

13 Creating High Quality and Distinctive Environments

13.1 The quality of the built environment, open space and leisure facilities determines how a place is regarded by its own community, visitors and investors. The historic Borough of Christchurch and East Dorset District are very attractive places in which to live with areas of valuable open space and leisure facilities. As a result, there is increasing demand to build new homes and extend existing ones. Faced with possible need for urban intensification it is crucial to ensure that new development schemes enhance local character and building traditions and contribute to the creation of healthy and sustainable environments, that give residents easy access to recreation, green space and sport facilities and secure the provision and enhancement of 'green infrastructure'.

13.2 The provision of leisure facilities and open spaces is important for the health and wellbeing of the population and spaces for the pursuit of formal and casual recreation, they also provide natural relief in built up areas, 'green lungs' for carbon exchange and habitats for wildlife. The routes that connect these spaces also encourage walking and cycling and can contribute to a network of 'green infrastructure'.

13.3 This section of the Core Strategy seeks to establish a coordinated approach to design including architecture, heritage conservation, open space, 'green infrastructure' and the public realm. The issues that will be addressed include:

- Enabling future development while conserving and enhancing our historic assets
- Delivering new high quality housing that complements and enhances the character of local neighbourhoods and settlements
- Creating a safer, greener and more accessible environment through the provision of appropriate types of open space and 'green infrastructure'

13.4 Options set out in this chapter have been established following responses received to the issues and options consultation and informed by the evidence base. For further detail concerning the development of options please refer to the following documents:

- Key Issue Paper : Historic Built Environment
- Key Issue paper : Design and Landscape
- Key Issue Paper : Improving Sports and Leisure Facilities

Historic Built Environment

Rules Regulations and Advice

13.5 National

- Preservation of the historic environment is an integral component of sustainable development (PPS1).
- The historic environment should be considered in the process of forming place shaping policies (PPS5).
- Policies should take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation (PPS5).
- Wherever possible, heritage assets should be put to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation (PPS5).
- National policy emphasises the importance of the whole historic environment, not just statutory listed assets. Development plans should, therefore, consider how best to conserve those individual, groups or types of heritage assets that are most at risk of loss through neglect, decay or other threats (PPS5).
- New development should make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment (PPS5).

13.6 Local

13.7 Dorset, Christchurch and East Dorset Community Strategies

- Heritage plays an important role in a prosperous economy.
- There is a need to balance the pressure for development with the need to protect sites of environmental importance.

Where are we now?

Key Facts

In Christchurch there are:

- 12 Conservation Areas
- 287 Statutory Listed Buildings (six Grade I)
- 136 locally listed buildings

In East Dorset there are:

- 19 Conservation Areas
- 697 Statutory Listed Buildings (19 Grade I, 41 Grade II*)
- 5 Historic Parks and Gardens

Tourism

13.8 The rich, historic and cultural heritage of Christchurch and East Dorset is an important factor in defining the character of the area for both residents and visitors, with historic buildings and parks attracting significant numbers of visitors per annum. The key historic attractions in Christchurch are the Grade I Listed Priory and Highcliffe Castle and the 17th Century Kingston Lacy Estate, Badbury Rings Hill Fort and Wimborne Minster in East Dorset.

13.9 Taking into account the important role the historic environment plays in the economic wellbeing of the two districts, it is vital to consider how tourism can be used to help the economy without harming the environmental assets of the area.

Threats to Conservation Areas

13.10 There are significant pressures exerted on the historic environment. These come from the demand to modernise historic buildings, change their uses, develop within conservation areas, and from the increased affects of traffic and highway improvements.

13.11 A recent English Heritage report 'Heritage at Risk-Conservation Areas' (July 2009) highlighted the incremental damage that has been caused to conservation areas by uncontrolled small scale developments. The deterioration of the historic building stock in both Christchurch and East Dorset was reaffirmed by the recently carried out Conservation Area Appraisals where the erosion of valuable features such as windows, doors and walls was listed as a real threat to the preservation of their character.

13.12 Also, as a result of the increasing pressure to provide more housing in the urban areas, the impact of possible development within conservation areas on their character is a crucial issue. Carefully designed schemes have the potential to improve historic areas, provided new development complements and enhances the special features of historic buildings and respects the scale, building materials and density of the surrounding built form.

