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Welcome

Welcome to the Core Strategy Options Consultation

We have now reached the next stage of the joint Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy. The strategy has been prepared very much in line with the Coalition Government's Localism Agenda, which is intended to give the local communities an opportunity and power to shape the future of their areas.

We have gathered together a significant amount of evidence, data collection, and appraisals, alongside the results from Issues and Options consultation from 2008 and 2009, and now set out key policy options for the future planning of Christchurch and East Dorset.

This is an important document. It sets down a strategy for the delivery of the sort of development seen as necessary to meet the needs and aspirations of our residents, our businesses, as well as visitors to our area. The challenges we face are substantial, but we feel we now have a solid set of policy options from which to develop our draft Core Strategy. This is planned for publication in the Autumn of 2011.

We are putting these various options to you to get your views. In some cases, where we believe we have a clear policy choice, we do set out a preferred approach, and offer an explanation as to why they appear to offer the best way forward. Some are open for consideration and some are not considered as suitable, but in all cases we would welcome your views.

However, we also felt it was important that the community had the opportunity to consider other alternatives. Some issues are finely balanced, particularly future housing delivery, and the possible need to provide new housing. In these cases we set out a range of alternative options, and want to hear your views on which of those you feel we should take forward.

The choices are not easy, but we must rise to the challenge to secure a sustainable future for our residents and respective Councils. As the leaders of Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council we encourage you to read the consultation document and give us your views. These views are important to us and will help to shape and guide our policies through until 2027.



Cllr Spencer Flower – Leader of East Dorset District Council

Cllr Alan Griffiths – Leader of Christchurch Borough Council

1 Introduction

What is the Core Strategy?

1.1 The Core Strategy will set out the broad planning strategy of the Councils for the 15 years up to 2027, containing a vision, objectives and planning policies to make the strategy happen.

1.2 Guidance on production of Core Strategies has changed since the Councils began work on this document. Production of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy can essentially be broken down into 6 main stages:

- Evidence gathering – work on baseline data and studies which inform the issues to be addressed in the Core Strategy. Most of this work is complete, but some further evidence is still to be finalised.
- Issues and Options – where consultation takes place to identify issues and a range of possible options for addressing them. Consultation and engagement on this stage took place during 2008 and 2009.
- Options – where the Councils identify one or more options for dealing with key issues and publishes them for consultation. This is the current stage.
- Submission – a draft Core Strategy is produced, and following consultation, likely to happen in the autumn of 2011, it will be revised and submitted for approval to the Secretary of State. .
- Examination – where an Inspector examines the "soundness" of the Core Strategy, considers the comments and representations, and produces a report.
- Adoption – where the final Core Strategy is adopted as Council policy. Likely to happen in 2012.

1.3 A Joint Core Strategy

1.4 Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council are working in partnership to prepare their Local Development Frameworks. This includes a number of documents which will be jointly prepared, of which the Core Strategy is one.

1.5 The document therefore contains many policies which are common to both areas, as well as specific sections relating to areas within Christchurch and East Dorset specifically.

1.6 The Options Consultation Document.

1.7 This document represents the second major consultation stage in the production of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy.

1.8 The Councils have been gathering evidence and data across a very wide range of issues which may affect the future planning strategy for Christchurch and East Dorset. Evidence studies have dealt with issues such as housing need, housing market assessment, employment development, retailing, open space, flood risk, and the future development of Bournemouth Airport.

1.9 In March 2008, the Councils produced a consultation document which sought views on what the main issues facing the two areas were, and provide an initial range of possible options for addressing those issues.

1.10 In order to bring together the results of evidence gathering, consultation on issues and options, and sustainability appraisal, the Councils have decided to consult on a refined series of options which will inform the basis of its submission draft Core Strategy.

1.11 In most cases, the consultation document sets out a "preferred" policy option, along with one or more alternative "non-preferred" options. In these cases, reasons for the preferred option are provided.

1.12 Certain issues, particularly relating to the scale and location of future housing and employment development, remain finely balanced. In these cases, the Councils are consulting on a small range of possible options, but not expressing a preference for any one option. The consultation response will be particularly important in informing which of these options is taken forward into the submission Core Strategy document.

1.13 Structure of the Options Consultation Document

1.14 The document sets out the overall vision and objectives of the Core Strategy, the key strategy for Christchurch and East Dorset, and the policy options.

1.15 A common structure has been developed for each of the main sections of the document:

Introduction
This sets out the main issues being considered.
Rules, regulations and advice
This establishes the national and local context in which the Core Strategy must operate
Where are we now?
This sets out key facts and information which have emerged from evidence gathering.
What you said at Issues & Options?
This summarises the response on this topic at the previous consultation stage.
The options.
This sets out the policy options themselves for consultation. In most cases, a preferred option is proposed, together with one or more alternatives. An explanation is given for the choice of preferred option. In some cases however, a number of options are set out for consultation, with the Council wishing to seek the public's view on the merits of these options. This is particularly the case with housing delivery options.

1.16 Additional documents produced as part of the Options consultation are as follows:

- Key Issues Papers on major topic areas of the Core Strategy, which set out how the Core Strategy Options have been developed.
- Sustainability Appraisal Report, providing detailed appraisal of each of the policy options in the consultation.
- Area Profiles, produced to identify local characteristics within each area, and how this might impact on policy options.
- Habitats Regulation Assessment Report.
- Equalities Impact Assessment.
- Health Impact Assessment.

1.17 How can you respond to the Options Consultation?

1.18 We want to receive as many responses as possible to this Core Strategy Options consultation.

1.19 The consultation period runs from 4th October until 12 noon on the 24th December 2010.

1.20 There are a number of ways you can view the consultation documents, and make comments on them:

- All documents are available to view on the Councils' website, www.dorsetforyou.com/348323.
- The documents can be viewed at the Christchurch Civic Offices, East Dorset District Council Offices at Furzehill, Wimborne, Town and Parish Council Offices and at all libraries throughout Christchurch and East Dorset.
- We shall hold a number of public exhibitions in the main town centres and at locations where development may take place.
- The Core Strategy consultation will be publicised in the local media and there will be special features in the Christchurch Courier, and the East Dorset News, which are delivered to every household in the two areas.
- You can get up to date information on the consultation through Facebook and Twitter.
- Comments on the consultation can be made in several ways:
 - By completing a response form – available from our offices, or on our website.
 - By using our Limehouse consultation software to directly input your comments to the document online through the website, www.dorsetforyou.com/348323.
 - By sending us your comments by e-mail planning.policy@christchurch.gov.uk or policy.planning@eastdorset.gov.uk

We look forward to hearing your views.

2 Critical Issues, Problems and Challenges

2.1 This chapter provides an overview of Christchurch and East Dorset, selecting key findings from the evidence base. It sets out the main characteristics of Christchurch and East Dorset in terms of geography, economy, environment and social matters. Key issues, problems and challenges are identified from the main characteristics of the area which provide the context for the Core Strategy vision and strategic objectives. More detailed analysis of the characteristics of areas at a local level is contained within a series of Area Profiles and analysis of issues in more depth is contained within Key Issues Papers which the Council has produced to inform the preparation of the Core Strategy.

Current Picture of the Districts



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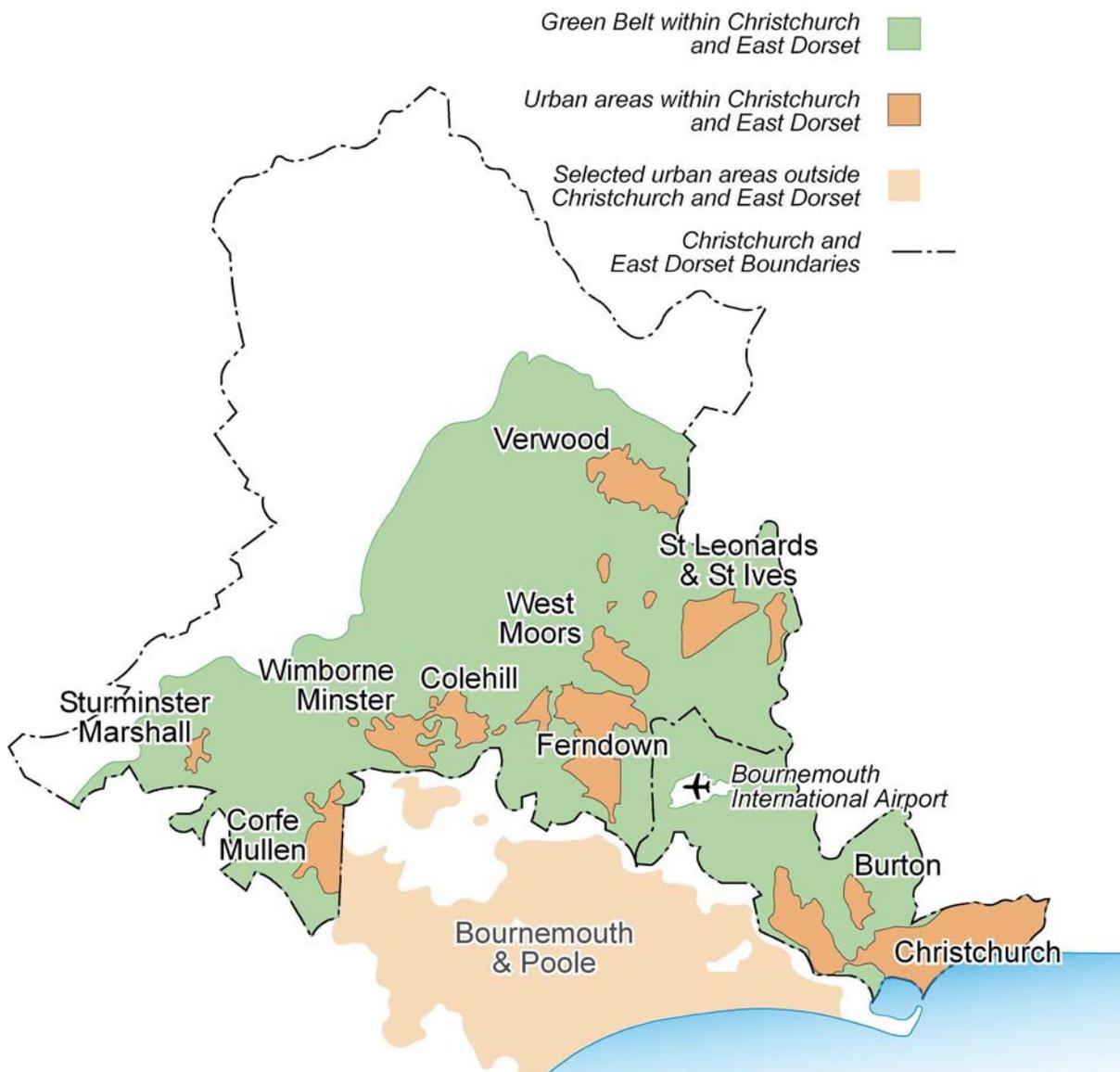
2.2 Christchurch is a relatively small Borough at around 5,169 ha with a population of 45,824 (Office for National Statistics (ONS) Mid Year Estimates 2008) and is set at the eastern edge of the South East Dorset conurbation. The town has expanded along its major roads and includes Highcliffe, which has its own district shopping centre. Burton has seen major residential growth separated from the urban area.

