan, which was adopted in 1999. Most of the local policies and proposals in the Verwood, Three Legged Cross and St. Leonards and St Ives Local Plan are carried forward unchanged into the East Dorset Local Plan. General land-use policies towards all development in East Dorset are contained in Chapter 6, and general transport proposals in Chapter 7. These apply to the St. Leonards and St. Ives area as they do to the rest of the District.
- 10.2. The policies and proposals will be used as a basis for development briefs where these are required and for development control.

## The Character of the Area

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- 10.3. The Parish of St. Leonards and St. Ives lies on a low ridge of heathy and wooded land between the Moors River in the west and the River Avon in the east. Here the Avon forms the County boundary with Hampshire. The A31 Trunk Road crosses the ridge in a north-east to south-west direction running from Ringwood towards Ferndown, Poole and western Dorset.
- 10.4. There are two separate built-up areas in the parish, both of which are overall of a low density and well-treed. St. Leonards and St. Ives itself lies to the north of the Trunk Road. The second settlement is Avon Castle, lying on the narrow belt of high ground between the A338 Spur Road to Bournemouth and the River Avon.
- 10.5. Both settlements have a high proportion of retired people in their populations. There are a very few local shops: otherwise the area depends on outside centres. St. Leonards and St. Ives have a good, modern village hall, with a recreation ground including children's play, tennis and bowls facilities, and a separate recreation ground on the Horton Road. Otherwise formal recreation facilities are lacking. The settlement has a County First School but no library. There is little local employment within the Parish, although a small industrial estate adjoins the western border, at Woolsbridge, and other large employment centres at Ringwood, Verwood and Ferndown are within 5km. Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch are easily accessible by car.
- 10.6. The remainder of the Parish is rural, with a scatter of development, particularly at the Grange Estate, where rural resettlement was undertaken after the First World War. There are several caravan sites, which provide a large proportion of the tourist accommodation of the District. Also to the south of the A31 and west of the A338 are the Avon Heath Country Park, Matchams Park and stadium, and the Barnsfield Heath and Hurn military testing grounds. Matchams is a motor sport centre of national standing. The military testing grounds could become redundant towards the end of the plan period or some time thereafter.

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- 10.7. Also south of the A31 is a large Forestry Commission plantation at Hurn Forest, at the northern end of which, adjoining the A31, is the St. Leonards Hospital, first built as a military hospital in the Second World War. On the western side of St. Leonards and St. Ives, and falling partly in the parish and partly in Verwood, is the very well-used Moors Valley Country Park, which caters for visitors not only from the immediate locality but also from the coastal towns and from Hampshire.
- 10.8. The heathland areas are almost entirely Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and have also been designated as potential Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds and are candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the Habitats Directive, and in several cases are also proposed wetland sites under the Ramsar Convention. The River Avon floodplain is designated as both SSSI and potential SPA. The Avon Valley has also been designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) because of the traditional pastoral landscape and the remains of water meadow systems. The Moors River is also an SSSI, being one of the most important rivers in southern England for nature conservation. There are a number of protected species and their habitats both within and outside these designated areas.
- 10.9. The main road in the area is the A31 Trunk Road, which enters the parish from the east, providing its only direct river crossing in that direction, although a second and narrower crossing exists to the south, at Avon Causeway in Hurn Parish. The A31 is one of the two main routes from the east into Dorset, the other being at Christchurch. On the Dorset bank of the river a number of routes diverge from it. The B3081 runs north westwards to Verwood, from which there is a further branch, called Harbridge Drove, running northwards to Alderholt. The C156 Hurn Lane/Hurn Road runs south from the same junction on the A31 towards Hurn. On the A31 800 metres to the west there is a second junction at Ashley Heath where the C2 road leaves the A31 to run westwards to Horton and Shaftesbury, and the A338 Spur Road runs southwards towards Bournemouth and Christchurch. Boundary Lane forms an east-west connection between the A31 and Hurn Road.
- 10.10. The volume of traffic on the A31 has grown rapidly. The current Annual Average Daily Traffic flow is now over 66,000 vehicles a day east of the Ashley Heath junction, while the A31 to the west carries about 41,000 vehicles a day and the A338 Spur Road carries about 35,000 vehicles. The Ashley Heath junction is the focal point for this traffic and work has now been completed to make it two-level. A pedestrian and bridleway bridge has been provided at St Ives and a further pedestrian bridge at St. Leonards Hospital.