Flood Risk

13.13 The historic town centres of both Christchurch and Wimborne are vulnerable to flooding. Measures aimed at adapting existing and new dwellings to potential flood incidents will be required to be incorporated, which may affect the setting of the central conservation areas. Good design will be crucial to ensure this does not harm the historic features of such buildings.

What you said at Issues and Options

- More rigid controls to prevent inappropriate development to historic buildings/conservation areas should be introduced.
- Greater protection should be afforded to unlisted heritage assets.
- Archaeologically important sites and Historic Parks and Gardens are important heritage assets that should be protected.

The Options

13.14 The following options have been developed taking into account consultation responses, evidence, legislation and guidance.

13.15 Issue: How can we protect historically and/or architecturally locally important unlisted buildings, sites, parks and gardens from demolition or inappropriate development?

Preferred Option HE 1

Protection of buildings of local historic and architectural interest

Locally listed buildings, along with monuments, sites or landscapes of historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest will form part of the heritage protection strategy. Local lists of heritage assets will identify key buildings and structures which, although not of sufficient quality to meet national listing criteria, have valuable architectural or historic merit and make a positive contribution to local character. Development proposals affecting such sites or buildings will be sympathetic to their character and will respect their key architectural or historic features. Demolition of a locally listed building will require planning consent, as will works which adversely affect any of the features recognised on the Local List.

Accordingly:

- a. In East Dorset, a Local List of Heritage Assets will be produced.
- b. In Christchurch the existing Local List of Heritage Assets will be updated.

Why is it the Preferred Option?			
This option gives protection to vulnerable, locally important buildings, which otherwise may be at threat of inappropriate alterations or demolition. The option will contribute to enhancing local distinctiveness and improve the attractiveness of the area.			
Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?			
National	Yes	Local	Yes
Is it informed by evidence?			Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisals (2006-ongoing) East Dorset Conservation Area Appraisals (2005 - 2007) 			

13.16 Issue: How can we further prevent harmful changes to conservation areas and listed buildings?

<p>Option HE 2</p> <p>Development within Conservation Areas</p> <p>To consider the use of Article 4(2) Directions in appropriate cases to control small scale works to buildings in conservation areas and within the curtilage of listed buildings that would otherwise be authorised by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.</p>

Why is it an Option?			
Implementation of the option would support the preservation of the special architectural features of conservation areas, which in turn would enhance local distinctiveness.			
Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?			
National	Yes	Local	Yes
Is it informed by evidence?			Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisals (2006-ongoing) East Dorset Conservation Area Appraisals (2005 - 2007) 			

13.17 Issue: How can we further prevent harmful changes to conservation areas and listed buildings?

<p>Option HE 3</p> <p>Development within Conservation Areas</p> <p>To consider the use of of Article 4(1) Directions in appropriate cases (where the consent of the Secretary of State is required) to control small scale works to buildings in conservation areas and within the curtilage of listed buildings that would otherwise be authorised by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.</p>
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Why is it an Option?			
Implementation of the option would support the preservation of the special architectural features of the built environment in conservation areas, which in turn would enhance local distinctiveness.			
Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?			
National	Yes	Local	Yes
Is it informed by evidence?			Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisals (2006-ongoing) East Dorset Conservation Area Appraisals (2005 - 2007) 			

Design

Rules, Regulations and Advice

13.18 National

- Design is crucial to the delivery of sustainable development. Design policies should be based on an understanding of an area's defining characteristics and needs (PPS1).
- New development should make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment (PPS5).
- Development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping with the scale of its location (PPS7).

13.19 Local

13.20 Dorset, Christchurch and East Dorset Community Strategies

- The quality of the environment drives Dorset's economy by attracting people to the area. The aim is to achieve a high quality built environment designed to support viable lifestyles with good provision of green spaces and active use and stewardship of heritage assets.

Where are we now?

