

### 3.8 RL Area 5 : The Moors River

#### General Description

**3.8.1** The Moors River is the smallest of the three main rivers within the Borough. The river flows into the most northern corner of the Borough as a small stream flowing through wet pastures. Passing between Hurn Forest and East Parley Common the watercourse broadens into a narrow meandering river. The river has cut a defined narrow flood plain in the gently undulating topography along the edge of Hurn Forest. Both the river and the flood plain are designated as a SSSI. Within this the coniferous plantations of the adjacent forest give way to a more natural cover of willow, oak and birch.

**3.8.2** Although the Forest area is open to free public access the river is in a very secluded landscape with only occasional points of public access. The presence of the nearby airport brings regular noise disturbance to the central section of the river corridor.



#### 3.8.3 Main Characteristics

- Small scale landscape of secluded valley.
- River heavily contained by vegetation.
- Narrow flood plain divided into small water meadow pastures.
- Semi-natural tree cover of willow, oak in scrub woodland and copses.
- Private landscape with no public access.

#### Sensitivity to Change

**3.8.4** Small scale difficult agricultural land often poorly accessed. River corridor may in time be abandoned from agricultural use. Lack of management would reduce natural conservation interest and diminish resource of water meadow/wet pasture landscape. This small scale and attractive landscape is sensitive to severance, intrusion or management changes all of which could have severe adverse impact on the limited area of the Moors River Valley.



**3.8.5** The Local Plan includes a route corridor for a new access road into the airport. The potential landscape (as opposed to simply visual impacts) and ecological impacts of any new roadway should be carefully assessed to minimise the effect in this small scale landscape.





### 3.9 RL Area 6 : Hurn Bridge and Hurn Court

**3.9.1** The hamlet of Hurn is set on the western side of the St. Catherine's Hill - Hurn Forest Ridgeline. The area is contained by the heavily treed higher ground of Ramsdown Hill and Sopley Common. The settlement is comprised of scattered clusters of farmsteads, cottages and a discreet cul-de-sac of post-war housing. The Moors River divides these clusters with a narrow secluded and heavily treed valley. The area opens up into different spaces around the hamlet with small paddocks and fields between building groups. The heavy woodland edge also breaks in places, giving a setting to houses on the eastern side of the settlement.

**3.9.2** The settlement is heavily dominated by traffic. The B3073 provides a link from the A338 and Christchurch to Bournemouth International Airport. This road crosses the Moors River via a small bridge. Immediately adjacent to the bridge a roundabout junction links with the Avon Causeway and Matchams Lane. Both of these minor roads provide back road alternatives to other strategic routes through the Borough. The enclosed wooded setting and modest scale roads concentrate the impact of heavy traffic within this Character Area.

**3.9.3** The 'core area' of the hamlet is designated Conservation Area. The area protects both statutory listed and locally listed buildings and building groups. A small side road lane, old ford on the river and the tree cover within the valley all contribute to the rural settings of the building groups.

**3.9.4** The buildings range in scale from small Victorian red brick farm cottages to larger farm house properties with surrounding barns and out-buildings. An impressive stable block is located just outside the southern edge of the Conservation Area. This gives one of the few public references to the presence of Hurn Court, a secluded country house, and estate laid out next to the confluence of the Moors River and River Stour.

**3.9.5** The main house is described as of irregular plan and varying dates, the earliest visible sections of the building dating from the 18th century. The bulk of the building is a heavily remodelled Elizabethan house in the neogothic style. The building occupies the site of the monastic Grange for Christchurch with fish ponds and elements of a medieval planned landscape.

**3.9.6** The enclosed parkland landscape around the house is located partly on the River Terrace landscape and partly within the Flood parkland within the Borough. The low lying riverside area contains a series of channels, weirs and pond features within a planned landscape.

**3.9.7** These areas are physically located close to the A338 dual carriageway and the outer suburbs of Bournemouth. They are, however, very secluded and private areas that retain a historic and isolated character.