### Proposals

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- 10.11. Apart from the built-up areas of St. Leonards and St. Ives and Avon Castle, the area forms part of the South East Dorset Green Belt. The generally high conservation value of the land outside the built-up areas also requires close restrictions on development. While housing development on windfall sites within the built-up areas will continue, the low density and special quality of much of the existing housing areas will also require special protection and will limit the scope for new development. There are no identified sites within the built-up areas for which either housing or employment developments are proposed. The re-use for employment purposes of the existing workshops at the military vehicle test ground north of Boundary Lane is proposed if the site should become redundant, while the remainder of the site, which is within the Green Belt and is of high nature conservation value, would be proposed as a nature reserve.
- 10.12. The strategy for the Parish is therefore primarily one of conservation. Development in the Green Belt will be controlled through the policies set out in Chapter 6.

### Housing

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#### 'Windfall' Sites

- 10.13. Development on 'windfall' sites within the built-up areas of St. Leonards, St. Ives and Avon Castle is expected to continue during the Plan period. In the past, this type of site has provided a wide variety of housing including flats, retirement homes and individual houses. From their nature, the number dwellings on these sites cannot be predicted accurately for individual areas, depending as they do on the varied decisions of private landowners. Development on windfall sites will be permitted subject to the policies set out in Chapter 6 of this Document, which will limit the possible extent of the changes to these attractive, well wooded, low-density settlements. There are no proposals for new, green field housing sites in this part of the Plan area.

#### Affordable Housing

- 10.14. In common with the rest of East Dorset, St. Leonards and St. Ives are areas of relatively high house prices. It is likely that this will lead to a continuing need for some 'affordable housing' for local people throughout the Plan period. The Planning Authority may seek to negotiate that a suitable proportion of housing on larger 'windfall' sites should be provided to meet this need, taking into account the housing situation at the time, and the character of the site. It is considered that this area is not sufficiently close to the outer edge of the Green Belt to permit affordable housing as an exception to Green Belt policy.
- 10.15. The proportion of this type of housing will be determined in the light of the need for affordable housing at the time of development and by negotiation with the intending developers. It will be a requirement that secure arrangements are made to ensure that the benefit of the affordable housing is enjoyed by successive as well as by initial occupiers. However, because of the low density character of the settlement area as defined on the Proposals Map, it is likely that the number of sites of a suitable character will be very limited and those in need of affordable housing may be housed in nearby settlements.

### Industry

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#### Military Testing Ground

- 10.16. It is possible that the military vehicle testing grounds at Barnsfield Heath and north of Boundary Lane may become redundant. The northern site contains workshop buildings of substantial construction which have a useful life ahead of them. They and the compound in which they stand would be suitable for re-use for employment purposes, subject to Green Belt policies and the satisfactory solution of traffic and access issues. The site has an existing access from the north-bound carriageway of the A338 Spur Road and this should be used as the sole access to any re-used buildings. This will avoid industrial traffic using Boundary Lane and Hurn Lane as routes to the site, neither of which are suitable for that purpose. It will also prevent traffic being drawn through the remainder of the northern site, which is of high nature conservation value. The construction and visibility splays of the access from the A338 will need to be improved and the safety of the access proposal demonstrated by a traffic impact study. To allow access for workers living locally, a pedestrian and cycle route from Boundary Lane is proposed.

#### 10.17. Policy SL1

**Existing workshop buildings at the military vehicle testing ground north of Boundary Lane and the compound in which they stand, extending to 1.1 ha (2.7 acres), may be re-used for employment uses. Vehicular access to the site must**

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**be from the A338 Spur Road with a pedestrian and cycle access from Boundary Lane.**

### Shopping

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- 10.18. For its size, St. Leonards and St. Ives parish is poorly provided with shops. However, because it is so close to both the main shopping centres of Ringwood and Ferndown, both of which have large superstores, and with a high car-ownership level among the local population, the scope for additional shopping within the Parish is likely to be very limited.
- 10.19. The approach which has been adopted in this Local Plan has been to avoid positive proposals for new facilities which might well prove to be unviable because of the lack of real demand for them, while establishing a policy framework which would allow proposals to come forward from the private sector or outside bodies. The policies in Chapter 6 would allow the establishment of further shopping on suitable sites within the built up area on the initiative of private developers.