Key Facts

- Both districts are built at low density with a high proportion of bungalows and detached dwellings (64.4% in East Dorset and 42.5% in Christchurch)
- Christchurch, at 20.8% has a higher number of flats than East Dorset (9.9%), mainly concentrated in Highcliffe, the Town Centre and Grange wards.
- There are 17 designated Special Character Areas in East Dorset

Character of built-up area

13.21 Christchurch has a diverse built environment, development of which was largely influenced by the borough's coastal setting, topography and presence of flood plains.

13.22 The urban area represents a predominately modern, post war environment, which has grown up around a historic town centre with pockets of older buildings predominantly in the Town Centre, Purewell and Mundeford. Much of the residential development is good quality and low rise. The densities vary considerably across the Borough, which reflects the historic development of neighbourhoods over the last two centuries, and range from generous plots with low density housing in Walkford and Friars Cliff (average 10dph), to terraced cottage plots in Bargates and Purewell (30-40dph).

13.23 Even though the Borough does not currently have specifically designated ‘character areas’, the 2003 Christchurch Borough-wide Character Assessment carried out a series of urban neighbourhood studies and specifies the essential qualities which give each area in the Borough its special character, and how these areas are sensitive to change with regard to conservation and heritage policy. In particular, the Borough-wide Character Assessment emphasised the importance of waterside areas to the character of the Borough.

13.24 **East Dorset** has witnessed rapid growth in the last 50 years. The area contains a number of suburban developments, often built at low density, with a scattering of houses in the remainder of the countryside. The housing stock is relatively new, with Wimborne Minster and the smaller villages being the exception in having an older and higher density building stock.

Special Character Areas

13.25 National policy contains provisions justifying the designation of Special Character Areas, where higher design standards are required. In East Dorset mature and established residential areas have been afforded special protection. selected on account of a particular character of buildings or layout, their street pattern and/or presence of strong landscape elements that are of high environmental quality. They are an important tool in preserving the intrinsic character of the district.

13.26 Appropriate design policies, supporting the preservation and enhancement of areas with distinct character and emphasising the importance of maintaining local features of both the built and natural environment should be introduced. Existing designations and character statements should be reviewed, and this should take place through a rolling programme over the period of the Core Strategy.

Dealing with the pressures of change

13.27 Taking into account development pressures it is inevitable that the area will need to face and adapt to change. The aim of the emerging policies should be to preserve valued features in the towns, which give them their distinctive characters and sense of place. New development should respect the prevailing characteristics of a local area and, where possible, enhance those neighbourhoods in need of improvement both within the existing urban areas and within the rural countryside. New development will be expected to be attractive, functional, sustainable and of the highest quality, optimising the site potential and respecting the scale of the locality.

13.28 The suggested new neighbourhoods in Christchurch and East Dorset provide an opportunity to create sustainable new areas of housing of high quality design, that are carefully linked with the existing communities they adjoin.

What you said at Issues and Options

- The responses highlighted the importance of good design in all new development.
- There was support for low density development.
- The concept and role of Special Character Areas in East Dorset was strongly supported.
- High quality design in the town centres was seen as a crucial element to ensure investment.

13.29 **Issue: How can we ensure that development is of a high design standard which complements local character, environmental qualities and makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and cultural vitality?**

13.30 *Please note that the Preferred Options addressing this issue, which are presented below form part of one design strategy and are not mutually exclusive.*

Preferred Option HE 4

Special Character Areas

It is proposed that Special Character Areas should continue to form part of the design strategy in East Dorset. A review will be carried out regarding the appropriateness of the designations in the Plan period. When considering this, the local authority will take into account the character of the area by virtue of its function, i.e. the accessibility to transport corridors, the design details/style/appearance/layout of buildings and landscaping.

Why is it a Preferred Option?

It supports the preservation of the special character of established residential areas, that give the district a distinct character.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

- East Dorset Special Character Area Appraisals
- Annual Monitoring Reports

Preferred Option HE 5

Introduction of an Urban Design Guide in East Dorset

In East Dorset introduce urban design guides for the urban areas outside conservation areas and Special Character Areas.

Why is it a Preferred Option?

The implementation of this option will support high design quality and help to guide prospective developers in the form and design of well designed schemes that work well in the context of local character.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

- This is supported by experience of East Dorset District Council Development Service

Preferred Option HE 6

In Christchurch the Borough-wide Character Assessment will continue to guide decisions regarding protection of character and appropriate design control, and will be updated within the plan period.