### 3.9 RL Area 6 :Hurn Bridge and Hurn Court cont ...

#### 3.9.8 Main Characteristics

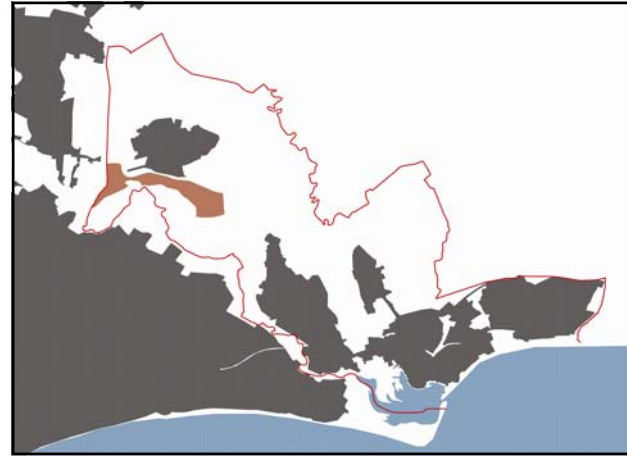
- Enclosed area contained by landform and forest landscapes. Scattered development pattern of historic buildings and building groups.
- Secluded river and minor side roads.
- Main road and local junction dominated by heavy traffic.
- Individual building groups set within distinct spaces of paddocks, fields or woodland edge landscapes.
- Historic parkland landscape with parkland trees and historic buildings and landscape features.

#### Sensitivity to Change

**3.9.9** The area currently suffers from heavy traffic impacts contained within a small scale rural road corridor. This area would be sensitive to changes which exacerbate this impact.

**3.9.10** The area is already fragmented by the main road. Highway improvements to the road corridor could alter the character of the roadway reducing sense of a rural location. The Conservation Area protects a scattered pattern of historic building set within small pockets of open space. In protecting the character of the Conservation Area these spaces and settings to buildings should be seen as sensitive to change.

**3.9.11** The parkland of Hurn Court is a particular landscape type that has been lost in other parts of the Borough. The buildings and parkland are in effect an extension of the main settlement of Hurn. The grounds contain elements of earlier historic interest related to the original settlement of the nearby town. Consideration should be given to how this area could add to the value of the Conservation Area.



### 3.10 RL Area 7 : The River Stour Terrace

**3.10.1** Historically the River Stour Terrace was as extensive as the terrace area alongside the Avon. However, Bournemouth International Airport and associated mixed industrial areas now occupies a substantial part of the Terrace with inevitable impact on landscape character.

**3.10.2** The remaining Terrace landscape can be seen as a narrow shelf of higher ground located between the B3073 and the river flood plain. The boundary between the flood plain and Terrace is marked by the position of lanes and agricultural tracks linking a series of small farmsteads. The farm buildings are generally clustered on the river side of the Terrace, as the farms would traditionally manage areas of both water meadows in the flood plains and the dryer soils of the Terrace. The Terrace areas sit between 7 and 6 m AOD while the adjacent flood plain is at around 5m and below.

**3.10.3** At the western end of the terrace, Parley Green is a small hamlet formed by a loose cluster of farms and cottages. Amongst the surviving traditional agricultural dwellings and farm buildings is a fine example of a 19th century barn in a model farm style. This area is not designated, but could be considered as of equal value as some of the other settlements protected by Conservation Area status.

**3.10.4** The fields on the Terrace are regularly shaped parliamentary enclosures dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. The fields are defined by flailed hedges with a regular pattern of hedgerow oaks.

**3.10.5** In the south eastern corner of the River Terrace, Hurn Court is a small parkland landscape set at the confluence of the Moors River and Stour. The area is described in greater detail in the Hurn Bridge – Hurn Court Character Area description.

**3.10.6** The alignment of the B3073 Parley Lane on the northern edge of remaining the Terrace has been adjusted to suit the Airport operation. This has become a busy main road through route. The Alice-in-Wonderland family theme park is accessed off the main road opposite the Airport.

**3.10.7** These developments have changed the perception of the landscape along the main road corridor. However, the minor lanes and paths leading away from the main road still retain a strong rural character. Occasional glimpsed views to the built up area of Bournemouth, road noise and aircraft noise reduce the tranquillity of the landscape.

