

Planning Purbeck's Future



Core Strategy Background Paper Volume 2: Challenges

This is volume 2 of 10 volumes which comprise the Core Strategy Background Paper, as follows:

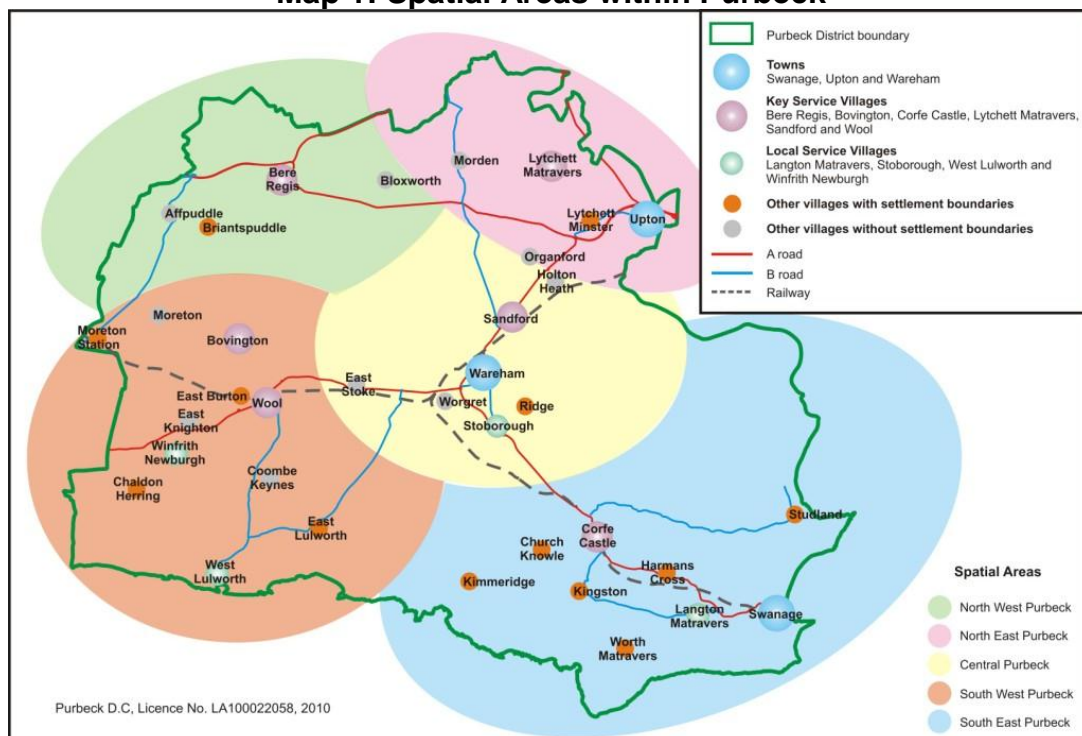
- Volume 1: Summary of Evidence
- Volume 2: Challenges
- Volume 3: Vision and Spatial Objectives
- Volume 4: Development Options
- Volume 5: Housing Supply
- Volume 6: Settlement Extension Sites
- Volume 7: Economic Context
- Volume 8: Development Policies
- Volume 9: Purbeck Infrastructure Plan
- Volume 10: Settlement Strategy

This background paper was completed in September 2009 and updated in August 2011.

SUMMARY

This document summarises the challenges arising from the issues outlined in Volume 1. The District can be split into 5 fairly distinctive but overlapping spatial areas each with different challenges and this volume refers to each separately:

Map 1: Spatial Areas within Purbeck



It should be noted, however, that some of the challenges identified under specific spatial areas are shared District-wide, for example the need for affordable housing.