Why is it a Preferred Option?			
The Christchurch Borough-wide Character Assessment has been successfully guiding development to ensure new schemes complement existing vernacular and should continue to inform development management decisions.			
Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?			
National	Yes	Local	Yes
Is it informed by evidence?			Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is supported by experience of Christchurch Borough Council Development Services 			

Non Preferred Option HE 7

In Christchurch to introduce Special Character Areas, to preserve the special character of individual areas.

Why is it not a Preferred Option?			
There is no need to introduce Special Character Areas in Christchurch, as the Christchurch Borough-wide Character Assessment has proven to be a successful tool in guiding the design of new development.			
Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?			
National	Yes	Local	Yes
Is it informed by evidence?			Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience of Christchurch Development Services has found that the Borough Wide-Character Assessment has proven to be a successful tool in guiding the design of new development. 			

Sports and Leisure Facilities and Green Infrastructure

13.31 The provision of attractive, accessible and functional open space is important for the well being and health of residents and the support of our valuable wildlife. This section puts forward options as to how we can ensure that residents have access to their open space needs. For further information please refer to the Improving Sports and Leisure Facilities Key Issues Paper.

Rules Regulations and Advice

13.32 National

- Local authorities should plan to improve the local open space framework to create local networks of high quality and connected urban spaces (PPG17).
- High quality open space should be an integral element of well designed development schemes and settlements (PPG17).
- Deliver safe and attractive places to live, which respect the character of the area, promote health and wellbeing, and reduce social inequalities by ensuring that people have access to high quality open spaces, green infrastructure and sports, recreational and play spaces and

facilities which are safely and easily accessible by walking, cycling or public transport. (Planning for a natural and healthy environment: PPS consultation 2010)

- Provide access and appropriate recreational opportunities in rural and coastal areas to enable urban and rural dwellers to enjoy the wider countryside.

13.33 Local

- The Dorset Community Strategy promotes a high quality built environment designed to support viable lifestyles with good provision of green spaces and active use and stewardship of heritage assets.

13.34 Objectives of Christchurch and East Dorset Community Strategies

- There is a need to balance the pressure for development with the need to protect sites of environmental importance.
- High quality open space and recreation provision has a role in meeting the community's housing needs, by providing vital supporting infrastructure.
- Good promotion and management of open space and leisure opportunities can help to:
 - Promote good health
 - Reduce crime levels and make people feel safer.
 - Strengthen relationships between people
 - Enhance the natural and built environment
 - Create communities where travel is affordable, efficient and sustainable

Where are we now?

Key Facts

13.35 1. Open Space Provision in Christchurch and East Dorset according to Open Space and Recreation Survey (2007)

Settlement (no of responses)	A: allotments	B: amenity space	C: Park/green	D: pitches	E: hard surface courts	F: playgrounds	G: community halls	H: teen facility
Alderholt	Enough	Enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Ashley Heath	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burton	Not enough	Enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Christchurch	Not enough	Not enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Colehill	Not enough	Not enough	Not enough	Not enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Corfe Mullen	Not enough	Enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Cranborne	Enough	Not enough	Enough	Enough	-	Enough	-	Enough

Settlement (no of responses)	A: allotments	B: amenity space	C: Park/green	D: pitches	E: hard surface courts	F: playgrounds	G: community halls	H: teen facility
Ferndown	Not enough	Enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Highcliffe	Not enough	Not enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Holt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Matchams	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mudford and Stanpit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
St Leonards & St Ives	Not enough	Enough	Not enough	Not enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Three Legged Cross	Not enough	Enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Verwood	Not enough	Enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
West Moors	Not enough	Enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
West Parley	Not enough	Enough	Enough	Enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough
Wimborne	Enough	Not enough	Not enough	Not enough	-	Not enough	-	Not enough

13.36 Source: PPG17 Open Space Study

Health

13.37 The quality of the built environment can have significant impacts on a wide range of social issues including crime, health, education, inclusion, community cohesion and wellbeing. It can also, in part, help address many health challenges – such as reducing obesity, diabetes, heart disease and depression, through promoting more active lifestyles, including walking, cycling and jogging.