### 3.10.8 Main Characteristics

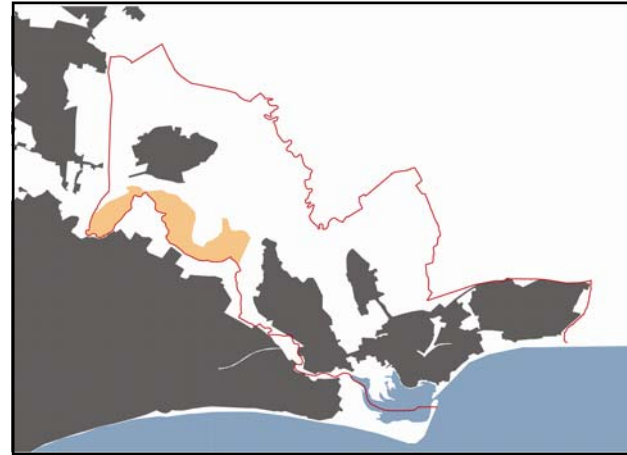
- Narrow ‘shelf’ of Terrace landscape previously extended across the Airfield boundary
- Medium scale Parliamentary Enclosure landscape with regular field pattern
- Hedge lines managed as flail cut native hedges with mature oaks as hedgerow trees
- Adjoining parkland landscape of Hurn Court provides glimpsed views of more formal and varied treescape
- Fringe of willow scrub areas on boundary to River flood plain
- Minor lanes and farm tracks define the riverside edge to the Terrace and provide recreational access links.
- Views limited by low lying landscapes, hedgerow cover and enclosing tree cover

### Sensitivity to Change

**3.10.9** As a small remnant area of terrace landscape, this area has already been compromised by adjoining development. The remaining area is not in itself a significant area of characteristic landscape. However, as part of a wider tract of agricultural land between the Stour and the airport, this area is an important buffer between the built-up areas. As an agricultural landscape, this area helps define the setting of the airport as countryside, rather than urban fringe or town. This area should, therefore be seen as sensitive to changes that undermine the rural/agricultural character of the land.

**3.10.10** Such change is in prospect with the potential expansion of the recreational uses/farm diversification and potential minerals extraction on the terrace. (See Figure 3.13 at the end of this section for the minerals allocation). The Green Belt designation limits inappropriate ‘built’ development but not necessarily recreational uses and not mineral operations. The sense of this area as ‘countryside’ should be protected so that the airport is not seen as coalescence between the outer fringes of Bournemouth. To do this a strong positive landscape framework is crucial to the successful integration of those changes that challenge the traditional agricultural character of the landscape.





### 3.11 RL Area 8 : River Stour Flood Plain

**3.11.1** This area is a shared landscape forming the boundary to the Bournemouth Borough area. The administrative boundary generally follows the river but there are a few locations where land on the Bournemouth side of the river falls within Christchurch.

**3.11.2** The landscape of the river corridor is more heavily influenced by its proximity to the urban areas. Sections of the valley are occupied by significant urban elements such as roads and sewage works. The visual and auditory impact of urban development is also present.

**3.11.3** While the urban areas undoubtedly have an impact, the river corridor also provides a valuable setting and buffer zone to the urban area. Despite the urban elements there is a continuity of landscape character within the flood plain.

**3.11.4** The low-lying landscape is contained by river terraces on both sides of the river. These are typically 2-3 m above the flood plain level.

**3.11.5** The river flood plain has developed as a gently winding corridor within which the river has cut a meandering channel. Weirs with pools and side channels highlight the past management of the watercourse. The surrounding fields are divided by ditches and drains. The Leadon Stour, a side stream running off the Stour, is designated as part of the Moors River SSSI.

**3.11.6** The regular pattern of drainage on parts of the floodplain link to the more intensive management of land associated with the enclosure movement.

**3.11.7** Variations in levels, tree cover, and irregular field patterns create a more informal landscape than the terraces. The natural course of the river also helps break down the regularity of the pastures. The tree cover along the river is predominantly willow and oaks. Additional tree cover encloses the flood plain along the terrace edges.

**3.11.8** Sections of the river are accessible by public footpath. This area is also visible from the Stour Valley Way (a path following a minor road route on the edge of the Bournemouth area).