### Open Space and Recreation

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- 10.20. Although existing provision is limited, additional sports fields are unlikely to be necessary, particularly because of the unusually large proportion of older people in the parish. If needs arise for additional sports fields for adult use, these could be provided in the Green Belt, subject to the other policies and proposals of this Document.

### Countryside Recreation

- 10.21. It is expected that the Moors Valley and Avon Heath Country Parks will continue to act as major local facilities for informal countryside recreation. Further improvements to the access to both parks may be desirable, although the nature conservation importance of the Avon Heath must be protected.
- 10.22. The Castleman trailway created along the former railway line is also an important local resource for countryside recreation. It is important that it should be protected from crossings by traffic routes which would break its continuity and reduce its attraction as a recreational route safe from motor vehicles. It will also be desirable for the trailway and the network of routes to which it gives access to be developed and extended. Policy TRANS8 (para 6.352) will prevent development which would disrupt the continuity of the trailway.

### Folly Farm Lane

- 10.23. There is a substantial area of woodland to the north of the A31 between the Ashley Heath roundabout and the junction with the Verwood Road. It is important for the appearance of the approach to St. Leonards and St. Ives from the east, being on a prominent slope. The wood is on a registered common. It is proposed that it should be used as a public open space and should be preserved for informal recreation and for nature conservation.

#### **10.24. Policy SL2**

**Woodland west of the junction of the A31 and the Verwood Road and south and west of Folly Farm Lane extending to 1.7 hectares (4.2 acres) will be used for public open space and for nature conservation. The woodland will be managed to ensure its long term protection.**

### Lions Hill

- 10.25. The western end of St. Leonards has the least easy access to countryside open space and recent surveys have shown that this is one of the most strongly felt local needs. The area immediately west of the built up area contains the Lions Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest part of which, immediately south of the trailway, is common land. The Herpetological Conservation Trust owns Lions Hill and manages it as a nature reserve allowing the public foot access.

### Conservation and Countryside

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#### Nature Conservation

- 10.26. The Parish of St Leonards and St Ives has some of the largest areas of heathland within East Dorset, including Avon Heath and Lions Hill. These are protected as SPA's, SAC's and Ramsar sites. It is anticipated that to accord with the Structure Plan requirement to re-create 500 hectares of heathland that further heathland could be created within the Parish. The areas stated in the following policy have been identified for restoration as they are located adjacent to existing heathland.

#### **10.27. Policy SL3**

**The St Leonards and St Ives area has other sites of heathland interest and potential. To reflect heathland restoration targets in the Structure Plan, conservation will be sought through management and restoration, with the owners and interested organisations, of suitable sites in the area. These may include:**

- (a) land west of Wayland Road**
- (b) land between Grange and Foxbury Roads**
- (c) to the south-east of St Leonards Hospital**
- (d) the Shamba complex south of Lions Hill**
- (e) Matchams SSSI, and**
- (f) Wattons Ford Common.**

#### Military Vehicle Testing Sites

- 10.28. Other than the existing workshops and compound at the northernmost of the two military vehicle testing sites, the remainder of these two areas are largely heathlands designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). While these sites may become redundant, the policies set out in Chapter 6 of this Plan, together with national policies and international obligations, would prevent the re-use of these areas in any ways which might damage their nature conservation value. The preferred use of these sites would be as Local Nature Reserves designated under the Local Authorities (National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949), managed by one or more of the voluntary or public conservation organisations.

#### **10.29. Policy SL4**

**Other than the existing workshop compound, and its access from the A338, the two military vehicle testing grounds at Boundary Lane and Barnsfield Heath will be used for nature conservation, should the protection given by the current military use cease.**

### Urban Conservation

- 10.30. Because of their recent growth, there are no areas of St. Leonards and St. Ives or Avon Castle which have been designated as Conservation Areas. However, Policy BUCON6 (para 6.136) will apply to areas whose special character merits additional protection, while still accepting that further development may take place. These areas are defined on the Proposals Map. The policy will apply predominantly to lower density areas where tree cover is important.
- 10.31. Tree Preservation Orders have been made on individual trees, groups or woodland areas which are of importance to the character of St. Leonards and St. Ives, Avon Castle and the surrounding area, and where protection has been considered necessary. The Planning Authority will continue to apply Tree Preservation Orders where they are required.
- 10.32. The A31 and the A338 are the most important public routes through the area: they form the main approaches to the whole south east Dorset area. They are particularly fortunate in the extent of tree cover along their lengths. Developments adjoining these roads should allow this to be maintained. Advertising signs and unsightly developments are particularly intrusive along the A31. New advertisements, development or redevelopment should be to a higher standard than in the past. Prospective developers should therefore take particular note of the requirements of policies contained in Chapter 6.