13.38 Overall the health of residents across the area is good. Life expectancy for the period 2006-2008 was 80.2 years for men and 84.8 years for women in Christchurch and 81.2 and 85.1 respectively in East Dorset (Source: Office for National Statistics).

Biodiversity

13.39 Both districts enjoy diverse natural environments which support a range of biodiversity. As many of these areas are open to public recreation, conflicts can arise between nature conservation objectives and sport and leisure objectives, especially where habitats can be easily disturbed by people.

Climate change

13.40 Sea level rise and increased rainfall will mean that more areas of land are subject to flooding which restricts their development for residential purposes. Areas affected by flood risk could be set aside for open space, contributing to the improvement of sports and leisure facilities.

Leisure and recreation

13.41 Leisure activities contribute to the quality of life of residents, providing amenity and opportunities for enhancing intellectual, spiritual and physical well being. Specific facilities include Two Riversmeet in Christchurch, Ferndown and Queen Elizabeth leisure centres, golf courses, equestrian centres, sports pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens. The harbour and coast at Christchurch supports water sports and fishing. The rural areas provide significant opportunity for informal recreation.

13.42 The Councils, along with other authorities in SE Dorset, have carried out a Green Infrastructure Report (2010). This has shown that there are needs for additional green infrastructure within both districts in order to provide for the wider needs of SE Dorset as well as those within the local area.

Identifying future need

13.43 The Open Space and Green Infrastructure studies confirmed that there are significant deficiencies in open space and recreation facilities across the districts. The aim should, therefore, be to provide higher levels of new provision in step with population changes. This is especially important in the context of the suggested new neighbourhoods, where the creation of a sustainable, attractive and functional environment is crucial.

13.44 Provision of open space on-site is preferred as it ensures a close link with development. However, given a shortage of available land and the difficulties of incorporating valuable open space within small schemes, it is sensible to adopt a policy approach which tailors the type and location of new open space to each settlements' needs, the level of development within them and the likely size of individual schemes. To provide for this, it will be necessary to establish an approach that combines on-site provision with off-site financial contributions towards a series of agreed projects.

What you said at Issues and Options

- Deficiencies in the provision of open space and recreation facilities were identified across the two districts.
- The priority should be to improve existing facilities, but this should be balanced with new provision where it is required. Concerns were raised that increasing financial demands on developers may affect viability.
- New water-based recreation facilities could be permitted as long as they have no impact on the coastal landscape and habitats.
- Local authorities must set clear thresholds for development contributions.
- Strategic links at a sub-regional level should be developed to maximise the benefits of a Green Infrastructure Strategy across the local authority boundaries.

Issue: What open space and leisure provision should we provide to best meet identified local needs?

Preferred Option HE 8

Adoption of local open space standards on the basis of a Local Need Area approach. Existing open space sites will be protected and, where appropriate, new sites designated.

The recommended open space standards and Local Need Area boundaries provided by the 2007 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study will be adopted for the Plan area (amended as necessary to take account of recent open space developments and new areas being considered for housing in the Core Strategy). Contributions will be directed towards meeting the **quantity**, **quality** and **accessibility** shortfalls for each of the Local Need Areas. The option will aim to deliver a combination of new facilities and improvements to existing ones, depending on the unique needs of the Local Needs Areas and the availability of land.

This option will protect existing open spaces and leisure facilities identified in the Local Plans and will not permit their loss unless their whole or partial redevelopment would result in greater benefits to the community than retaining that facility. Protected sites will be identified through the forthcoming Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Document. The proposed open space ‘implementation and delivery plan’ will identify opportunities to maximise the use of existing sites and potentially re-designate sites for alternative leisure uses, in line with local needs.

Recommended Open Space Standards from the 2007 Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study:

Open space type	Recommended accessibility standard (straight line distance).	Recommended quantity standard (hectares per 1000 population)	Recommended quantity standard (square metres per person)	Total recommended provision
Recreation Grounds & Public Gardens (includes parks)	450m	0.5 ha	5.0 sq m	3.75 ha per 1000 population / 37.5 sq m per person
Amenity Green Space	450m	0.5 ha	5.0 sq m	
Natural & Semi-natural Green Space	600m	1.0 ha	10.0 sq m	
Active (outdoor) Sports Space	600m	1.25 ha	12.5 sq m	
Children & Young People’s Space	450m	0.25 ha	2.5 sq m	
Allotments	600m	0.25ha	2.5 sq m	

Why is it a Preferred Option?