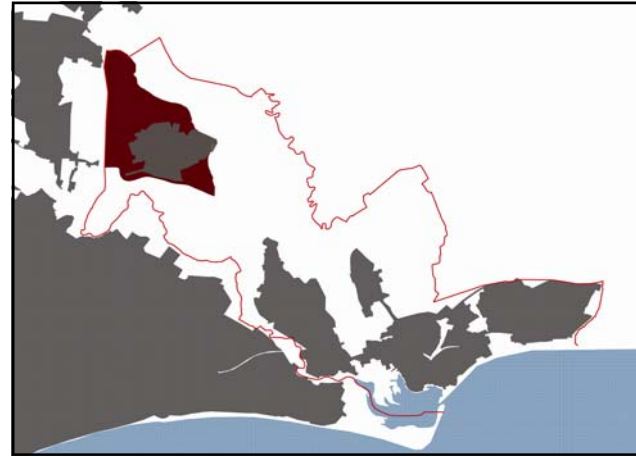
### 3.11.9 Main Characteristics

- Low-lying modest scale flood plain contained by river terraces
- Flood plain has developed as a winding corridor with meandering river channel
- Evidence of water management for mills and water meadows, along with drainage ditches as land improvement
- Regular field pattern broken by natural river course and irregular tree cover
- Absence of buildings, roadways or other 'historic' structures within flood plain area
- Minor roads and tracks located on terrace edges provide views down into and across the area
- Modern intrusions include A338, large scale sewage works and overhead power lines.

### Sensitivity to Change

**3.11.10** This landscape provides valuable recreational access to the River Stour close to the built up area of Bournemouth. It is also a critical part of the buffer space and 'defensible' boundary between the built up areas of Bournemouth and the countryside of Christchurch. In this role the area helps separate the urban area and airport. The area should therefore be seen as highly sensitive to changes that undermine the recreational or positive landscape structure of the River Corridor.

**3.11.11** The glimpsed views of nearby residential development and the presence of urban infrastructure within the floodplain already influence the rural character and quality of the landscape. The cumulative impact of additional development within or adjacent to the river corridor should be carefully considered.



### 3.12 RL Area 9 : Bournemouth International Airport and East Parley Common

**3.12.1** The Airport occupies a large part of the River Stour terrace. Originally built as a military airfield in 1941, the site has grown into an important regional facility.

**3.12.2** The southern side of the Airport is the public frontage facing onto the B3073. The passenger terminal being accessed off the main road. This is operational landscape with security fencing, managed grassland, runways and public buildings. This is the high profile managed frontage, although much of the built development is a cluttered mix of buildings and hard developments. This area is set to change with the approval of a new terminal building and parking area to the west of the existing collection of buildings. New bunded landscape areas are proposed alongside the main road. The final fate of the existing buildings is unclear from the approved scheme. As a Green Belt site it is assumed there will be a radical reduction in the extent of built development on the old terminal site.

**3.12.3** Adjacent to the south-east sector of the airport and bordering the Moors Rivers and Hurn Conservation Area, is an open flat area of agricultural land with a scatter of mature trees. This area provides an essential landscape buffer and setting to the river corridor, Conservation Area and listed buildings at Hurn Bridge Farm.

**3.12.4** On the north side of the site hangar buildings and workshops are clustered around a maze of taxiways and roadways. Parts of the site are promoted as a 'business park' with newer buildings and formal staff parking areas. The general overall impression is of an intensely commercial and untidy collection of development in a chaotic setting. It is noted that even though the western side of the site is promoted as a business park, the development to date has been relatively piecemeal and mediocre. This is not helped by the point that there is no strong landscape infrastructure that a normal high quality business park would demand.

**3.12.5** The northern boundaries of the site are enclosed by scrub woodland opening out onto rough heathland. The physical boundaries of some parts of the commercial operations are not well defined. Sections of old roadways or taxi ways extend away from the buildings into the surrounding woodland cover.

**3.12.6** Several sites of nature conservation interest lie within the curtilage of the Airport generally on the north and eastern sides. In addition other pockets of semi-natural vegetation are found

elsewhere on the site. These areas do not appear to be clearly defined or protected. The adjacent area of heathland to the north of the Airport is designated as SSSI, special protection area and special area of conservation.

**3.12.7** The Airport clearly excludes recreational access from a large area of countryside. A bridleway route is available on the eastern side of the site providing the only access up to East Parley Common. The areas of nature conservation interest to the north of the Airport are inaccessible.

