

3 Vision and Strategic Objectives

3.1 When formulating a vision and objectives for the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy, the aims of the Councils have been:

- That the vision and objectives should be driven by the outcomes of evidence gathering and public engagement.
- That the vision should reflect wider council and community aspirations set out in Corporate and Community strategies.
- That the vision should be focused on the main issues, rather than trying to cover every issue.
- In turn, that the vision and objectives should be as succinct as possible.
- That there should be a clear link between objectives in the Core Strategy, and the objectives used for sustainability appraisal.
- Finally, that the vision and objectives should be “fit for purpose” to provide a clear direction for the key strategy and policies.

3.2 More detail on how the vision and objectives have been developed is contained in the Vision and Objectives Key Issues Paper (No 1).

Rules, Regulations & Advice

3.3 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 Delivering Sustainable Development (PPSs set out the Government’s national policies on different aspects of land use planning in England) encourages planning to be a positive and proactive process, operating in the public interest, with sustainable development as a core principle. Planning is seen as a tool for local authorities to use in establishing and taking forward the vision for their areas as set out in their community strategies.

3.4 In planning for and delivering sustainable development, PPS 1 encourages planning authorities to:

- Provide a positive framework for economic growth;
- Promote urban and rural regeneration;
- Promote communities which are inclusive and safe;
- Bring forward sufficient land for housing, industrial and commercial development, and for leisure;
- Provide improved access to jobs and services;
- Focus major development in existing centres;
- Reduce the need to travel, and encourage more sustainable patterns of transport development;
- Promote the efficient use of land through higher density development, mixed use development, and better use of previously developed land;
- Enhance and protect biodiversity;
- Address the causes of climate change.

3.5 PPS 12 Local Spatial Planning: notes that Local Authorities have a role as place shapers, based on assuming a leading role in their communities and bringing different partners together:

3.6 *“in order to create a vision of how to respond to and address a locality’s problems, needs and ambitions and build a strategy to deliver the vision in a coordinated way.”*

3.7 Spatial planning is identified as having the role of producing a vision for the future of places that responds to the local challenges and opportunities, and is based on evidence, local distinctiveness, and community derived objectives.

3.8 Core Strategies are seen as having 4 main elements:

- An overall vision which sets out how the area and the places within it should develop.
- Strategic objectives for the area focusing on the key issues to be addressed.
- A delivery strategy for achieving these objectives; and
- Clear arrangements for managing and monitoring the delivery of the strategy.

3.9 PPS12 goes on to advise that:

3.10 *“The vision should be informed by an analysis of the characteristics of the area and its constituent parts and the key issues and challenges facing them. The vision should be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy and should closely relate to any Sustainable Community Strategy for the area.”*

3.11 *“The strategic objectives for the link between the high level vision and the detailed strategy. They should expand the vision into the key specific issues for the area which need to be addressed, and how that will be achieved within the timescale of the core strategy.”*

3.12 Whilst Core Strategies should be visionary, they must also be effective, so the vision and objectives must create a spatial strategy which is deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored. Core Strategies must show how the vision, objectives and strategy for the area will be delivered and by whom, and when. It should also be flexible enough to deal with changing circumstances, and should be able to be monitored to ensure that it can be reviewed if it appears to be failing.

Where are we now?

3.13 The Core Strategy needs to address the main issues which have been identified through evidence gathering and consultation. These issues include:

- There is a significant housing waiting list, with annual housing need far exceeding even total housing supply.
- House price to income ratios are among the highest in the Country.
- The popularity of the area to live in, means that housing demand is almost limitless.
- The area is highly constrained by Green Belt, landscape, flood risk and nature conservation designations. This in turn limits the potential for new development land.
- The Dorset Heathlands are extremely sensitive habitats, under considerable recreational pressure from surrounding residential development.
- The transport network in the area is increasingly congested, and there is a need to provide better and more sustainable travel choice for residents and visitors.
- The area will need to adapt to the challenges of climate change, particularly the increased risk of flooding. Measures to reduce the impact of new development on the climate will also need to be addressed.
- The economy will need to grow, and will need to encourage growth in new sectors to improve skills and knowledge. Key employment sites, such as Bournemouth Airport will be at the heart of this strategy.
- Communities need to be supported, including addressing specific issues affecting young and old. Facilities must be provided to support community development.