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1. North East Purbeck (Upton and Lytchett Matravers)

- 1.1 The **Upton and Lytchett Minster Town and Parish Plan** states emphatically that Upton should be seen as a place in its own right and not just a suburb of Poole. The Parish Plan supports additional facilities such as a larger supermarket, bank and a new town square or other focal point for Upton. The **Lytchett Matravers Parish Plan** states that the village has good amenities but it is in danger of being a dormitory suburb of Poole. The retention of the Green Belt surrounding the village is seen as essential, although infilling of established sites could be acceptable.
- 1.2 The Retail Study (2008) highlighted the limited retailing at Upton and that the potential to improve and enhance its role given the size of the community it serves, but it **lacks a well defined centre**. Upton's development as a suburb of Poole, rather than a self-contained settlement, has prevented the development of a well-defined centre. The settlement's main facilities are grouped around a central crossroads and in a small shopping precinct nearby. The proximity of Upton to the range of shops and services provided by the conurbation has to some extent limited the development of the local centre. This lack of a central focus remains a key issue in developing a sense of place, character and identity in Upton. The recent loss of its central landmark building and only public house, the Greenridge Pub, has further undermined the integrity of the town centre. There is a community desire to develop an individual sense of place, character and identity through the enhancement of the existing town centre and the provision of a wider range of community facilities. This was highlighted through a recent Planning for Real © event considering the reuse of the Greenridge pub site.
- 1.3 Upton lies in close proximity to **heathland** – in particular to Upton Heath – and a large part of the town lies within 400 metre buffer, limiting residential intensification potential. The Upton Woods project is a mitigation scheme implemented to take the pressure off Upton Heath. Part one of the project has recently been opened and monitoring of visitors to the new public space and to the Upton Heath will help determine whether the project has been successful mitigation.
- 1.4 Poole's Core Strategy sets out plans for large scale **redevelopment in Hamworthy** and the mix of proposed uses could improve accessibility to new and community facilities. There could be an increase in traffic in Upton as a result of the construction of the second lifting bridge linking Hamworthy and Poole Port to the central part of Poole.
- 1.5 The Transport Strategy (2005), Transport Modelling (2006), the Retail Study (2008) and the SWRDA Workspace Strategy (2008) identified how the geographical and transport links with the conurbation have resulted a high degree of **out-commuting** from North East Purbeck to access the broader employment opportunities, services, shops and facilities provided in Poole, Bournemouth and Holton Heath. There are relatively few employment opportunities within Upton, with only one existing industrial estate. A new employment site at Wareham Road, Lytchett Matravers, has recently been built out and will provide local employment opportunities.
- 1.6 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2011) outlined the importance of planning for flood risk and the Heritage Strategy (2009) identified that owing to predictions of

sea level rise over the next few decades there will need to be **managed re-alignment** around Poole Harbour.

1.7 A large number of community facilities and services have been identified, yet the potential for development is quite low. This will restrict the opportunity for development to contribute to providing some of these requirements. The Upton Parish plan has identified the following community and recreation uses for improvement or replacement:

- Extension to Lytchett Minster School
- New primary school or improvements to existing schools
- Children's centre
- New youth club
- New youth facilities including café and shelters
- New communal focus at Upton Cross / town square
- Enhancements to existing facilities
- New facilities e.g. bank, additional shops and/or supermarket, café, pub
- Expansion of library
- Care home and Level 3 Sheltered Housing
- Expansion of health centre
- Improved public transport
- New green space to reduce pressure on Upton Heath and Wareham Forest
- Improvements for recreation ground, including new changing rooms
- Improvements to footpaths and cycle routes
- Improvements to the Castlemain Trailway
- Nature Reserve on Border Road open space
- Improved play and other facilities for 13 – 16 year olds
- New sports centre.

2. Central Purbeck (Wareham, Sandford and Stoborough)

2.1 The Retail Study (2008) showed that a degree of self-containment is exhibited in Wareham, with an estimated 45% of the working population living and working within the town, but only 20% of residents do their food shopping within the town. **Retail** growth will be difficult as there is no physical capacity within the town centre or at the edge of centre.

2.2 Wareham is in close proximity and has convenient access to **heathland** at Stoborough, Hartland Moor and Wareham Forest. Providing alternative green space that is more attractive than the surrounding heathland presents a real challenge, and other forms of management of heathland may also be necessary including restricting roadside parking around heathlands.