**3.12.8** To the north of the airport a collection of small commercial operations have encroached into the countryside alongside the bridleway. The uses are generally open air operations served by temporary site accommodation. The site uses include a commercial composting operation in an old gravel pit and fencing/shed manufacture. Beyond this the area opens out into managed open farmland with few strong features, but limited visible connection to the nearby built-up areas beyond the Borough boundary.

#### 3.12.9 Main Characteristics

- Open expanse of managed operational land presents a tidy frontage to public areas.
- The future terminal development will bring the foot print of development out towards the main road and proposed landscape works will enclose the site from the roadway.
- Commercial development areas of very poor and uninviting visual quality.
- Pockets of nature conservation interest are retained within the operational areas.
- Semi natural woodland cover of oak/birch scrub provide some enclosure to the site.
- Areas outside of Airport boundary provide some level of recreational access to the north of the airport.
- Area to south-east of airport provides an essential buffer area to the Moors River SSSI, Hurn Conservation Area and listed building.





### Bournemouth International Airport and East Parley Common cont ..

#### Sensitivity to Change

**3.12.10** Although an operational facility, the airport currently presents as a predominantly open space within the countryside. The main cluster of development around the old terminal site was set back from the roadway, west of Hurn, helping to reduce the perceived scale of development on the site. The larger hangar buildings were also concentrated on the more distant or secluded site areas where their substantial scale was off-set by the overall expanse of the airfield.

**3.12.11** The development of business park uses in the north west sector has brought development into closer view. While the scale of the office buildings in footprint terms is not large in the context of the hangar buildings, the height and position of the buildings makes them quite prominent in views across the site from the B3073. The approved new terminal building, whilst landscaped, still concentrates large scale development much closer to the 'B' road. These changes have already been accepted as part of the economic benefit brought by the airport.

**3.12.12** In terms of future changes the area should be seen as sensitive in terms of further development, which would reinforce the sense of an urbanised landscape rather than countryside. The new terminal reinforces the presence of development against the road, the cluster of development around the existing terminal still has an impact on the openness of the Green Belt area. Consideration should be given to how the mass of existing buildings can be reduced to compensate for the proposed new terminal.

**3.12.13** The area to the south-east of the airport should be seen as highly sensitive to further development. It is essential to retain the open, treed character in order to maintain the setting of the River Corridor, Conservation Area and listed buildings.

**3.12.14** The northern part of the airport is excluded from the Green Belt as an important employment site. The location of the new terminal on the southern side area requires the abandonment of a north/south runway. This may leave an extensive area of potential development land along the northern side of the airfield. The location of employment uses in this location comes from the exceptional circumstances of the location of the airport and the previous high levels of employment provided by the facility.