2.3 East Dorset District lies to the north-east of Christchurch, has a population of 85,500 (2008) and at 35,441 ha is around seven times the size of Christchurch Borough. With its southern area relating to the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation, the district has a number of major settlements:- Wimborne, Corfe Mullen, Colehill, Ferndown, West Parley, West Moors, St Leonards and St Ives and Verwood, as well as a large rural area.

2.4 The New Forest National Park lies on the border of both Districts and there are close road connections with Christchurch via the A35 and East Dorset via the A31(T). There is a particularly close relationship between Christchurch and neighbouring Bournemouth Borough with major roads and frequent public transport connecting the two Boroughs. Both Christchurch and East Dorset have links with the wider conurbation and their residents have access to a range of employment, leisure and cultural facilities provided by the larger towns of Bournemouth and Poole. Christchurch and East Dorset fall within the Bournemouth and Poole Travel to Work Areas (defined by ONS following an analysis of commuting patterns) and have an economic role in contributing to the provision of

employment premises and land to meet the wider needs of the conurbation. Both districts are also part of a wider Bournemouth/Poole housing market area. However this inter-connectivity can add to the traffic and housing pressures in the Plan area.

2.5 Christchurch Borough is smaller and more urban in nature than East Dorset. The vast majority of its population live in the urban area. However, around 70% of the Borough remains as open countryside, harbour or coast. Certain areas of Christchurch are significantly affected by flood risk, particularly in the town centre, Christchurch Quay, Bridge St, Purewell, Stanpit, Mudeford and an area within Jumpers. It is predicted that these risks will increase because of climate change.



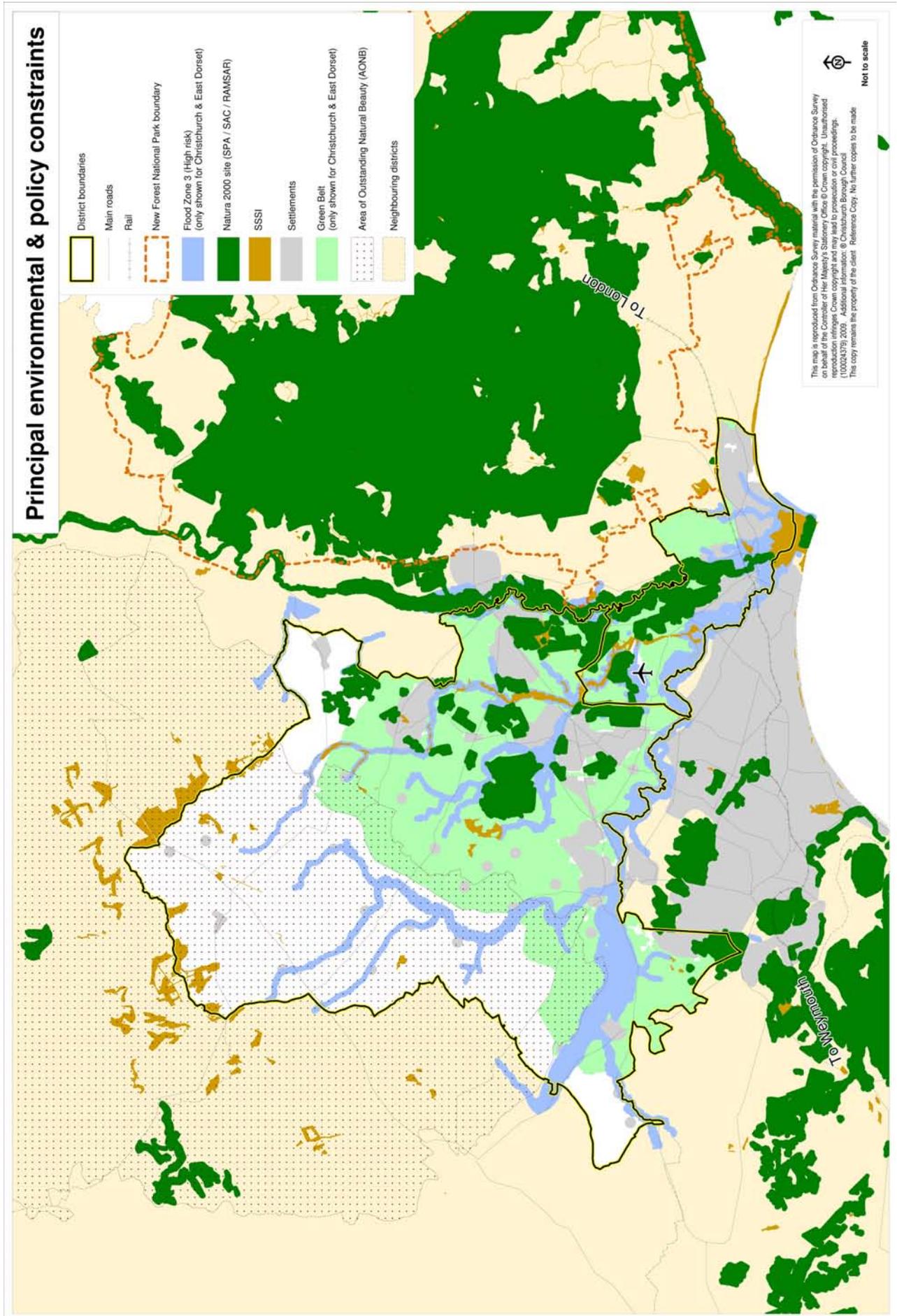
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2.6 East Dorset has more of the characteristics of a “rural” authority with about 92% of it being countryside and only 7% urban. The main centres of Wimborne and Ferndown, together with the other urban settlements, are located in the south and eastern part of the District. The north and western part of the District is more rural in character, a large proportion being within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and contains villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings. East Dorset is less significantly affected by flood risk than Christchurch, although there are areas of concern in Sturminster Marshall, Wimborne, West Moors and Verwood. Both areas have historic town centres and a high quality natural environment, much of which is internationally or nationally protected for its nature conservation value.

Natural and Built Environment

Natural Environment

2.7 The natural environment of Christchurch is diverse and of high quality, consisting of the coast, harbour, cliffs and extensive areas of wet and dry heath and river valleys. There are around 150 hectares of nature reserves, wildlife areas and a significant proportion of the Borough is protected by some form of nature conservation designation from sites of local importance and green corridors to those of international importance. Christchurch has no designated special landscape areas although the 'Environmentally Sensitive Area' in the Avon Valley is a positive landscape protection area administered and funded by DEFRA. Nevertheless, there is a diversity of rural landscapes in the Borough, which gives it an interesting, relatively complex rural setting.



2.8 The towns and villages of the southern and eastern part of East Dorset are interspersed with areas of open countryside, protected as Green Belt and containing a number of internationally important nature conservation sites. These include some of the rivers which flow through the District, which also have extensive flood plains. The northern and western part of the District falls within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is extensively agricultural. Areas of Great Landscape Value in East Dorset have also been identified and their character protected through planning policy.

- Christchurch – 24% of area is covered by one or more nature conservation designations
- East Dorset – 9.7% of area covered by one or more nature conservation designations. 45% of area is covered by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2.9 Across Christchurch and East Dorset there are large parts of the Dorset Heathlands, an internationally protected and fragmented habitat. There are major pressures on this fragmented habitat which often lies next to the urban areas. This accessibility directly impacts on their site condition. Advice from Natural England is that no residential development should be allowed within 400 metres of these sites and mitigation should be provided for sites within 5 km.