2.3 The northern section of the A351 from Corfe Castle to the A35 passes through internationally protected heathland, which considerably restricts residential development. As well as the failed bypass, a strategic housing scheme of 1350 dwellings at Holton Heath also failed to satisfy Habitats Regulations and was deleted by the Inspector from the Local Plan. New residential development along this section of the A351 will need to incorporate large swathes of new green infrastructure to provide alternative open space and attract people away from the

heaths. New housing allocations at Wareham and employment allocations at Holton Heath and Admiralty Park will have to provide nature conservation improvements and linkage of existing habitats to avoid fragmentation.

- 2.4 Documents such as the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2009) and Heritage Study show that **sea level rise / managed re-alignment** is an issue in Purbeck. A Poole Bay and Harbour Strategy Study is being undertaken to assess impact of no longer maintaining tidal banks and the impact this could have on the realignment of Poole Harbour.
- 2.5 The Purbeck Transport Strategy (2005) and Transport Modelling (2006) have confirmed how **traffic congestion** is a particular issue in Central Purbeck. The A351 is heavily congested at peak periods through Wareham and Sandford, causing community severance issues.
- 2.6 **Purbeck School Review** - the First School in Sandford is likely to become vacant and due to its location within 400metres of a heathland, may provide an opportunity for community uses. In Wareham, the middle school is set for closure and The Purbeck School may require extension.
- 2.7 The Wareham community plan has identified the following community and recreation uses for improvement or replacement:
 - New site to rebuild secondary school, sports centre and sports pitches
 - New combined community hospital, medical centre and ambulance station
 - Improved bus and train service
 - New green space to reduce pressure on nearby heathland
 - Improved facilities on recreation ground (e.g. cricket wicket, changing rooms)
 - Development of walking and cycle paths
 - Youth drop-in centre / café
 - New skate park.

3. South East Purbeck (Swanage, Corfe Castle and Langton Matravers)

- 3.1 The **Swanage Community Strategic Plan** supports expansion of businesses, housing, the promotion of the tourist industry and enhancements to the urban environment. The **Corfe Castle Parish Plan** highlights serious concerns about lack of affordable housing and good sports facilities.
- 3.2 The Transport Strategy (2005) and Transport Modelling (2006) have demonstrated that **traffic congestion** is a serious issue in South East Purbeck. Corfe Castle is a pinch point on the A351, particularly in the peak tourist season, and HGVs travelling to and from Swanage are problematic. There is no potential for a bypass due to the outstanding landscape of the AONB. Congestion is also an issue in Swanage town centre during peak tourist season.
- 3.3 The Transport Modelling study (*ibid*) also notes the problems with **accessibility**, as do the Heritage Strategy (2009) and Tourism Strategy (2008). Reliance on the car

as a main mode of transport reflects the geographically remote location of Swanage and limited public transport connections. Access to a wider choice of employment opportunities, shops, services and facilities is difficult, particularly during the peak tourist season.

- 3.4 A solution could be the **proposed reconnection of the Swanage to Wareham rail service**, which would contribute to the reduction of congestion on the A351, particularly during the summer months and peak travelling periods. It would also provide an alternative method for accessing the World Heritage Coastline and contribute to a reduction in car use in such an environmentally sensitive area.
- 3.5 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008) and Economic Viability Testing (2008) showed that **affordability** is a key issue in South East Purbeck. Approximately 16% of dwellings in South East Purbeck are second homes. This demand has increased the difficulty for local people to secure housing that is affordable, which is not helped by Swanage having the lowest average household income in Purbeck.
- 3.6 **Declining service provision** has been highlighted by the Community Facilities (2009) study and Retail Health Checks (annual), which show that in recent years there has been a threat to a number of local services in Swanage including the waste recycling centre, day care centre, night time opening of the community hospital and, most recently, the proposed school closures. This theme of declining service provision needs to be addressed to ensure that services are not lost and the town can continue to thrive.
- 3.7 The **Purbeck School Review** has recommended the closure of the middle school and reducing three first schools to two primary schools. This proposal will require more pupils being transported to Wareham for secondary school.
- 3.8 The **economy** has been discussed in the South West Regional Development Agency Workspace Strategy (2008), Retail Study (2008), Employment Land Review (2010), Heritage Strategy (2009), Tourism Strategy (2008) and the Retail Health Check (annual). There are very few potential opportunities to increase the economic base within the town centre without significant re-organisation of existing uses and this poses problems finding further retail growth. An out-of-town shopping centre is not desirable and would be inappropriate in the town. The opening of Prospect Business Park should allow some employment growth. The 1.2 hectares site may be fully occupied within 10 years and identifying further suitable sites around Swanage is difficult due to landscape, flooding and residential amenity constraints.
- 3.9 Although outside the scope of land use planning, it is worth mentioning that developers are anticipated to submit an application to the Infrastructure Planning Commission for a substantial **offshore wind farm** South East of Swanage in the near future. The Council is only responsible for planning on land, but there are linkages between the wind farm and town that need further thought, including the potential for expansion to educational field trips and tourism. There is also concern about the impact of the turbines upon the sea bed and, in particular, the local fishing industry.
- 3.10 Parish plans have identified the following community and recreation uses for improvement or replacement:

- Swanage Children’s Centre and childcare provision
- New site for combined community hospital, medical centre and ambulance station
- More adult care and sheltered housing
- Extend enhancement scheme along Shore Road
- Community and multi-function centre to develop learning facilities
- Improved Day Centre
- Develop cultural and heritage venues and facilities
- Improved transport facilities
- Development of quality toilets and baby changing facilities
- Develop performance and exhibition space
- Greenspace to reduce visitor pressure on Hartland Moor and Godlington Heath
- More allotments
- Sports centre with indoor sports hall
- Improve Swanage Football Club ground
- New pavilion for King Georges Playing Fields
- Multi Use Games Area / Synthetic Turf Pitch
- Growth of cultural and heritage trails
- Improved quality of footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways
- Development of wet weather activities and facilities
- Improved bus links to X53

4. South West Purbeck (Wool, Bovington, Winfrith Newburgh and West Lulworth)

- 4.1 The South West Regional Development Agency Workspace Strategy (2008) specifically mentions the **Winfrith Technology Centre**, which has traditionally attracted employees from across the sub-region and falls within the Weymouth and Dorchester Travel to Work Area. Its specialist nature has meant that the employment relationship with Wool is not as direct as its proximity might suggest. Recently, a new development partner has taken over the site and is actively marketing the site for business growth. The Employment Land Review (2010) highlights that the centre is a key opportunity for growing knowledge based industries.
- 4.2 There are a number of large scale uses and issues in this area that need coordination and could be addressed through a future plan(s). Recently, events have taken their own course, with 181 dwellings almost completed at Purbeck Gate in Wool and a development partner currently preparing a master plan for Dorset Green Technology Park to unlock economic growth. The MOD has a large training facility and residential accommodation at Bovington and recently expanded the Tank Museum as a tourist attraction. There are other issues yet to be resolved, including expansion of Monkey World as a tourist attraction, improvements to the C6 road to Bere Regis and the railway crossing in Wool to relieve congestion and better linkage between the settlements, including the linkage of the railway station to the Technology Park and Lulworth Cove.
- 4.3 New development will need to ensure that it does not impact upon internationally protected heathland at Winfrith Heath and provides suitable mitigation that could include new green infrastructure.

- 4.4 The Transport Strategy (2005) and Transport Modelling (2006) note the problems with **traffic congestion**, as do the Heritage Strategy (2009) and Tourism Strategy (2008). The rail level crossing on the A352 experiences congestion and capacity problems during the summer months and at peak travelling periods, as the barriers are down for 6 minutes at a time. Improving this situation would require a grade separated crossing of the railway, relocation of the station or improvements to the existing station and signals to reduce barriers' down times and therefore traffic queues. Each option is expensive and achieving external funding would be difficult.
- 4.5 The above studies also highlight the issue of **accessibility**. Links between Dorset Green Technology Park, Wool and Bovington are poor and require improvement. In particular, improved links are needed between the Technology Centre and railway station. Accessibility to services within Bovington is difficult due to a dispersed pattern of residential development and the restrictions of secure fenced areas. In particular, Cologne Road has poor access to the main shops. There is very little public access to countryside around Wool and this may have the effect of encouraging visitors to nearby heathland. Further consideration needs to be given to new green infrastructure. A future plan(s) could seek to address these issues.
- 4.6 The **School Review** has recommended the closure of one of the two first schools in Wool, leaving just a Roman Catholic school. This may lead to children being transported to Church of England schools in Bovington or Winfrith, which is not sustainable. The Bovington Middle School site will become surplus to requirements and as it lies within 400 metres of a heathland, where new residential development is not allowed, alternative uses including community uses need to be explored.
- 4.7 The Local Plan included a housing allocation in Bovington, but this has yet to come forward and delivery is tied to the operational requirements of the MOD. This makes allocation of new sites difficult as there is no certainty over delivery within the plan period.
- 4.8 The Dorset Deprivation Indices have shown that higher deprivation is experienced in Bovington than elsewhere in the District.