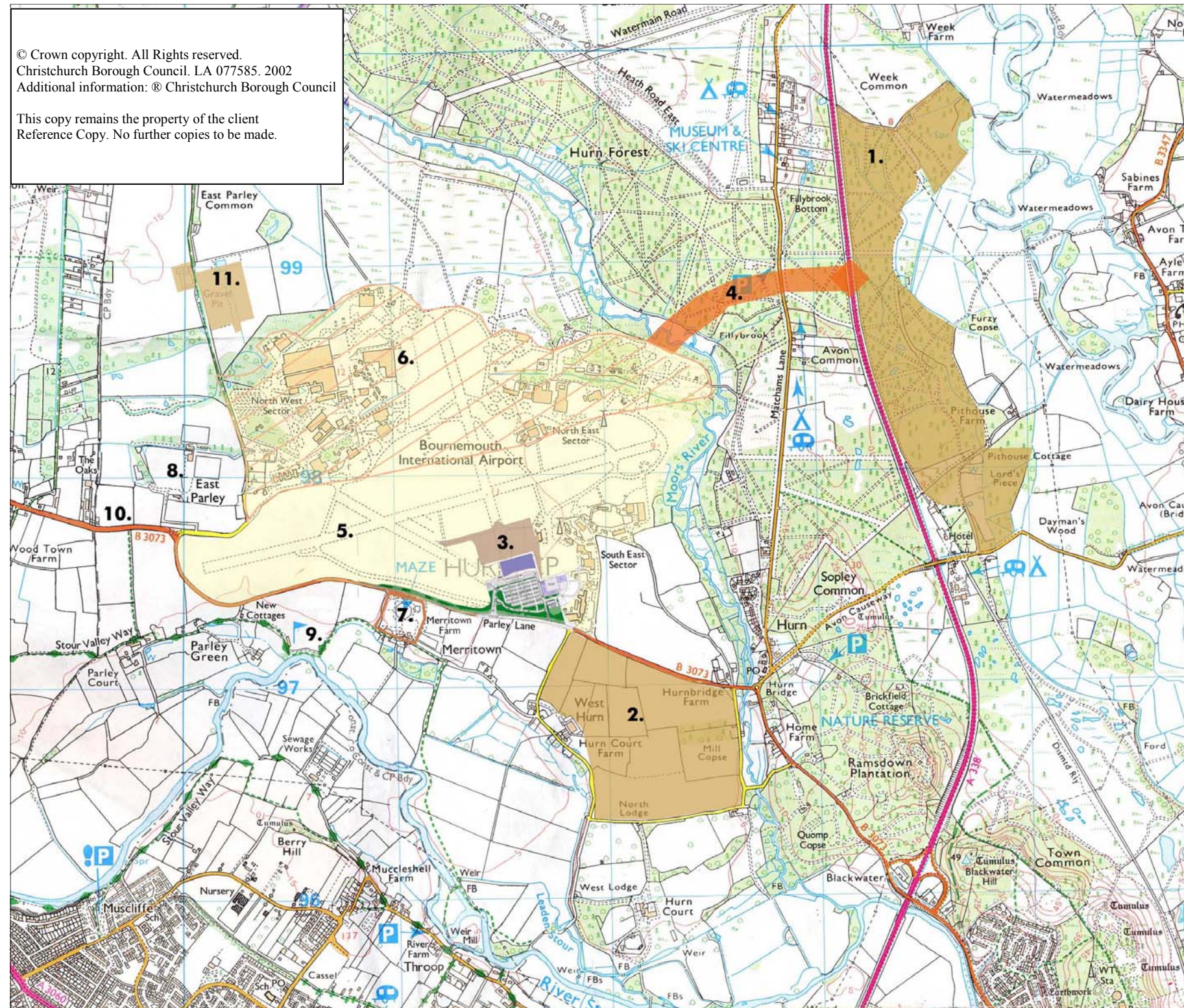
**3.12.15** The existing mix of old and new commercial development on the site suggests a site that in simple terms is not sensitive to further development. However, if considered as an exceptional site set in countryside on the edge of a conurbation, then this area is evidently more sensitive than the existing site appearance would suggest. While there may be significant capacity for development on the northern part of the airfield, as a prime and exceptional employment site for the Borough, there is a need for a higher standard of development and properly structured landscape infrastructure to the site if the area is not to be seen as a very poor quality urban extension.

**3.12.16** In addressing development proposals for the employment site, it should be noted that while outside of the Green Belt, the area guidance is clear that the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be harmed by conspicuous development even located outside of the designated area. In this respect, views from the B3073, the new terminal building and for airport passengers, are a relevant consideration.

**3.12.17** The more open farmland to the north of the airport, which is not particularly accessible from the urban areas, is relatively remote. As countryside this area lies on the Borough boundary and combines with open land to the north and west to create an extensive areas of open land between Ferndown and the Hurn Forest. This area should be seen as sensitive in terms of the strategic setting of the airport in 'countryside' In addition, the area of Parley Common heathland should also be seen as highly sensitive in that it is currently more isolated and remote than the other heathlands in the Borough.

**3.12.18** This sensitivity to development pressures for this area should be read in conjunction with the adjoining pressures on the River Stour Terrace area to the south, and the Moors River area to the east (where mineral extraction and the potential road link to the A338 are identified). (See Figure 3.13)





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**Key:**

1. Avon Common - Preferred Area for Extraction of Sand & Gravel.
2. Hurn Court Farm - Preferred Area for Extraction of Sand & Gravel.
3. Proposed masterplan for new passenger terminal at Bournemouth Airport.
4. Potential link road from adopted Local Plan.
5. Bournemouth International Airport.
6. BIA Allocated Employment Land.
7. Alice-in-Wonderland Family Theme Park.
8. East Parley Sports Fields
9. Parley Green Golf Course
10. Wessex Autistic School
11. Composting operation and other adjacent commercial operations

Figure 3.13 - Existing, permitted and allocated development on and around Bournemouth International Airport





### 3.13 Countryside Character Summary

**3.13.1** The variations in the underlying physical structure of the Borough are relatively subtle. Despite this a range of distinct landscapes have evolved within the Borough that reflect the interplay between the physical geomorphology of the area and the influence of traditional management and landscape. The majority of the more dominant aspects of the landscape are in fact relatively modern. The agricultural landscapes date from the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century enclosures, and the pine forests from the 1950's.