This option will safeguard existing and provide new open space facilities to meet the needs of the local communities.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?			
National	Yes	Local	Yes
Is it informed by evidence?			Yes
• East Dorset and Christchurch Open Space and Recreation Surveys (2007)			

13.45 Issue: How should a developer contributions policy apply to new development?

Preferred Option HE 9

Developer contributions for the provision of open space will be applied to residential units of 1 unit net gain or greater.

The Core Strategy will include a developer contributions policy which seeks to deliver new open space and enhancements to existing facilities in step with new residential development. Funding acquired through developer contributions will be complimented by other sources of funding where it can be secured.

Where appropriate in terms of location and the nature of the development, and where a local need for small scale facilities has been identified, an on-site contribution will be preferable. It may be appropriate for earlier developments to provide the land upon which later developments pay for structures or equipment. The policy will aim to deliver a combination of new facilities and improvements to existing ones, depending on the unique needs of the Local Need Areas (LNA) and the availability of land.

Contributions commensurate with demand

Population increase will be used to determine the relative demand created by different developments. For residential development, contributions will be on a per-dwelling basis and the level of contribution will be higher for larger housing than for small houses or flats; this will be determined by the average occupancy rates (where the average occupancy acts as a multiplier reflecting population increase):

Dwelling type and size	Average occupancy (persons per dwelling)
1 bedroom flat	1.1
1 or 2 bedroom house / 2 bedroom flat	1.5
3 or 4 bedroom house or flat	2.3
5+ bedroom house or flat	2.8

(Average dwelling occupancy rates, *source: Office of National Statistics 2006 household projections*)

Delivering new and enhanced provision

To provide an evidence base upon which to base the contributions policy the Councils will produce an 'implementation and delivery plan' which will include a list of the priority needs and objectives for each LNA and specific opportunities for new or enhanced provision. The plan will provide costs for establishing and maintaining a range of formal and informal leisure facilities, which will then be factored into the calculation of per-dwelling (residential) and per-hectare (commercial) developer contributions. The plan will also provide developers with clarity about which form of contribution they will be required to make. Applicants should consider how their development can meet the identified priorities, either through on-site provision within the development, or through a financial contribution.

Location of new provision

When considering sites for new open space and leisure provision, priority will be given to sites which are easily accessible by a range of transport modes and which can be integrated into a network of green infrastructure. Transport options being proposed through the Key Strategy, aim to reduce people's need to travel by car and to guide new development towards accessible locations (such as town centres) and major transport corridors. Issue: How should policy deliver a network of green infrastructure? in this chapter provides options for integrating open space policy with green infrastructure and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. Sites for new open space provision will be identified through an implementation and delivery plan and considered for allocation through the forthcoming Site-Specific Allocations Development Plan Document.

Why is it a Preferred Option?

This will maximise the provision of new open space to meet the needs of residents who live and work in new developments.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

- East Dorset and Christchurch Open Space and Recreation Surveys (2007)
- Christchurch and East Dorset Development Viability Reports (2009)

Alternative Preferred Option HE 10

As Option HE 9 and developer contributions will also be applied to commercial developments of over 1,000sqm gross internal floor space for B1, B2 and B8 uses and hotels.

A discounting rate of 90% will be applied to commercial development (compared with residential) to recognise that employees create less demand than residents. The contribution will then be charged at a per - sqm rate.

Why is it a Preferred Option?

This will only require an open space contribution from large commercial developments. This will, therefore, only meet the needs of some of the new workforce who occupy new development. However, it would be easier to administer.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

In part

- East Dorset and Christchurch Open Space and Recreation Surveys (2007).

Preferred Option HE 11

Use a standard contribution across both districts and spend contributions anywhere in the districts.

Why is it a Preferred Option?