### St. Leonards Hospital

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- 10.33. The existing Hospital at St Leonard's is a Community Hospital, administered by the Dorset Healthcare NHS Trust, which provides local GP services, rehabilitation care for the elderly and day care facilities. Originally established during the Second World War, development on the site comprises mainly single-storey with some two-storey buildings together with recreational facilities and open space on a site of approximately 30 hectares.
- 10.34. Any infilling or development of this site should be in accordance with policy guidance contained in 'PPG2' (in particular paragraphs C4 and C14). The health agencies have indicated their intention to maintain some health-related uses at the St Leonard's Hospital site for the foreseeable future. It cannot however be guaranteed that current health requirements will continue for the lifetime of this plan and proposals for the reuse of the site or buildings are likely to come forward. Any planning applications for redevelopment for other uses will be determined in the light of the latest Government advice contained in 'PPG2' and the following policy.
- 10.35. Account will need to be taken of the nature conservation interest which exists on part of the site. Additionally, sustainable drainage solutions will be required to prevent harm to the Moors River system.
- 10.36. There are important highway safety issues related to the access onto the A31 Trunk Road. Improvements in sustainable transport opportunities e.g. bus, walking, cycling will be sought to minimise the number of car and lorry movements associated with the site.
- 10.37. The A31 Trunk Road carries large numbers of vehicles on a daily basis. This causes significant noise and air pollution that could influence the type and form of future development.
- 10.38. If the site were to be redeveloped for residential purposes it would be large enough to justify the provision of affordable or special needs housing, subject to there being a need for such housing within the District.

- 10.39. The planning authority will encourage the highest standards of design and layout throughout. Prior to the submission of proposals for development, a planning brief would need to be prepared to guide any development. This should include a comprehensive masterplan for the whole site as well as information relating to scale, orientation, form and style of buildings, and the use of space around these buildings. The preparation of the development brief should involve the District Council, Health Agencies, Highway Agencies, Dorset County Council, English Nature, the Environment Agency and other interested bodies.

### **10.40. Policy SL5**

**St Leonard's Hospital is identified as a 'Major Developed Site in the Green Belt' on the Proposal's Map. Any proposals for infilling or redevelopment on the site should be based upon a development brief agreed by the Planning Authority and will need to demonstrate the following:**

- a) the development will have a no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it;
- b) there will be a positive contribution towards the objectives for use of land within the Green Belt set out within PPG2;
- c) development will be predominantly single-storey in height;
- d) development will not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings;
- e) there will be a high standard of layout and design;
- f) there will be no significant impact on species and habitats of nature conservation interest;
- g) a practicable sustainable drainage system can be implemented which will provide protection to the Moors River system against pollution from the site;
- h) sensitive development, including residential, old persons homes and other uses where people are likely to be exposed to air pollution, will not be located within areas which would be subject to unacceptable levels of air or noise pollution;
- i) there will be significant improvements to the provision of sustainable transport options;
- j) there will be an improved highway access to the A31 (T) in terms of safety;
- k) that if residential development is proposed, affordable or special needs housing should be provided on the site, subject to there being a proven need in the District.

### **Matchams Stadium and House**

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- 10.41. Matchams Stadium and its associated land provides a unique mixture of facilities for motor sports and related existing uses. However, conflicts exist between these uses, the amenity of adjoining residents, and the need to conserve sensitive habitats of national and international importance. Potentially, redevelopment of the site could offer a significant opportunity for environmental and ecological improvements without impacting upon on the openness of the green belt and the purpose of including the

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land within it, while at the same time presenting an opportunity for major heathland restoration.

### 10.42. Policy SL6

**The council will continue to support improvements to facilities at Matchams Stadium provided that they do not result in a marked increase in vehicular traffic attending the site, the heathlands are positively managed to prevent their deterioration and the openness of the green belt is not diminished. Any proposal for alternative use or redevelopment would be subject to green belt policy and the prior submission of plans for the restoration and management of the heathland, prepared in conjunction with English Nature and other interested bodies.**

- 10.43. Matchams House has planning permission for the residential re-development of the House, with the majority of the grounds being transferred to the Herpetological Conservation Trust in order to protect and enhance the heathland and its protected species on the site. The area is within the Green Belt and further intensification of the land use on this site beyond that already permitted is unlikely to be acceptable. Any proposals for alternative use would be subject to Green Belt policy.