**3.13.2** Discrete parts of the rural landscape present a strong sense of place, high scenic quality or represent good examples of their respective landscape type. The rural area also contains several areas of major importance for nature conservation (while not always accessible, these areas should be regarded as valuable landscapes as the setting to other aspects of 'Natural Beauty').

**3.13.3** Many other areas are heavily influenced by their proximity to the urban area. While this has an impact on their inherent quality at the same time most continue to contribute to the environmental quality of the Borough. Individually few areas are of outstanding or special quality status. Collectively the rural areas contribute to the identity of Christchurch Borough as a whole. As a succession of different landscapes the rural areas provide a range of different experiences and recreational opportunities across the Borough.

#### Capacity for Development

**3.13.4** Rural countryside is by definition sensitive to development as changes can often dilute or erode the character of traditional landscapes. The countryside is also sensitive in terms of wider influences that bring noise or visual disturbance. These can affect the quality of the rural area. It can often be the case that simply increasing visitor or recreational pressure can affect the very qualities people visit the countryside for.

**3.13.5** National planning policy guidance identifies the countryside as valuable for "its own sake". Even sporadic isolated development can be seen as harmful to rural character. The capacity for development within the countryside is therefore extremely limited.

**3.13.6** In the eastern half of the Borough, the openness of the landscape and the lack of isolated dwellings is a clear indication of a sensitive landscape. Around Burton and Winkton the historic

relationship of the settlements with the rivers has been lost to suburban development. Expansion of the settlements out to the east would break the historic relationship between the village and the associated countryside. Within the Avon Valley, St. Catherine's Hill and Hurn Forest areas, the landscapes are highly sensitive as recreational and nature conservation areas and have already absorbed significant infrastructure. The nature conservation interests are also sensitive in terms of conflicts with recreational pressures.

**3.13.7** In the western area the airport is in part a major designated employment site and adjoins a future minerals site, sports facility and other accepted development in the Green Belt. The area has some capacity in the sense that there is a substantial allocation for development on the airport, but at the same time the surrounding countryside is a strategic gap between the nearby extensively built-up areas, and the identified natural and built Conservation assets.

**3.13.8** The cumulative footprints of the permitted developments and allocated areas is illustrated on **Figure 3.13**. The effect of these developments combined, will change the general character of this part of the Borough. It may be that the perception of this area, as an agricultural landscape surrounding the airport, will in time be lost. But there is no reason why this should be taken as a complete loss of a strong landscape or generally rural character. In terms of development capacity, it is suggested this area (allowing for the future allocations) is at capacity, at least until such time that the proposed developments are properly integrated into the landscape.

#### Recommendations

**3.13.9** There is no obvious case for any additional wide scale special landscape designations within the rural part of the Borough. A number of the more sensitive environments are protected by high status nature conservation designations. There is a case for the improved protection of the rural landscape as a whole and the protection of the particular positive characteristics of the individual character areas.

**3.13.10** To date the general extent of the rural area has been protected by its Green Belt status. This designation protects the openness and encourages protection of the general environment and visual amenity of the area.





### 3.13 Countryside Character Summary cont..

**3.13.11** While this has been effective to date, it is possible increasing pressure for diversification in the rural area could lead to development that may not affect general openness but may impact on the rural character of the countryside.

**3.13.12** While there is not a specific ‘countryside’ protection policy in the current local plan, there is support for such protection within national planning guidance (PPG7). It is suggested that a specific countryside protection policy with particular reference to landscape character should be considered in the next review of the Local Plan.

**3.13.13** This section has considered only the ‘wider’ countryside of the Borough. Areas closer into the urban edge are dealt with in Section 4.0. Within this area there are no areas of designated Green Belt that do not provide some level of useful separation, definition or protection of the wider countryside. No adjustment to the Green Belt is suggested in this area.