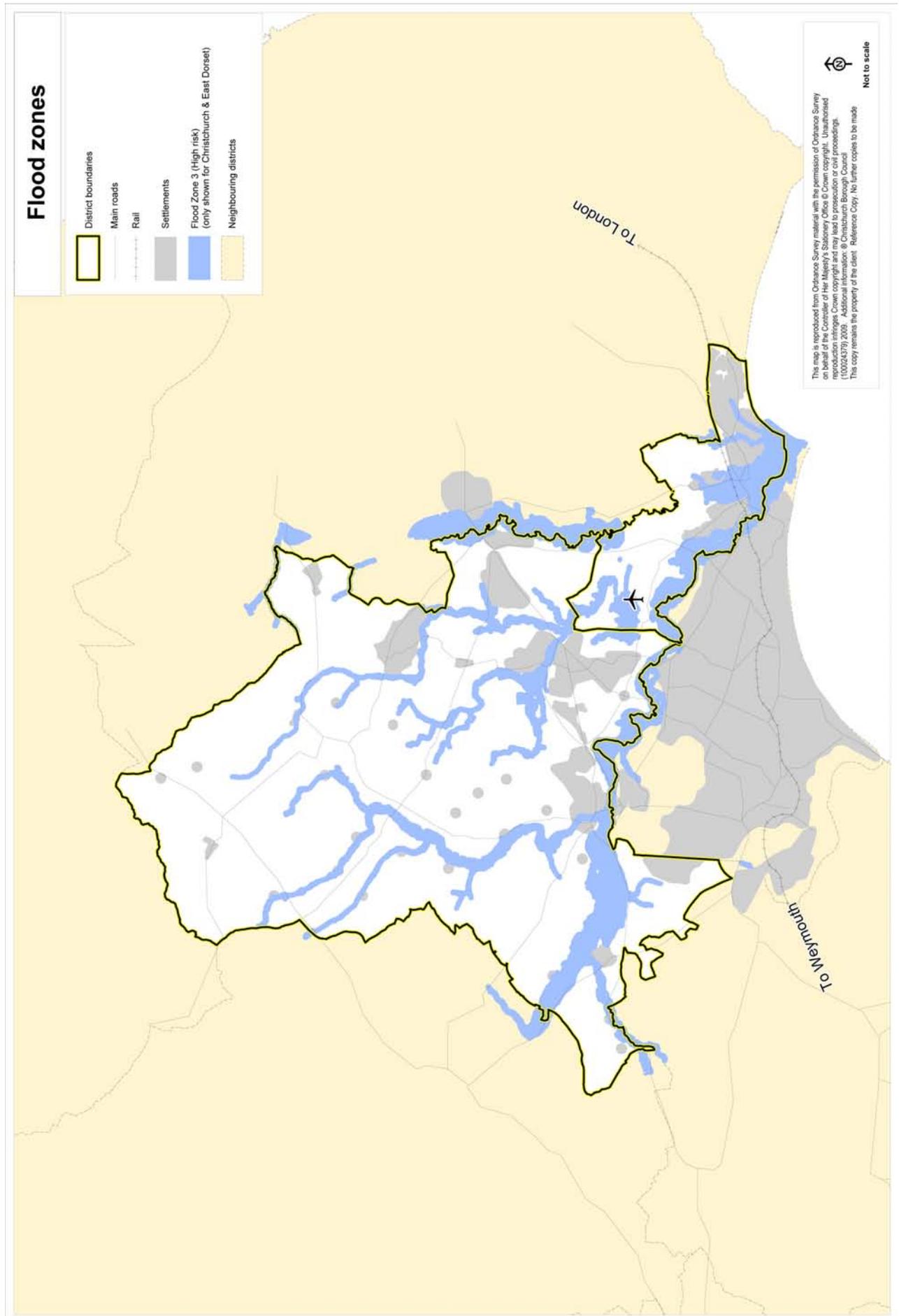
2.10 The main source of air pollution within Christchurch and East Dorset is primarily from car transport, although there are no Air Quality Management Areas within the area.

2.11 The New Forest National Park lies on the border of the Districts. Large areas of the Park have open public access and it has long been a popular destination for visitors. Housing growth in Christchurch and East Dorset may increase visitor pressure on the New Forest National Park with associated recreational impact upon the Park's heathlands. The impact of development combined with growth of Bournemouth Airport will also need to be considered.

Climate Change and Flood Risk

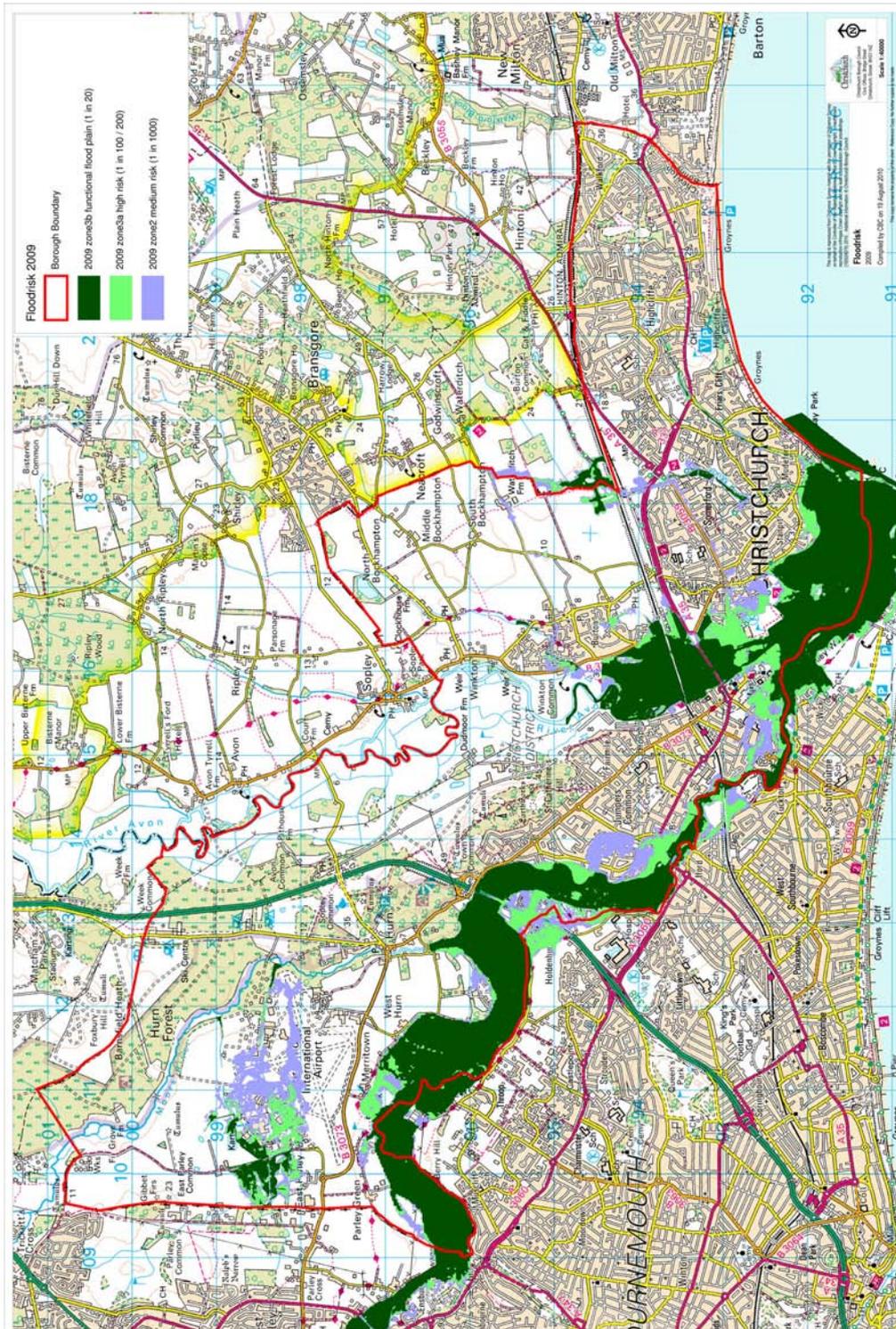
Flood Risk

2.12 The rivers Stour, Avon, Moors, Allen and Bure Brook flood regularly and wide areas of Christchurch are subject to both river and tidal flood risk. Strategic Flood Risk Assessment work has identified significant areas within Christchurch and to a lesser extent within East Dorset which are subject to flood risk, particularly when taking into account the effects of climate change.



2.13 In Wimborne there is risk of flooding on the eastern side of the town centre along the line of the River Allen. Other areas of concern exist in Sturminster Marshall, Verwood and West Moors.

2.14 Areas at significant risk in Christchurch include Bournemouth Airport, primarily the North West Business Park, parts of the town centre, Christchurch Quay, Bridge Street and parts of Stanpit and Mudeford. The map below shows in more detail areas of flood risk within Christchurch.



Climate Change

2.15 Climate change has the potential to not only affect the environment, but also the social and economic aspects of life in Christchurch and East Dorset. Although the precise nature of environmental changes is not fully understood, changes to rainfall levels (and river flow) and rising

sea levels have significant implications particularly for Christchurch in terms of flood risk as mentioned above. Conversely, predicted hot and dry summers will cause problems of low flows for some of the chalk downland rivers in the area. Additionally, climate change could have a significant impact on agriculture and wildlife.

Built Environment

2.16 The historic town centre of Christchurch is characterised by narrow streets, attractive older buildings and complemented by its Priory and riverside setting. Within the Borough there are 12 designated Conservation Areas, around 287 Listed Buildings and 12 Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

2.17 Wimborne is a historic market town and there are many attractive villages in East Dorset District. There are 19 Conservation Areas, 689 Listed Buildings and 152 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the district. East Dorset has identified “Special Character Areas” within a number of residential areas which are distinguished by their built form and layout, often within a well-treed setting.

Challenges and Opportunities for the future

- There are a significant number of sites designated for their nature conservation importance in Christchurch and East Dorset. Of those designated at an international level, the Dorset Heaths are the most significant, both in terms of area and impact.
- Landscape quality and character in rural areas needs to be protected.
- The identifiable impacts resulting from climate change need addressing.
- Flood risk is a significant issue for Christchurch as it affects areas with development potential. It is less of an issue within East Dorset. There is a need to make the best use of the limited development land whilst directing development away from flood risk areas. Resisting development in flood risk areas reduces the risks from climate change, but could result in greater pressure for development in areas unaffected by flood risk.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the intensification of residential development within the urban areas does not adversely impact on the established and valued local character and amenity of these areas.

Population

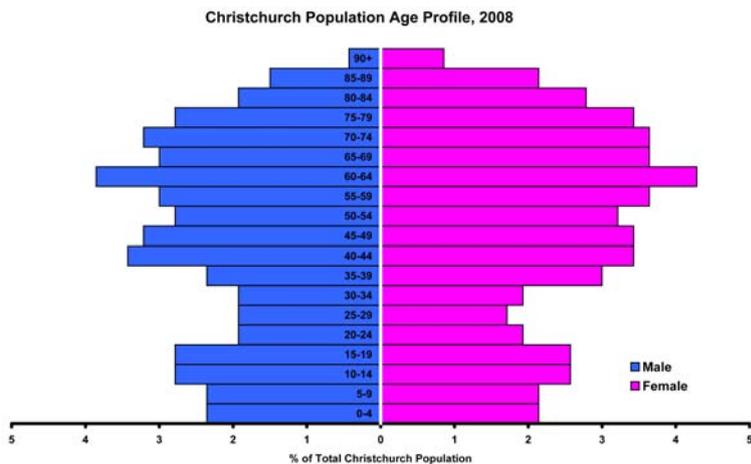
2.18 The area has seen a rapid growth in population, principally through the in-migration of people from other parts of the Country. The area is popular with older people, leading to a significant imbalance in its age structure. Forecasts show that the proportion of older people is set to increase in the future and the proportion of working age population is expected to drop.