5. North West Purbeck (Bere Regis)

- 5.1 The **Parish Plan** indicates that the doctors' surgery is popular but needs additional space as an urgent priority. There is currently no consensus on whether a new community hall should be built. There is opposition to large-scale development but there is open-mindedness to steady, measured growth where this would maintain the vitality of the community.
- 5.2 The Transport Strategy (2005), Transport Modelling (2006), the Retail Study (2008) and the SWRDA Workspace Strategy (2008) show that **out-commuting** is an issue, with Bere Regis experiencing high levels due to its location on a key highway node at the junction of the A35 and A31. The location of the settlement, together with good highway accessibility, has resulted in the formation of close links with Dorchester, Blandford and Poole.

- 5.3 The Community Facilities (2009) study, Retail Health Check (annual) and PMP PPG17 Assessment (2006) highlight **services and facilities** as an issue, with the level of shops, services and community facilities provided generally low. The Local Plan employment allocation has not come forward for development. This lack of facilities, services and employment encourages out-commuting from the village, which experiences low levels of self containment as a result.
- 5.4 **School** - The first school is adjacent to the C6 road to Wool and distanced from the core of the village. Proposals for a bypass through the Purbeck Transportation Strategy would help reduce traffic past the school and improve the attractiveness of walking to the school, however this has now been dropped. Alternatively, the Purbeck Review proposes to enlarge the school to a primary school requiring significant alterations, which could provide an opportunity to relocate the school closer to the village away from the main road.

6. Summary of Purbeck's Main Challenges

- 6.1 The evidence indicates that there are constraints and pressures that result in key issues that need to be considered in Purbeck's future. They are summarised as follows:

How can we...

- Accommodate housing growth without harm to the built, natural and cultural environment of the District?
- Optimise the provision of affordable housing (of all sizes) in new development, providing a mixture of low cost market housing, social rented accommodation and shared ownership accommodation to help meet local needs?
- Live with the consequences of second home ownership and in-migration on the housing market and consequently the District's demographic structure?
- Maintain active communities and ensure that housing development is supported by the social and physical infrastructure required to meet the needs of future occupiers?
- Attract and provide suitable employment opportunities that reduce the need to travel?
- Provide sufficient land and premises to support the tourism industry without harm to the built, natural or cultural environment?
- Resist the loss of hotels and other important services to alternative uses like housing?
- Reduce the disparity between low local wages and high house prices?
- Address climate change and its effect on agriculture, coastal erosion and flooding?
- Further enhance the ecological and landscape value of the District?

- Respond to the changing demographic make up of the District, with an increasing proportion of elderly persons and decreasing number of children?
- Address traffic congestion, whilst recognising that future development could place additional pressures on the road system, in particular the A351?
- Provide new employment, shops, community facilities and services that are accessible for those without a car to avoid isolation and social exclusion?
- Provide an integrated transport system within the District?
- Improve accessibility to existing employment sites that are not well related to the main settlements?
- Ensure everyone has access to countryside and open space to benefit their health?
- Adapt to a decline in oil production (Peak Oil) and the growth of renewable energy?

6.2 These have been amalgamated into the following five challenges facing Purbeck:

- i) Providing housing people can afford.
- ii) Protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- iii) Relieving congestion on the A351.
- iv) Improving the range of employment opportunities.
- v) Help people access services and community facilities locally, including shops.