What you said at Issues and Options.

3.14 A formal public consultation on Issues and Options took place between March and May 2008. The consultation, quite deliberately, did not propose any draft vision or set of objectives, but instead asked two questions aimed at establishing what people felt should be the key elements of the Core Strategy vision:

What major themes should the Core Strategy vision have?

- **Managing and safeguarding the natural environment.**
- **Managing and safeguarding the built environment and heritage.**
- **Addressing climate change as it might affect Christchurch & East Dorset.**
- **Creating sustainable economic growth.**
- **Improving transport.**
- **Providing appropriate homes for all.**
- **Supporting our communities.**
- **Providing for the needs of children and young people.**
- **Making our communities safer.**
- **Tackling deprivation and social exclusion.**
- **Improving the health of our communities.**
- **Other, please specify.**

If you could only select 3 of the above options (or including any additional issues you have identified) to be included in the vision, which would they be?

3.15 Subsequently, both Councils have undertaken further visioning work, either as part of formal focus groups, or within existing Community Partnership action group meetings and seminars.

3.16 Details of the outcome of these visioning events are set out in the Vision & Objectives Key Issues Paper.

3.17 The Issues and Options consultation in March 2008 sought views on what issues people felt should make up a vision for the Core Strategy. The outcome of this consultation was not particularly conclusive, with widespread support for all of the issues set out in the document. However, the issues which were supported by over 90% of respondents were:

- Improving transport.
- Managing and safeguarding the natural environment.
- Managing and safeguarding the built environment and heritage.
- Supporting our communities.
- Making our communities safer.
- Providing for the needs of children and young people.
- Improving the health of our communities.
- Creating sustainable economic growth.

3.18 When responding on which themes people would include in a “top 3” for inclusion in a vision, a number of themes stood out in terms of support:

- Managing and safeguarding the natural environment.
- Creating sustainable economic growth.
- Managing and safeguarding the built environment and heritage.
- Improving transport.
- Providing appropriate homes for all.

3.19 These broadly correspond with those supported in principle by respondents above, with the exception of the housing issue, which appeared to be better supported in the second question than the first.

3.20 It is more difficult to establish priorities from analysis of the outcomes of the various visioning events held with stakeholders, councillors and community partnership groups, not least because many focused on particular areas of concern to those attending. The two visioning events run at Christchurch and East Dorset do however provide a robust analysis of views about the most important issues seen as affecting the two areas.

3.21 Interestingly, only 3 themes emerged as being seen as a high priority from both seminars, these being provision of appropriate and affordable housing, improved transport, and protection and enhancement of the environment.

3.22 In Christchurch, additional priority issues were mitigating impacts of flood risk and enhancing cultural activity in the area. The East Dorset seminar also identified seamless service delivery, reducing deprivation, business enterprise, lifelong education and skills, a safe, healthy and active population, better facilities meeting local needs locally, and attractive town centres as important themes for a vision.

3.23 The Community Partnership seminars concentrated on specific issues, but it is notable that some common themes emerged which are important to many of the organisations represented on the partnerships:

- A need to develop and sustain volunteering in local communities, which in turn ensures service provision in both the voluntary and increasingly, in the public sector.
- A need to provide premises, both in terms of venues for events, classes and activities, but also office and meeting premises for organisations.
- Better communication and awareness raising about community facilities and events, ranging from interpretation signs in town centres to guide visitors, to awareness raising about services and support for young people.
- Provision of appropriate transport to meet the specific needs of voluntary organisations. This need may not always be met by mainstream public transport operators.

Preferred Option

3.24 The preferred approach is to have a memorable and locally distinctive vision. It will be supported by a series of key objectives which reflect priority themes identified through evidence and engagement.

3.25 The objectives also summarise the relevant preferred policy options put forward in this Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy Vision:

3.26 **The natural environment of Christchurch and East Dorset and its historic and thriving towns and villages are, and will, continue to be the most important assets for the area. However this environment will be used to sustain the growth of the local economy, and the welfare of its local communities, rather than being used as a reason to turn our back on growth which can be achieved sustainably.**

3.27 **The Dorset Heathlands, the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Christchurch Harbour and its beaches will be protected and enhanced to ensure that recreation and commercial activity sustains these areas.**

3.28 **The area will adapt to the emerging demands of climate change through clear strategies to reduce risk of flooding, and through encouraging high standards of building design and construction.**

3.29 The housing needs of the area will be addressed, with housing delivered of a type and tenure which meets the aspirations of those wishing to buy or rent. An element of this housing will be in the form of new, well planned, sustainable residential areas in both Christchurch and East Dorset. These will be attractive new areas, including high quality, sustainable homes, areas of open space, new community facilities, and improved transport links to the surrounding area.