2.19 The population in Christchurch is 45,824 and East Dorset is 85,200 (ONS 2008).

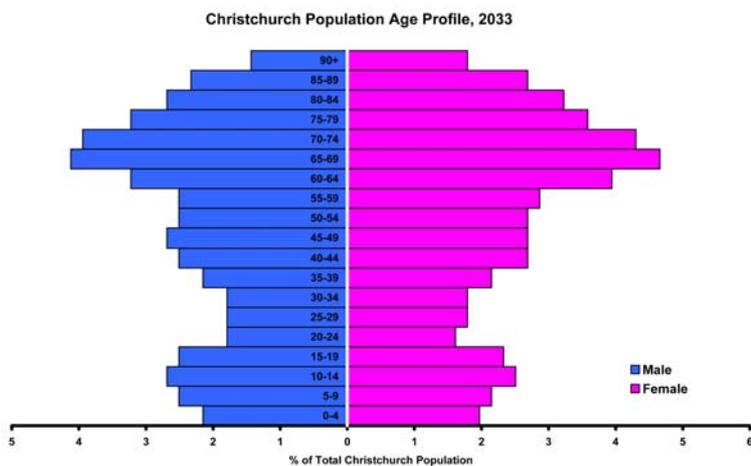
2.20 The current proportion over retirement age (ONS 2008) is above the County and national average in Christchurch at 34% and in East Dorset at 32%, compared with 29% in Dorset as a whole and just 19% nationally.

2.21 Despite death rates exceeding birth rates in the area, the population continues to increase as a result of in-migration from other parts of the Country rather than from abroad. In 2004 – 2008 more residents moved abroad from Christchurch and East Dorset than moved from other countries into the area. (ONS Long term international migration tables 1991 – 2008) The age profile of people moving to the area from elsewhere within the UK is younger than that of the current population, so it should not be assumed that people only move to the area to retire. However this trend is not significant enough to change the age structure of the current population to one which is less heavily weighted towards the older age groups.

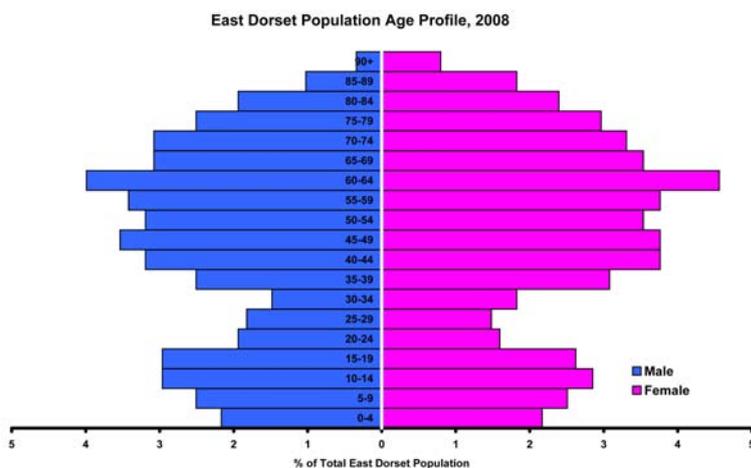
2.22 Long term projections suggest that the population may grow to 55,900 in Christchurch and 100,800 in East Dorset by 2033. (ONS Sub-national Population Projections- 2008 based)



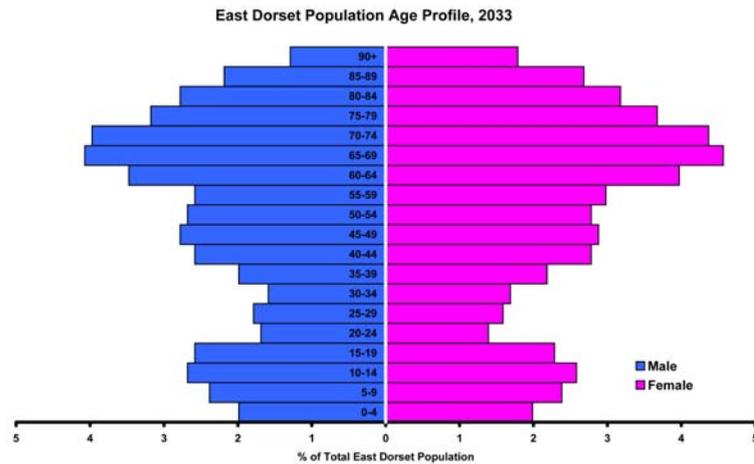
Christchurch Age Profile 2008 (ONS Mid Year Population Estimates 2008)



Christchurch Age Profile 2033 (ONS Sub-national Population Projections 2008 based)

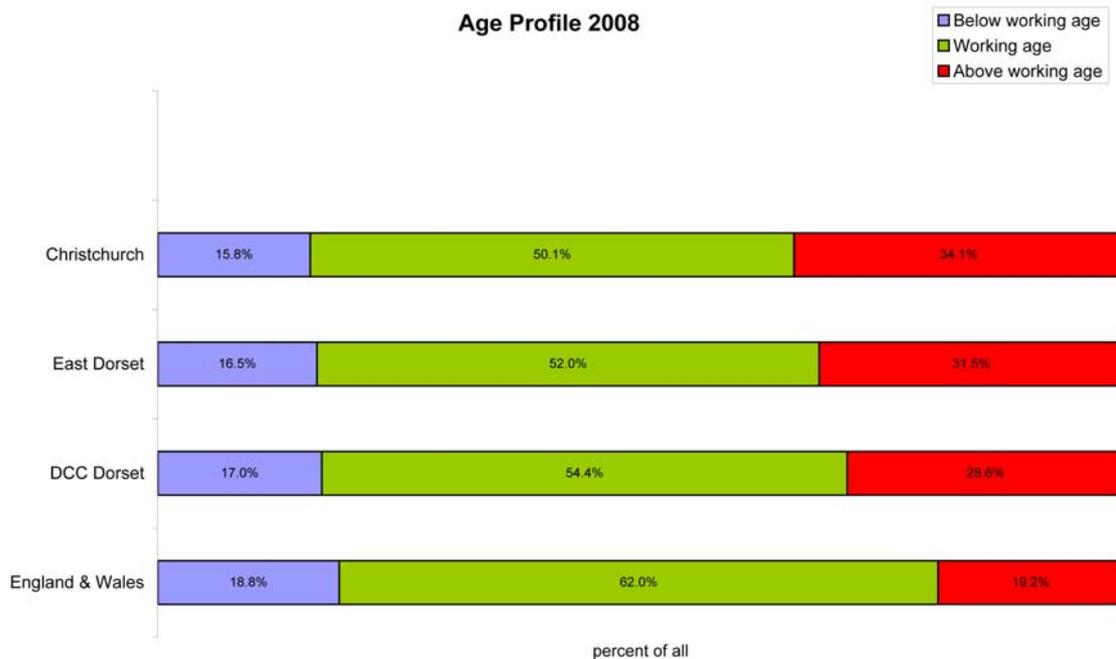


East Dorset Age Profile 2008 (ONS 2008 Mid-Year Population Estimates)



East Dorset Age Profile 2033 (ONS Sub-national Population Projections - 2008 based)

2.23 Older people are expected to account for an increasing proportion of the population in future with the percentage of residents aged 65 in 2033 predicted to reach 38 per cent in Christchurch and East Dorset. (ONS Sub-National Population Projections 2008 based).



Working Age Profile 2008 (ONS 2008 Mid-Year Population Estimates)

2.24 The proportion of population of working age in the area is relatively low, at only 50% in Christchurch and 52% in East Dorset compared with 54% in Dorset and 62% nationally (ONS 2008).

2.25 Working age population is predicted to drop to 47% of the total in Christchurch and 48% in East Dorset by 2033. (ONS Sub-National Population Projections 2008 based) However, this will be countered to a degree by changes in the retirement age.

2.26 As well as a projected population increase, there is a predicted increase in households due to the following trends:-

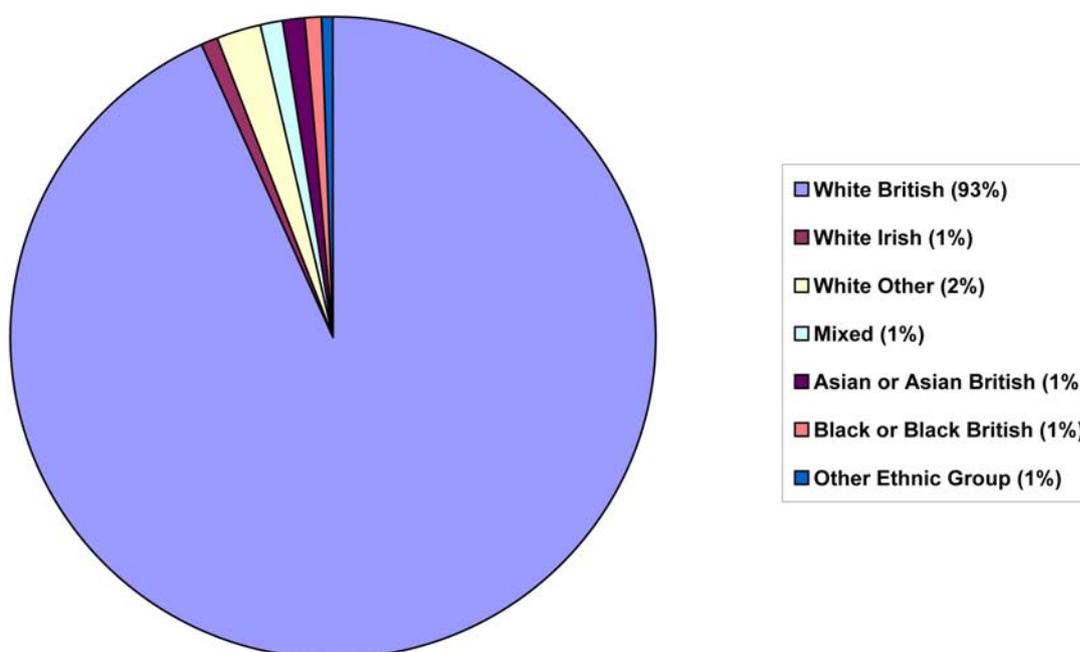
- Smaller households (currently average size is 2.15 in Christchurch and 2.32 in East Dorset – 2001 census)

- Fewer children per family
- Separation
- Older parents
- More people living alone
- Living longer

2.27 Ethnic minorities are a small but growing proportion of the total population. The 2001 Census identifies the ethnic make-up of the population as 99.92% classified as “White British” in Christchurch and 98.99% in East Dorset compared with 98.75% across Dorset and 90.92% in England and Wales.