## Transport

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- 10.44. The guiding policies on highways and transportation are found within the general policies contained in Chapter 6. These guiding policies relate to cyclists, pedestrians, traffic management, heavy goods vehicles, environment and landscape, public transport, parking facilities and servicing.
- 10.45. Chapter 7 contains details of the 'Local Plan Road Improvement Programme' and details the major highway schemes, including trunk road schemes, which are proposed for the period up to 2011.
- 10.46. This Chapter contains specific highway and transportation schemes for St. Leonards and St. Ives and should be read in conjunction with Chapters 6 and 7.

## Road Hierarchy

- 10.47. The 2011 hierarchy of roads for St. Leonards and St. Ives, as defined in Chapter 6 and described in Appendix A, is shown in Figure 10.1.
- 10.48. The A31 Trunk Road and the A338 Bournemouth Spur Road form part of the Primary Road Network. The B3081 Verwood Road from the A31 to the County Boundary is defined as part of the County Distributor Road network in the Structure Plan.

## Pedestrians and Cyclists

- 10.49. The network of minor roads provides satisfactory local routes for cyclists through much of St. Leonards and St. Ives. However, problems can occur where pedestrians and cyclists are required to use or to cross heavily trafficked roads. The problems and requirements of pedestrians and cyclists are being considered by the Highway and Planning Authorities with the aim of improving facilities and identifying suitable pedestrian and cycle routes.

**Figure 10.1 St. Leonards and St. Ives Road Hierarchy 2011**

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- 10.50. Measures to encourage cycling by making it safer and more attractive will be carried out. Such measures may include the separation of cyclists from other road traffic, shared pedestrian and cycle routes, facilities to cross roads carrying a heavy traffic flow, restrictions on parking and speed control facilities to slow motorists where separation is impossible. The Highways Authority is considering such measures on the A31 corridor westwards from Sandy Lane, St. Ives to the A31 Ferndown Bypass, which will be the subject of study to identify appropriate specific measures.
- 10.51. The A31 provides the only reasonable connection to the main local centre, Ringwood, and to West Moors and to Ferndown to the west. However, the heavy and fast flows of traffic along this trunk road result in increased vulnerability to cyclists, and a degree of intimidation which acts as a strong deterrent to using this route. A shared route for cyclists and pedestrians segregated from traffic has been provided as part of the

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improvements between Ashley Heath and Ringwood. It runs from Sandy Lane, St Ives to West Street, Ringwood. The Local Planning and Highway Authorities will seek for a safe provision for cyclists and pedestrians to be made along the A31 west of Ashley Heath, providing routes to West Moors, to the Sainsbury's store at Trickett's Cross and to Ferndown.

- 10.52. The existing quiet residential streets provide the opportunity of creating a network of advisory cycle routes providing for movement within the built-up area and connecting with the cycle link to Ringwood and also providing a route between the two country parks at Moors Valley and Avon Heath, using the recently built bridge at St. Ives End Lane.
- 10.53. Advisory cycle routes will be established using existing residential roads connecting to cycle routes along the A31 corridor.
- 10.54. Efforts will also be made to encourage Hampshire County Council and the New Forest District Council to extend the trailway from Ashley Twinning to Ringwood.

### Road Schemes

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#### A31

- 10.55. The Department of Transport have constructed a footbridge over the A31 near St. Ives End Lane and another at St. Leonards Hospital. Both bridges incorporate stairs and ramps and the bridge at St. Ives End Lane is designed to be negotiable by horse riders.
- 10.56. The Highways Agency of the Department of Transport has reviewed pedestrian crossing facilities along this busy section of the Trunk Road. Because of financial constraints it does not now expect to be able to provide a third footbridge, although the Planning and Local Highway Authorities consider that a further pedestrian and cycle bridge is greatly needed to provide a link between the Grange Estate and the local services within the built-up area to the north.

### Other Road Schemes

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#### Woolsbridge Road, Lions Lane, Horton Road Junction

- 10.57. The junction of the Woolsbridge Road, Lions Lane and the C2 Horton Road has a poor accident record. In order to increase highway safety, a junction improvement scheme will be carried out.

**10.58. Policy SL7**

**The junction of the Woolsbridge Road and Lions Lane with the C2 Horton Road will be improved.**