This option provides the greatest opportunity to deliver open space and recreational facilities. However, it does mean that the contribution would not always be easily related to the facilities provided.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it supported by evidence?

Yes

- East Dorset and Christchurch Open Space and Recreation Surveys (2007).
- Christchurch and East Dorset Development Viability Reports (2009).

Non Preferred Option HE 12

Use a standard contribution across both districts and contributions spent within the local need area of the contributing development.

Why is it not a Preferred Option?

The Local Needs Areas were identified effectively as catchment areas for general open space provision. However, they are not definitive as different open spaces and recreational activities have different catchment areas. If contributions are collected and spent within a Local Needs Area they are simply seen as being directly related to the development. However, development is likely to be focused in confined areas and this could result in disproportionate levels of contributions being collected for the different Local Needs Areas. This could prevent good opportunities for provision being provided as contributions would not be available, whereas problems of delivery in the Local Needs Area could mean that contributions are unspent.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

- East Dorset and Christchurch Open Space and Recreation Surveys (2007).
- Christchurch and East Dorset Development Viability Reports (2009).

Issue: How should policy deliver a network of green infrastructure?**Preferred Option HE 13****Creation of a Green Infrastructure network using a shared open space/recreation and heathlands mitigation contributions policy.**

Where appropriate, developer contributions acquired through local open space policies and the Dorset Heathlands Interim Planning Framework/Development Plan Document will be used to develop a strategic green infrastructure network. Developments will be expected to incorporate elements of green infrastructure into their design such as 'permeability', with green foot and cycle paths running through the development, connecting with existing routes wherever possible. A new separate charge for green infrastructure will not be levied through Section 106 or through a tariff based approach. Instead, contributions acquired through open space policy and heathland mitigation and supported by local authority budgets will provide the necessary funding.

This approach will recognise the unique situation in Dorset where large open spaces are already being funded through an existing developer contributions policy aimed at diverting recreational pressures away from the sensitive Dorset Heaths. The focus of the Joint Heathland Interim Planning Framework/Development Plan Document upon mitigating recreational pressures will be preserved. The mitigation benefits of sites funded through the Interim Planning Framework/Development Plan Document will be enhanced by Green Infrastructure policy through improved connectivity with other open spaces, thereby promoting informal recreation (such as cycling and dog walking) and facilitating access by alternative forms of transport to the car. Green infrastructure will also be designed to protect and enhance sites of biodiversity value.

Why is it a Preferred Option?

Green infrastructure is recognised as a very important asset within a community for nature conservation, recreational and visual reasons. Contributions are required to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces to mitigate the impact of human pressures on heaths. These areas form part of the wider green infrastructure provision and it is important that contributions are not double counted.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

- SE Dorset Green Infrastructure Plan (2010).
- Christchurch and East Dorset Development Viability Reports (2009).

Non Preferred Option HE 14

Establish a separate contributions policy for Green Infrastructure.

This option would implement a new separate charge for green infrastructure through Section 106 or through a tariff based approach on the basis that local open space policies, local authority budgets and the Dorset Heathlands Interim Planning Framework will be insufficient to deliver the required level of green infrastructure. Examples of infrastructure that might not be fundable through existing mechanisms include connecting routes which do not fall under either 'open space' or 'heathland mitigation'. Proposals for green infrastructure would be costed up and used to inform a per-dwelling or per-hectare charge to new development.

Why is it not a Preferred Option?

As above, but the contribution collected would be clearly set out as a separate item. This would overcome concerns about double counting green infrastructure requirements.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

- SE Dorset Green Infrastructure Plan (2010)
- Christchurch and East Dorset Development Viability Reports (2009)

Landscape

Rules, Regulations and Advice

13.46 National

- Policies should be based on an understanding and evaluation of an area's defining characteristics and needs and tailored to the character, pressures and opportunities presented by the area they cover. (PPS1)
- The Core Strategy must set out a design strategy aimed at protecting and enhancing the character of the countryside, and ensure high quality, locally distinctive development through good and inclusive design. (PPS1)
- The importance of sensitive high quality design in the rural areas is key to maintaining the area's local distinctiveness and protecting the AONB from inappropriate development. (PPS7)

13.47 Local

13.48 Dorset, Christchurch and East Dorset Community Strategies

- The quality of the the environment drives Dorset's economy by attracting people to the area. The aim is to achieve a high quality natural environment with good provision of green spaces and active use and stewardship of landscape heritage assets.