2.28 In 2007 the proportion of “White British” had fallen to 96.8% in Christchurch and 97.1% in East Dorset, compared with 96.4% across Dorset and 88.7% in England and Wales (ONS Mid Year Estimates by Ethnic Group 2007).

Ethnicity of population in Christchurch and East Dorset 2007



Ethnicity in Christchurch and East Dorset 2007 (ONS Mid Year Estimates by Ethnic Group 2007)

2.29 Christchurch and East Dorset are less ethnically diverse than England. For both districts the largest black and minority ethnic group is “White Other” (2% followed by “White Irish” (0.9% Christchurch, 0.7 % East Dorset. (ONS 2007)

2.30 In England & Wales the largest black and minority ethnic group is British Asian (5.5%) followed by Black British (2.7%), compared with 1.1% British Asian and 0.7% Black British in Christchurch and 0.9% British Asian and 0.6% Black British in East Dorset. (ONS 2007)

Challenges and opportunities for the future

- The issue of population living longer and living in smaller households needs to be addressed.
- The imbalance of the age groups of the population towards the older age groups will have implications for the types of housing required and provision of services.
- The impact of a declining working age population on the economy of the area needs tackling.

Housing

2.31 Demand for housing is high and there is a significant problem of affordability due to the high house price:income ratios in the area. There are high levels of need for affordable housing across both areas. Housing land supply is affected by environmental constraints, in particular, flood risk and proximity to heathland, as well as Green Belt and infrastructure constraints. Evidence on housing supply (Christchurch and East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments 2009) indicates a low number of larger sites likely to come forward within the urban area, hence a reliance on smaller sites and a need to maximise opportunities to meet housing needs.

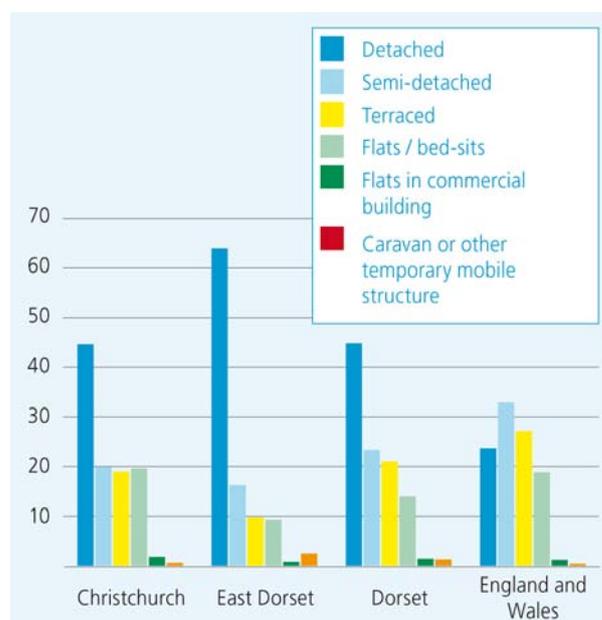
2.32 The Christchurch and East Dorset Surveys of Housing Need and Demand (2007) identify the main characteristics of the housing stock. The profile of the housing stock is heavily weighted towards detached properties, although there are differences between the two districts:-

2.33 Christchurch has a higher number of flats and terraced houses, although the proportion of detached properties is still high at 42.5% due to the particularly high proportion of detached bungalows – 23%, which is above the average for the Bournemouth and Poole Housing Market Area.

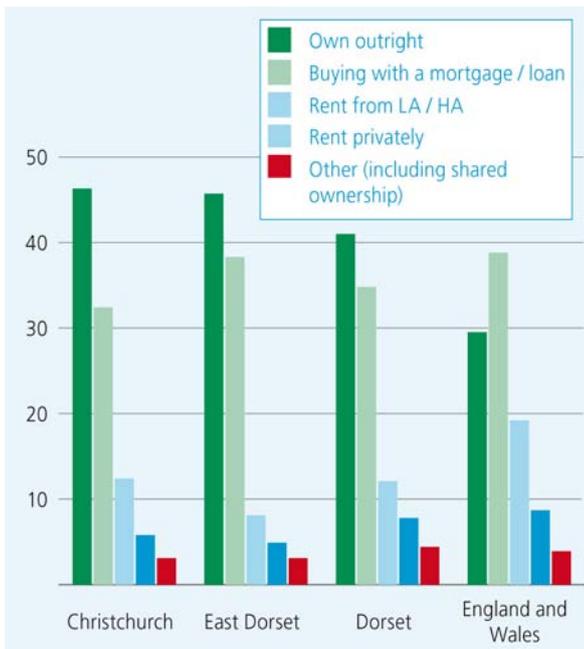
2.34 Within East Dorset there are low numbers of flats, terraced houses and semi detached houses and very high numbers of detached houses and bungalows when compared to the average across the Housing Market Area.

2.35 This shows the peculiarities of the two districts housing stock and underlines the fact that they are part of a wider housing market. East Dorset historically has provided housing for the more affluent commuters, whereas Christchurch provides a more urban cross section of house type.

2.36 However, in recent years more flats than houses have been built in both districts.



Types of housing in Christchurch and East Dorset



Tenure of housing in Christchurch and East Dorset

2.37 Both Christchurch and East Dorset have a high proportion of owner-occupier households. A significant factor is the proportion of households who own their property outright – at around 46% in East Dorset and 50% in Christchurch compared to the national average of 29.5%. This is linked to the high proportion of elderly people in the area. The proportion of owner occupied homes, but with a mortgage or loan, is broadly in line with the national norm in East Dorset but below in Christchurch.

2.38 Both districts have a low proportion of households living in the private rented sector, 6% in Christchurch and 5% in East Dorset compared with 9% in England and Wales.

2.39 The proportion of social rented households is well below national average – only 8% in East Dorset and 12% in Christchurch compared with about 19% in England and Wales.

2.40 The Housing Needs Surveys estimated in 2007, that in Christchurch 243 affordable homes would be required per year and 440 in East Dorset.

2.41 There are particular problems with young working households trying to afford property at the bottom end of the market. There is a high proportion who cannot afford to buy. National research (Hometrack, Can't supply: can't buy 2008) indicates that 46.6% of households in Christchurch and 45.7% in East Dorset fall within this category – 7th and 10th highest in the Country respectively. Local research (Bournemouth / Poole Strategic Housing Market Assessment Summary Report 2008) identified the low availability of private rented housing in Christchurch and East Dorset as a particular problem for young working households.

2.42 More recent research (Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings by district) shows that in 2009 the house price to income ratios over the past 2 years had fallen from 12.37 to 9.48 in Christchurch and 12.90 to 11.18 in East Dorset. Even though there has been a slight fall in house prices over the past 2 years, the house price to income ratios for Christchurch and East Dorset remain significantly high and higher than the County (9.3%) and England (6.28%) averages in 2009.

2.43 The housing surveys show that there is a greater demand for housing across all tenures (private as well as affordable) and sizes than the current stock of housing can meet.

2.44 Local authorities are required to assess the needs of gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople and provide permanent and transit sites within their areas. Evidence from the Dorset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2007) indicates that there is under provision for gypsy and traveller accommodation. Demand generally rises in the summer months, particularly in the Christchurch/East Dorset/Bournemouth and Poole areas. The Councils have not accepted this evidence however, and have concerns regarding strength of evidence and double counting.

2.45 Costs of inadequate pitch provision are high – both for the Local Authorities (financially) and for the gypsy/traveller community in terms of health and social care.

2.46 Future residential development is expected to take place mainly within the urban area but there is limited capacity. A number of potential greenfield housing options are therefore suggested.