3.30 Housing will also continue to be met from redevelopment within the existing towns, but developments will now better reflect the character and type of housing found in each local area, and will make appropriate contributions to infrastructure. Almost all new housing development will contribute to the provision of affordable housing, creating a step change in delivery of affordable dwellings and a significant reduction in waiting lists.

3.31 The character of the area will also be protected through retention of the Green Belt in all areas except those needed to secure well planned and sustainable housing and employment growth as part of the Core Strategy.

3.32 Historic towns such as Christchurch and Wimborne will be vibrant centres of commercial and cultural activity, with niche shopping, and varied attractions and facilities for residents and visitors alike. Other key local centres in Ferndown, Verwood, West Moors and Highcliffe will support shops and services for their local communities, with villages and smaller neighbourhood centres providing basic services. New ways of delivering services and facilities in rural areas will be developed.

3.33 The economy of the area will grow, both by sustaining its traditional sectors such as tourism, but also by creating a mixed economy with emphasis on growth in new knowledge based sectors, especially the green knowledge economy. Economic growth will be sustained by the creation of major high quality employment sites in East Dorset and at Bournemouth Airport, and by the protection of other well located sites for key employment uses. These will have an important role in sustaining the economy of South East Dorset.

3.34 The area will be easier to get around, not just for those who have a car, but for those who wish to use public transport, to walk or to cycle. In Christchurch, development will be focused on the existing public transport corridors on the A35 and A337 and better links will be made to Christchurch and Hinton Admiral stations, with the urban extension also linked to the transport network. Christchurch Borough Council will continue to press for the development of a Christchurch Bypass as a long term solution to the town's traffic problems.

3.35 The Airport will grow sustainably into a significant regional transport hub, providing scheduled and charter flights to a wide range of business and tourist destinations. Both the airport and its business parks will be linked to the surrounding conurbation by public transport services.

3.36 In East Dorset, transport corridors will be developed to help reduce the need to travel and promote a wider choice of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport. These corridors will include linking the towns and villages of Ferndown, West Moors, Three Legged Cross and Verwood, and improving links to Wimborne from Poole. Improvements to Canford Bottom Roundabout and dualling the A31 from Ferndown to Merley will reduce congestion and improve connectivity with the rest of Dorset and Hampshire.

3.37 And perhaps most important of all, our communities will thrive. There will be targeted redevelopment of local areas of deprivation in the Somerford, Leigh Park and Heatherlands Estates. Support will be given to the community groups and organisations to develop volunteering, and to obtain premises from which to deliver services. In particular, a new Druitt Hall community facility will be developed in Christchurch in parallel with remodelled community gardens, which will act as a focus for community activity in the town.

Strategic Objectives:

3.38 To underpin this vision, the Core Strategy has the following strategic objectives:

3.39 Objective 1 – To manage and safeguard the natural environment of Christchurch and East Dorset.

3.40 The **Green Belt** will be retained and protected, except for strategic release of land to provide new housing, and for employment development in East Dorset and at Bournemouth Airport. Impact **on designated sites** will be avoided, and residential development will contribute to mitigation of development on Heathland habitats. New **greenspace** will be provided as part of major housing proposals. Important **natural features** such as Christchurch Harbour and the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected and enhanced.

3.41 Key options:

- Clearly defined and justified Green Belt release, with strong protection elsewhere.
- Criteria based option to protect designated sites.
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace to be provided in step with new housing development.
- Review the Area of Great Landscape Value boundaries in East Dorset.
- Consider development of rural design policies.