Where are we now?

Key Facts

- 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 the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
- 45% of the area of East Dorset lies within the Cranborne Chase and West Wilts Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- East Dorset contains four distinct Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) which have been designated in the East Dorset Local Plan.
- Approximately 80% of the area of both districts is rural and residents generally have easy access to the countryside for informal recreation.

Character of the rural area

13.49 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. It has to be noted that various landscapes within Christchurch are extensions of wider landscape character areas found to the north and west; there is continuity of landscape up the Avon Valley towards Ringwood and up to the urban area of Bournemouth and Ferndown to the West. The New Forest National Park lies on the border of both Christchurch and East Dorset and neighbouring development could impact on the landscape quality of the park.

13.50 East Dorset falls within two character areas: The Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase to the north west which lies on chalk downland, and the Dorset Heaths which lie to the south east of the District, on sands and clays. The sand and clays to the south east of the District comprise a landscape of heaths, woodlands and extensive coniferous plantations interspersed with an intimate landscape of small fields separated by hedgerows. The area contains a number of modern suburban developments, often built at a low density and well planted with pines and other ornamental trees, with a scattering of housing in the remainder of the countryside. Although quite different in character to the AONB, much of this landscape is very attractive, although parts have been spoiled by the pressures and the developments of the urban fringe of the conurbation.

13.51 A large part of the downlands are included in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Settlements are sparse, being generally confined to the river valleys, and the landscape is open and rolling with scattered woods, many of which are ancient remnants of the Chase's forests. Landownership is concentrated with a small number of major estates, centred on a few great houses. The area is one of the richest in Britain in archaeological remains, forming an historic landscape of great importance.

13.52 Four distinct Areas of Great Landscape Value have been identified in the Local Plan which are high value unspoiled countryside, with a strong historical dimension, containing many traditional cottages and farm buildings and forming attractive and richly varied human and natural landscapes. Because of these qualities, they have been protected by Policy LSCON2 of the East Dorset Local Plan where any development must be sensitive to the surrounding character and quality of the landscape.

What you said at Issues and Options

- There was strong support for the protection of landscape quality and character in the rural areas.

- Most people would prefer to see rural areas, other than just the AONB area, also protected by special designations.
- There should be strong policies to guide development in rural areas.
- Care should be taken to ensure that any further designations don't stifle development opportunities.
- Make sure appropriate development is sensitively designed and located in rural areas so as not to harm landscape quality and potentially enhance it.

13.53 Issue: How far should landscape quality and character be protected in the rural area?

13.54 Please note that the Preferred Options addressing this issue, which are presented below form part of one strategy and are not mutually exclusive.

Preferred Option HE 15

Review the existing Areas of Great Landscape Value in East Dorset, and consider the designation of further Areas of Special Landscape Character across East Dorset and Christchurch, based on Landscape Characterisation work.

Why is it a Preferred Option?

This option supports the evidence that the characterisation of rural landscapes is increasingly becoming more important in setting the scene for further policies.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it supported by evidence?

Yes

- The Dorset Landscape Characterisation (2008).
- East Dorset Character Assessment (2008).

Preferred Option HE 16

Rural design policies should be introduced to ensure that alterations and extensions to the housing stock, as well as all new development, sensitively respects and enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the area in which it is situated, particularly in areas with strong traditions and high heritage value.

Why is it a Preferred Option?

Rural design policies are seen as one of the important elements in ensuring that developments are sensitively designed and located in rural areas so as not to harm the landscape quality and potentially enhance it.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it supported by evidence?

Yes

- The Dorset Landscape Characterisation (2008).
- East Dorset Character Assessment (2008)

Non Preferred Option HE 17

Use national policy to provide general rural landscape policies.

Why is it not a Preferred Option?

This option would not be sensitive to the particular characteristics of the Plan area and would not allow for policies to retain and enhance local distinctiveness.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National	No	Local	No
Is it informed by evidence?			No