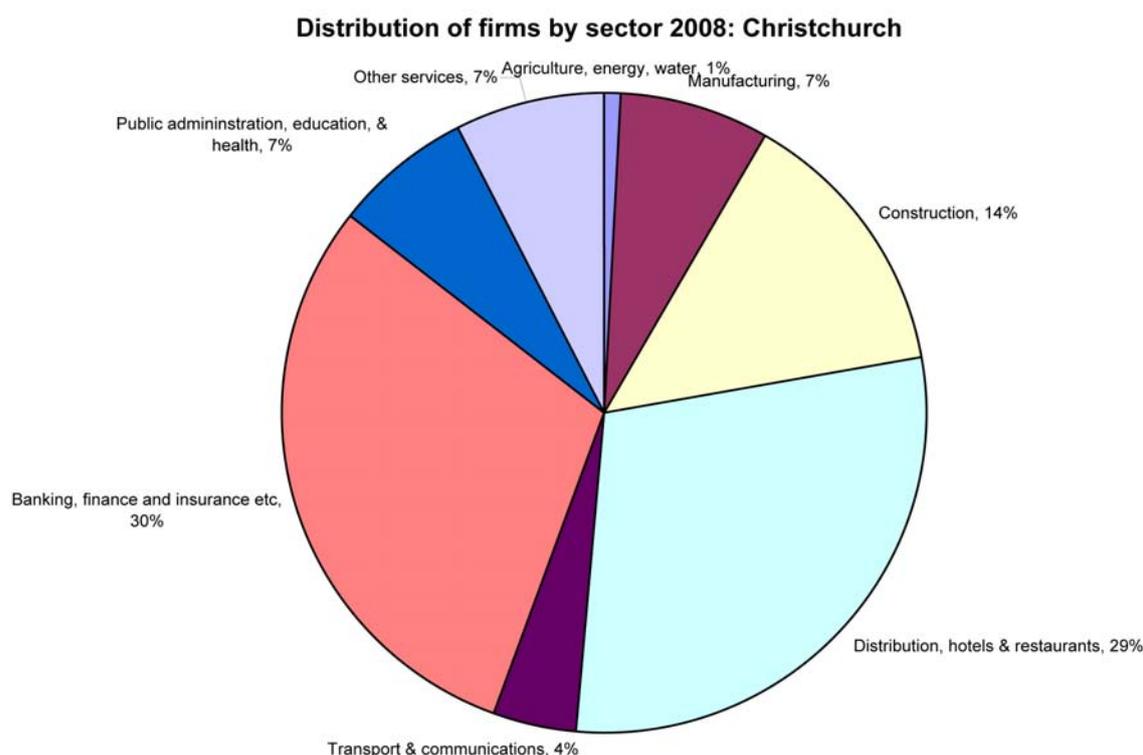
2.47 The impact on the viability of housing schemes of increased affordable housing contributions, together with other contributions likely to be required, has been tested in the Christchurch and East Dorset reports of the Three Dragons Affordable Housing and Developer Contributions Study 2009. The study found that all new housing schemes can comprise 40% affordable housing, or an equivalent financial contribution, with the exception of some special circumstances.

2.48 Challenges and opportunities for the future

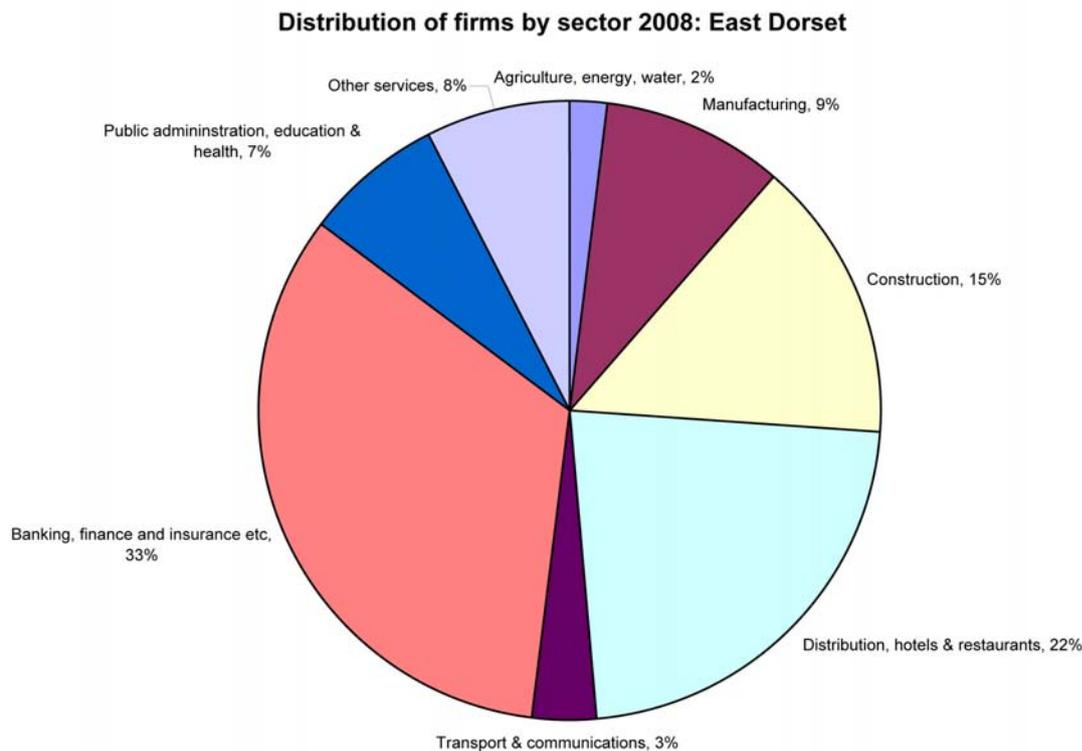
- Providing sufficient housing to meet the needs and demands of a growing population and the trend for smaller households, taking into account the shortage of housing land in sustainable locations.
- The need to address the significant shortfall in affordable homes.
- The shortage of private rented accommodation exacerbates the affordability issue.
- The Three Dragons study on impacts of revised affordable housing policy on the viability of housing schemes, is an important source of evidence when considering affordable housing policy options, as the delivery of affordable housing is dependent on an increase in the delivery of market housing.
- Providing an appropriate mix of housing. The needs of families should be considered as well as the need for smaller households.
- Taking opportunities to maximise housing delivery within new neighbourhoods in order to relieve pressure on redevelopment of the urban area.
- There is a need to address the accommodation needs of the gypsy and traveller community – providing for different types of site and travelling groups.

Economy

2.49 The economy of the area is centred on the service sector with more than half of all firms falling into two broad categories: distribution, hotels and restaurants; and banking, finance and insurance. There is a relatively high proportion of manufacturing firms within both districts. Tourism is a key part of the local economy. The area has low unemployment but wage levels are below the national average.



Christchurch Firms by Sector 2008 (Annual Business Inquiry 2008)



East Dorset Firms by Sector 2008 (Annual Business Inquiry 2008)

2.50 There are around 2,020 firms in Christchurch and 4,340 firms in East Dorset.

2.51 A market segment assessment (Christchurch and East Dorset Employment Land Review 2007) identifies that the vast majority of employment land supply within the area falls within the 'General Industrial / Business Area' segment. These sites generally comprise older, more established land and buildings in industrial use. There is a need to diversify the employment market segments represented in the districts with the inclusion of high quality business parks, research and technology parks and incubator / small, medium sized enterprise sites. This will assist in attracting a more diverse range of industries which contribute to long term economic growth and provide a range of skilled and well paid job opportunities. Reliance on the current industries is likely to lead to long term economic decline.

2.52 Employment land supply considered deliverable in Christchurch during the plan period to 2027 is 20.6 hectares. 12 – 15 ha of this land supply is located at the North West Business Park at Bournemouth Airport.(Employment Land Review 2007)

2.53 In East Dorset employment land supply will not be identified until consultation has taken place. Options for future growth are suggested to the west of Ferndown, at Sturminster Marshall and adjacent to the Woolsbridge Industrial Estate.

2.54 The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy (2008) identifies a shortfall in employment land supply for the Bournemouth Travel to Work Area in the short to medium term.

2.55 A strength of both economies is their diverse nature. Neither are reliant upon major dominant industries, so are robust to changes in economic demands.

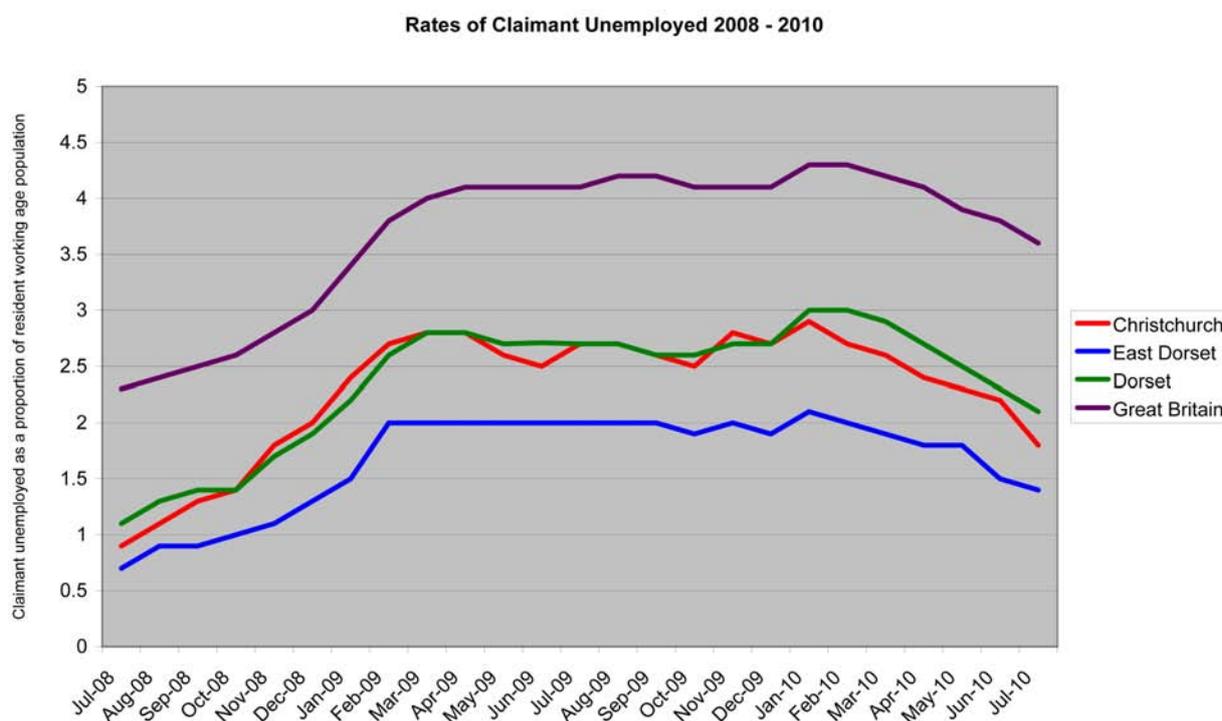
2.56 Bournemouth Airport is a major employer in the area. As well as providing a primary airport for the local and wider area, it also has an existing business park and is identified as a future employment opportunity of strategic importance to South East Dorset. Land availability within the northern business parks is approximately 60ha. The airport business park forms a fundamental part of employment land supply for South East Dorset and is critical for meeting projected employment land requirements for the sub region to 2027. However, development has been constrained by both

the sensitive nature conservation designations which lie within and adjoining the site and by inadequate local transport infrastructure. For further development to come forward improvements are required to the B3073, A338 and associated junctions.