3.42 Objective 2 – To maintain the character of the towns and villages, and to create vibrant local centres.

3.43 A clear **hierarchy of centres** will be developed, with a clear strategy for the major centres. Town and district centre boundaries will be created in Christchurch, Wimborne, Ferndown, Verwood and West Moors to help create a vibrant centre with a range of services and facilities. **Locally listed buildings** will now form part of the heritage protection strategy, and a local list will be created in East Dorset, and the Christchurch Local List updated. The Christchurch Borough Character Assessment and design standards in East Dorset will be used to guide design of new development. Article 4(1) and 4(2) Directions will be considered to control small scale works which might damage the character of **Conservation Areas**. **Open space** will be provided alongside new residential development. **Areas of Great Landscape Value** will be reviewed and possibly expanded in East Dorset. **Rural Design Guides** will be produced.

3.44 Key options:

- Creation of a settlement hierarchy of town, district and local centres.
- Focus new commercial development in Christchurch, Wimborne, Ferndown and Verwood town centres.
- Define town centre boundaries in key settlements.
- Potential new development sites identified in Christchurch town centre.
- Produce a list of locally listed buildings in East Dorset and update the list for Christchurch.
- Consider use of Article 4(1) and 4(2) Directions to control small scale development in Conservation Areas.
- Review Special Character Areas in East Dorset.
- Produce urban design guides for East Dorset.
- New open space and green infrastructure standards based on quantity, quality and accessibility.
- Areas of Great Landscape Value will be reviewed in East Dorset.
- Rural Design Guides will be produced.

3.45 Objective 3 – To adapt to the challenges of climate change.

3.46 The impact of **carbon emissions from transport** will be reduced by more sustainable patterns of development in accessible locations, and by encouraging travel by bike, on foot, or by public transport. Developments will be expected to incorporate **carbon reduction, water and energy efficiency measures** as part of measures to reduce impact on climate change. At least 10% of total energy used on developments of 10 or more dwellings or 1,000m² of non-residential floorspace will come from decentralised, renewable or low carbon sources. Development will be located in areas at lowest **risk of flooding** as required by PPS25. A Supplementary Planning Document for Flood Risk will be produced in Christchurch on how the sequential and exception tests will apply locally.

3.47 Key options:

- Focus developments in accessible locations to reduce the need to travel.
- Develop prime transport corridors on major routes such as the A35, A337, A347, A349 & B3073.
- Encourage developments to incorporate carbon reduction, energy and water efficiency measures.
- Minimum percentage of energy from developments of 10+ dwellings or +1,000 m² non-residential floorspace to come from decentralised, renewable or low carbon sources.
- Smaller developments to make contributions to off site measures.
- Detailed flood risk Supplementary Planning Document to be produced for Christchurch.
- Requirement for flood management strategies in appropriate locations.

3.48 Objective 4 – To enable the mixed economy of Christchurch and East Dorset to grow, and to develop new employment sectors.

3.49 Significant **new zones of employment development** will be located at Bournemouth Airport (15-20ha) and on key sites in East Dorset to serve the local and sub-regional economy. **A range of employment sites** will be provided meeting the needs of the local economy, and a hierarchy of sites will be developed so that certain sites can be reserved for higher order development in key employment sectors. Rural **farm diversification** will be supported in appropriate locations near key settlements such as Alderholt, Colehill, Corfe Mullen, Cranborne, Ferndown, St Leonards/St Ives, Sixpenny Handley Sturminster Marshall, Verwood, West Moors, Wimborne, Burton, Winkton and Hurn, and adjacent to the main Christchurch urban area. The key environmental features which attract **tourism** will be protected, including Christchurch harbour, rivers and beaches and the Dorset Heathlands.

3.50 Key options:

- Provide an appropriate range of employment sites in appropriate locations to meet the requirements of business.
- Encourage a mix of business premises.
- Encouragement of live/work units in appropriate locations.
- Develop Bournemouth Airport and suitable sites in East Dorset to deliver employment land to serve the wider needs of South East Dorset.
- Define a series of high quality employment sites in Christchurch to deliver B1(Light Industry and Office), B2 (General Industry) and B8 (Warehouse and Distribution) uses, at the Airport, Stony Lane, and sites fronting Somerford Road, as well as the employment sites in East Dorset.
- Adopt a more flexible approach to “non-B class” uses on other sites.
- Define locations where farm diversification will be acceptable, and a range of uses which could be permitted.
- Enhance and protect key features which encourage tourism, such as the Christchurch Harbour and beaches, the Dorset heaths, and historic town centres in Christchurch and Wimborne.