2.57 The Ferndown and Uddens Industrial Park forms the largest of its kind in Dorset, employing approximately 5,000 people.

2.58 The supply of potential new employment land in Christchurch is mainly within the Bournemouth Airport business parks. In East Dorset options for the supply of new employment land exist at Ferndown, Sturminster Marshall and Woolsbridge.

2.59 New employment land supply in Christchurch and East Dorset can contribute significantly towards the projected employment requirements for South East Dorset.



Claimant Unemployment Rates 2008 - 2010 (DCC)

2.60 Unemployment in Christchurch and East Dorset has risen since 2008 but has been falling during 2010. The claimant unemployment rate has fallen in Christchurch from 2.6% in May 2009 to 2.3% in May 2010. Over the same period the rate has fallen in East Dorset from 2.0% to 1.8%. The current rates are less than the national rate of 3.9% in Great Britain (May 2010). Although this is promising, the trends need careful monitoring as they may not give a complete picture and the economic climate is still uncertain. (Source: ONS Unemployment Claimant Rates May 2010)

Earnings

2.61 Workplace based earnings show that wage levels are below the national average.

2.62 Workplace pay in Christchurch is higher than East Dorset, but both are still below the national average (95% of average pay in Christchurch and 87.6% in East Dorset – 2009 data)

2.63 Residents who live in East Dorset earn just about the national average wage, whereas residents in Christchurch earn 88.6% of this wage. This implies that more residents in East Dorset commute to higher paid employment.

2.64 Levels of earnings vary across the districts, with areas of deprivation suffering from low wages.

2.65 9% of employees in Christchurch firms are in high pay employment. This is above the average for East Dorset and Dorset (both 7%), but below the national average for Great Britain (12%). Bournemouth has 16% of its employees in high paid employment and Poole 12% (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2009 data and Annual Business Inquiry 2008).

Tourism

2.66 Tourism is very important to both Christchurch and East Dorset due to the attractive built and natural environment. The tourist appeal is due to the high quality of much of the historic environment, riversides, harbour banks, coastal areas and countryside areas. Much of the valuable character of Christchurch and East Dorset is enriched by the wide range and number of open spaces.

2.67 Care needs to be given to the potential conflict of encouraging tourism and protecting the built and natural environment from harm.

Town Centres

2.68 There are six town centres within Christchurch and East Dorset which are of differing size, significance and function – Christchurch, Highcliffe, Wimborne, Ferndown, Verwood and West Moors. The town centres play an important role in the economy in shopping, community facilities, small office provision, tourism and in some cases a number of larger employers. These are complemented by a variety of local and neighbourhood centres in the villages and suburban areas.

2.69 A joint Retail Study (Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Joint Retail Assessment 2008) has indicated that both Christchurch and East Dorset will face demand to accommodate increased levels of non-food retail outlets in the period up to 2026. It concludes that the local town centres are healthy but need to adapt to changes in the demands of shoppers and visitors. There are recommendations for Christchurch that it needs to enhance its role as a niche shopping destination as it cannot compete with Castlepoint, and Bournemouth and Poole town centres.

2.70 Challenges and opportunities for the future

- Providing the additional retail floorspace requirements identified in the Retail Assessment (NLP 2008). Reversing the outflow of shoppers away from Christchurch and East Dorset and into Bournemouth.
- Meeting needs for a sufficient amount and range of employment land and premises.
- Securing the necessary infrastructure is put in place to ensure land can come forward for employment development.
- Responding effectively to the economic downturn in the short term and planning for sustainable growth for the years ahead.
- Employment sites such as the Bournemouth Airport business park are affected by increased flood risk. Appropriate measures need to be put in place to alleviate this risk.
- Creating increased opportunities for higher paid employment to be attracted to the area.
- The current employment structure is predominantly within traditional industries. It is important that other growth industries are attracted to the area to complement these businesses.
- Care needs to be given to the potential conflict of encouraging tourism and protecting the built and natural environment from harm.

Community – Quality of Life

2.71 Deprivation is low in the national context, particularly for East Dorset District. However, there are pockets of deprivation within each district. Information provided at a more local level shows that there are 2 areas within Christchurch which are ranked amongst the 20 most deprived in Dorset

and 25% nationally – Somerford East and Somerford West. Somerford South is just outside the top 20 in Dorset – ranked at 24th. Within East Dorset, the Heatherlands and Leigh Park areas are ranked at 14th and 26th most deprived areas within Dorset respectively. (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007)

Health

2.72 Life expectancy rates are some of the highest in the Country and compare well with national figures of 77.3 for males and 81.6 for females (Association of Public Health Observatories - APHO and Department of Health 2008). In Christchurch the figures are 80.3 years for males and 84.4 females, and in East Dorset 81.4 for males and 84.4 females.

2.73 However, the high proportion of older people in the area, which is anticipated to rise, does mean that there is an issue about providing adequate care for the elderly.

2.74 Health profiles (APHO and Dept of Health 2009) show that:-

- The proportions of over 65's in Christchurch and East Dorset "not in good health" is significantly better than regional and national averages
- The proportion of people diagnosed with diabetes in Christchurch and East Dorset is significantly worse than regional and national averages, which may reflect the ageing population.
- Road injuries and deaths are significantly worse than regional and national averages in East Dorset, but not significantly different to these averages in Christchurch.

2.75 A recent household survey (Dorset Housing Needs and Demands Survey 2007) found that there are an estimated 4,983 households in Christchurch (23.2% of all households) and 6,975 households in East Dorset (18.6% of all households) with one or more members in an identified special needs group.

2.76 Within this category, households with a 'medical condition' are the predominant group, closely followed by the frail elderly and those with a physical disability.

2.77 Special needs households are more likely to contain older persons, hence the larger proportion within Christchurch.

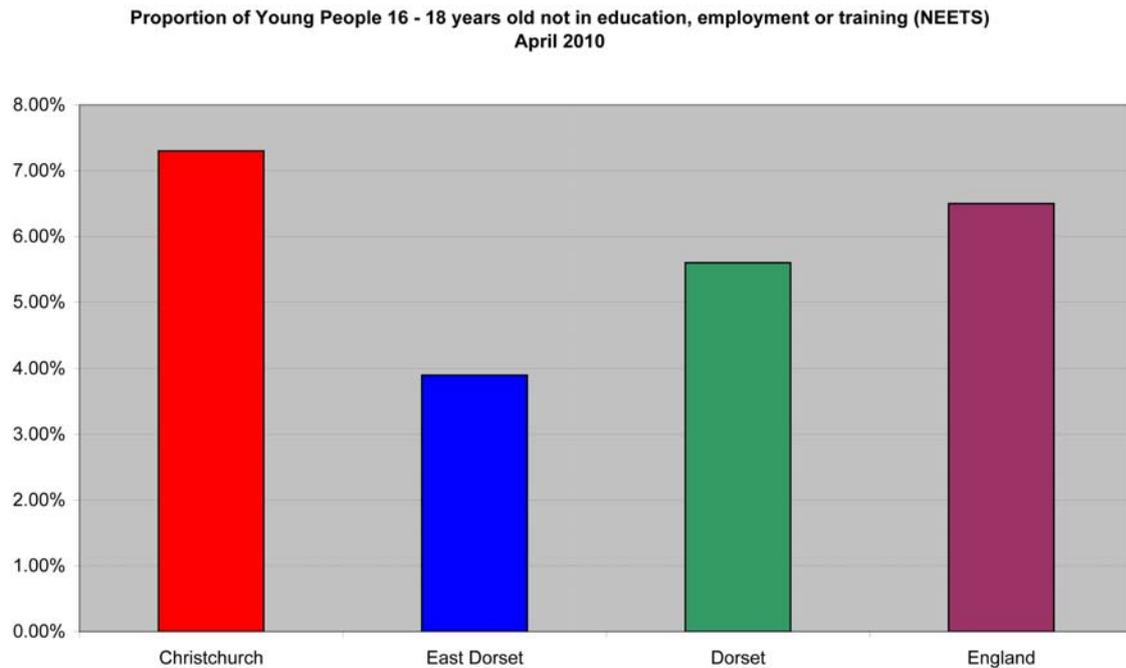
Sport and Recreation

2.78 The natural amenities of Christchurch lend themselves to recreational activities with riversides, harbour and coastal locations used for water sports and fishing. The rural areas provide significant opportunity for informal recreation, although there is a conflict in both districts between recreation and the protection of the heathlands for their nature conservation assets. Suitable alternative open space is required to reduce the number of people wishing to use the heaths for their recreation.

Skills and Qualifications

2.79 The percentage of the working age population in Christchurch and East Dorset without qualifications is below the national average (8% and 9% compared with 12% in Great Britain). The percentage qualified to degree level or above is about the national average for Christchurch (29%) and above average for East Dorset (31%). (Annual Population Survey 2008).

2.80 The percentage of Christchurch and East Dorset pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE's at A-C grades in 2008, including English and Maths was the same at 55% which is above the national average for England at 47.8%. (DCC, DCFS Secondary School Achievement and Attainment Tables 2008)



Proportion of Young People 16-18 years old Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)
April 2010 (Connexions)

2.81 The proportion of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) is particularly high in Christchurch at 7.3 %. This is above the County average of 5.6% and national average of 6.5%. East Dorset's proportion is 3.9% which is below the County and national average (Connexions, April 2010).

2.82 In general, school facilities provision currently meets the needs of the areas. However, predictions for population increases (ONS) and future residential development will put pressure on some education facilities. Although some schools may have capacity to accommodate the increase in population, others, for example in Wimborne and Highcliffe, may be affected.

2.83 Community Facilities Provision

2.84 Community facilities provision (education, health, leisure and cultural services) varies across the districts and analysis of the level of provision at a more local level is contained within the series of Area Profiles. In general, provision is better within the more central parts of the urban areas but there is poorer provision in some suburban and rural areas. Analysis of the issue has shown that the clustering of services and facilities such as education, health and leisure has many benefits – improving access for all and community cohesion and increasing opportunities and volunteering. There is also a need to create opportunities to improve physical activity levels across the population to improve their health and well-being.

2.85 Challenges and opportunities for the future

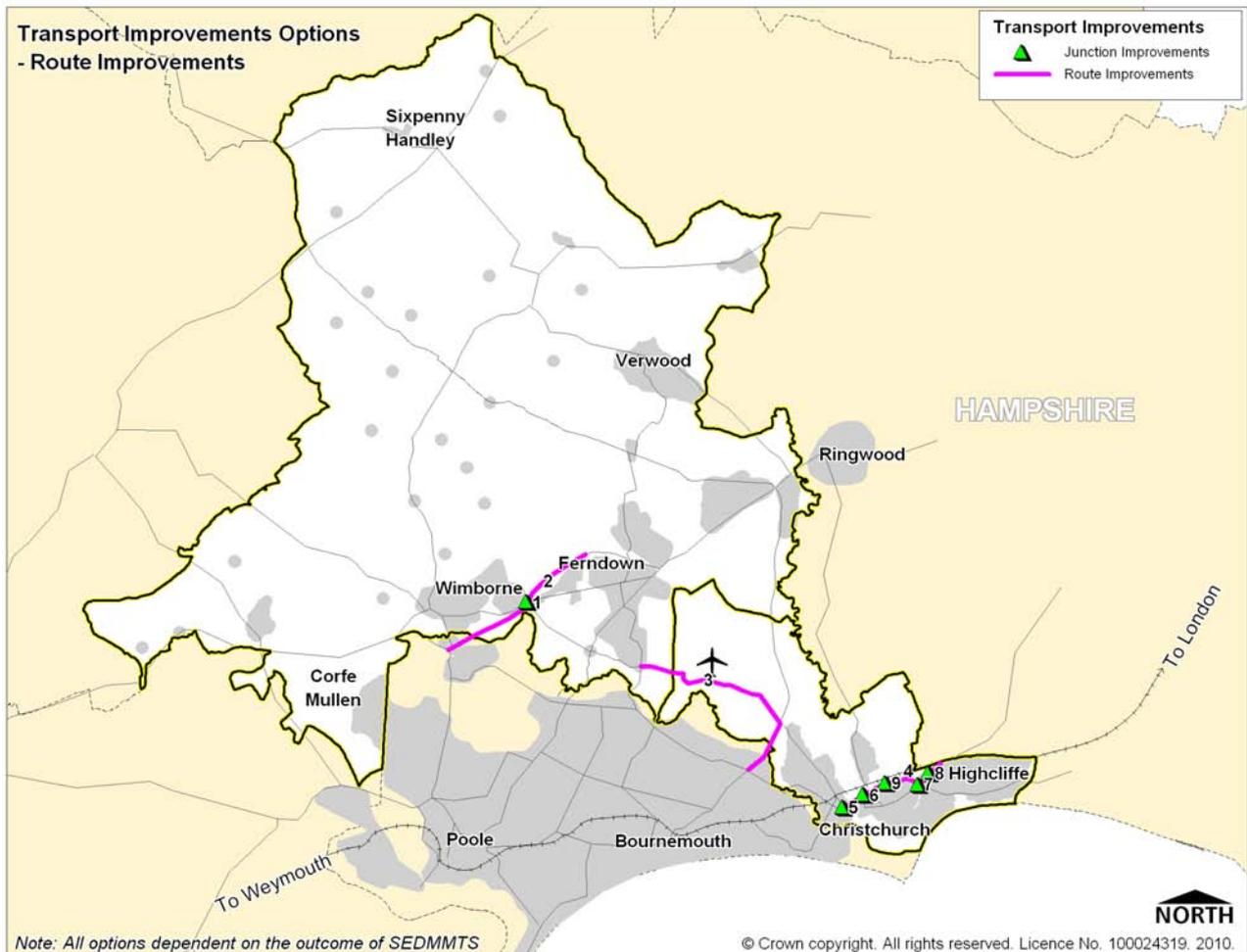
- Tackling deprivation and social exclusion in particular areas or communities.
- The high proportion of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) in Christchurch is particularly concerning.
- Addressing shortfalls in recreation and open space provision within the urban areas.
- Providing suitable alternative areas of natural open space in order to lessen the impact of recreational use of the heaths.
- Ensuring the provision of a sufficient level of community facilities and services to support current and future population.
- Whilst life expectancy is long, the elderly population of both districts means that demands on the health service can be higher than elsewhere.

Transport

2.86 Christchurch has good transport and communication links - the A35 linking to Southampton and the M27, the A338 running north-south and two railway stations on the main line to London, and Bournemouth Airport. Public transport is frequent on major routes, although some of the suburban areas are less well served. East Dorset has no railways and is poorly served by bus services. The main A31(T) runs through East Dorset linking the M3/M27 to Dorset. This route is the main east-west route into Dorset and the south west from Hampshire and feeds traffic into Bournemouth, Poole, Purbeck and West Dorset. There are links to the A354 and A338 to Salisbury. However there are no rail connections in the District and public transport is less frequent, particularly within the rural areas.

2.87 Bournemouth Airport is a regionally significant airport and provides scheduled and charter flights to a range of national and international destinations. The past few years has seen significant growth in air passenger numbers, particularly with the growth of low cost airlines. This growth is expected to continue.

2.88 The urban areas of both Christchurch and East Dorset suffer from congestion. In Christchurch the A35 running east-west has been identified as a traffic congestion hotspot, particularly along Barrack Road, at the Fountain junction and at the Stony Lane roundabout. The A337, A338 and B3073 also have particular problems. In East Dorset the A31(T) – an east-west route – suffers from congestion along with routes in and around Ferndown, particularly at the Canford Bottom roundabout. Also, in both areas the River Stour is crossed only in a few places which restricts movement to the main conurbation, especially if a crossing is blocked.



Transport congestion hotspots in Christchurch and East Dorset

2.89 Both areas have high levels of car ownership with 80.6% of households having access to a car in Christchurch, while East Dorset has the highest level of car ownership in the Country with 88% of households having at least one car.(2001 Census)

2.90 In Christchurch 5.6% of the workforce get to work by public transport whereas in East Dorset the proportion is only 2%, a reflection of the very high levels of car ownership in the district. (2001 Census)

2.91 Challenges and opportunities for the future

- Congestion within Christchurch and East Dorset on a number of roads and isolation issues for those without cars in the outlying part of the Districts where public transport can be poor.
- Accessibility to jobs, community facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling.
- The settlement pattern with suburban areas and rural settlements causes difficulties for servicing by public transport.
- Further development at Bournemouth Airport requires improvements to the B3073, A338 and associated junctions, which are also significant for the wider economy and local communities.
- Improvements will need to be made to the A31(T) and roads within and around Ferndown to enable the delivery of a growing economy and appropriate housing.
- Need to encourage people to use alternative modes of transport to the car.

Summary of Key Issues

- The ageing population leads to a high demand for facilities and services to support and provide for them.
- Predicted changes in the structure of the population indicate that the supply of workers will reduce as the economically active population is expected to fall.
- The area is perceived as being affluent, particularly as there is a very high proportion of households who own their property outright. However, this masks pockets of deprivation within the districts. Some areas have high unemployment levels and income levels well below the national average. The proportion of young people in Christchurch who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is a concern.
- The area is renowned for its special and often rare natural environment with large areas protected by local, national and international nature conservation designations and, in the case of East Dorset, landscape designations. Of particular significance are the Dorset Heaths. However, the protected environment heavily influences where future development in Christchurch and East Dorset can be located, which in turn puts greater pressure on areas outside these designations.
- One of the biggest challenges facing Christchurch and East Dorset is the impact of climate change. In tackling this, there is a need to address interrelated issues such as sustainable development, directing development away from flood risk areas, energy efficiency, carbon reduction and environmental sustainability. The effects of climate change with regard to flood risk are particularly significant for Christchurch.
- Christchurch and East Dorset have an existing high quality historic built environment which is important to the character of the area, and to the local economy, with particular reference to tourism. These features need to be protected and enhanced when considering future proposals and developments.
- Demands for new development need to be addressed:-
 - A significant level of new housing to meet local housing needs and demands and address the affordability issue;
 - Town centre vitality and the associated issues of need for more retail floorspace;
 - The shortage in the availability of employment land and the need for a sufficient amount and range of employment sites. The importance of strategic employment sites, such as

Bournemouth Airport and sites in East Dorset in providing opportunities for high quality employment which will make a significant contribution to raising productivity.

- The operational needs of Bournemouth Airport to enable it to develop as a flagship regional airport and the need to support sustainable growth of the airport.

2.92 These demands for new development to meet local and sub-regional requirements need to be balanced against the challenges of managing and safeguarding the high quality of the built and natural environment.

- Both districts have been identified as being among the least affordable areas in the county. The high house price to income ratios is still a significant problem despite a fall in house prices since 2008.
- Young people and young working families have difficulties in getting onto the first rung of the housing ladder. This can lead to them having to move to cheaper housing in other areas, most commonly Bournemouth.
- A significant proportion of new housing development is expected to take place within the existing built-up areas, often through redevelopment of previously developed land and buildings. There has been growing concern over the impact of some of these developments on the established and valued local character of the area and amenity of residents.
- The impact of increased affordable housing requirements on the viability of housing schemes must be tested. There is a need to consider the impact of contributions – affordable housing requirement, transport contributions, heathland contributions, Code for Sustainable Homes on the viability of housing, and other developments.
- A major challenge is ensuring that infrastructure is adequate to support the level of growth to meet local housing, employment and community needs.
- Accessibility to services and facilities is an issue for those in rural or suburban areas. This can increase reliance on the motor car in these areas, thus contributing to the congestion problems on major routes and in turn having an impact on CO₂ emissions.
- Traffic congestion is a significant issue across both districts, exacerbated by commuting patterns and tourist traffic, particularly in the summer months.