3.51 Objective 5 – To provide a suitable, affordable and sustainable range of housing to meet local needs.

3.52 Sufficient housing will be provided in Christchurch and East Dorset to address local needs, whilst maintaining the character of local communities. This housing will include well planned sustainable new communities on greenfield land in appropriate locations. The **size and type of dwellings** (both open market and affordable) will reflect current and projected local need through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. All residential development resulting in a net increase in dwellings will contribute towards **provision of affordable housing**, at a rate of 40% of total units being developed. Development of 100% **affordable housing schemes may be considered exceptionally** in land adjoining rural and urban settlements. Criteria for the provision of **Gypsy and Traveller housing** sites will be developed.

3.53 Key options:

- Locate new housing development in the main urban areas primarily, in accessible locations close to shops and facilities.
- Release Green Belt land in appropriate locations north of Christchurch and in East Dorset to secure delivery of sustainable, well planned new housing areas.
- Set out robust and detailed policies to secure open space provision in line with new housing development, based on local needs, and on quality and accessibility as well as quantity.
- Monitor housing delivery against assessments of need and market demand to ensure appropriate types and sizes of dwelling are built.
- Set out a criteria based option to enable delivery of Gypsy and Traveller housing in appropriate locations.
- All new residential development to contribute to provision of affordable housing.
- Allow urban and rural exception sites to come forward in appropriate locations to enable delivery of affordable housing in smaller settlements.

3.54 Objective 6 – To help our communities to travel less, and to travel more easily by a range of choices.

3.55 Development will be located in **the most accessible locations**, focused on prime transport corridors and town centres. New residential development will be located either close to existing facilities, or where good transport links exist to such facilities. **Prime transport corridors** will be developed in the short term on the A35 and A337 in Christchurch, the A348 in East Dorset, and the B3073 between the two areas. In the medium term, further prime transport corridors will be developed in East Dorset on parts of the A347, A349, B3074 and B3072, and corridors north of the A31(T). Significant **transport improvements** are proposed at Canford Bottom Roundabout, A31(T) Merley to Ameysford (dualling), and B3073/A338 airport transport improvements. The overall aim will be to reduce congestion in key locations, by reducing the need to travel and encouraging public transport use, walking and cycling as alternatives to the car.

3.56 Key options:

- Locate development in the most sustainable locations, focused on the conurbation, prime transport corridors and town centres.
- New residential development located in close proximity to employment facilities and services, or in locations allowing access to a range of transport modes.
- Short term transport corridors A35, A337, A348 and B3073.
- Medium term transport corridors south of A31(T) on A347, A349 and B3074.
- Long term transport corridors north of A31(T) on B3072.
- Improve interchange facilities at Christchurch and Hinton Admiral railway stations.
- Improve bus services and expand real time information at bus stops.
- Encourage travel plans in line with new developments.
- Further expand and improve the footpath and cycleway network.
- Short term improvements at Canford Bottom roundabout.
- Medium term improvements along the A35 junctions through Christchurch.

- Medium to long term dualling of the A31(T) Merley – Ameysford, and B3073/A338 improvements.
- Encourage innovative ways of improving accessibility, such as a rural travel exchange, to reduce need to travel in rural areas, particularly in East Dorset.

3.57 Objective 7 – To help our communities to thrive, and to help people support each other.

3.58 The main town centres of Christchurch, Wimborne, Ferndown and Verwood will be **the focus for commercial, retail and community facilities**, with District centres and villages playing a supporting role. **New facilities and services** will be developed alongside the new neighbourhoods, and associated facilities will be provided as part of new employment development at Ferndown and Bournemouth Airport.

3.59 Key options:

- Encourage provision of facilities and services to support local communities, and to reflect the changing age profile of the area.
- Concentrate most facilities in accessible locations in existing urban areas of Christchurch, Burton, Highcliffe, Wimborne, Colehill, Ferndown, West Moors, Verwood, Alderholt, Cranborne, Sixpenny Handley, Three Legged Cross and Sturminster Marshall.
- Resist loss of facilities unless it is shown that they are no longer needed.
- Development to contribute toward provision of community facilities.
- Provision of a new community hall in Christchurch town centre.
- Develop new ways of delivering services in rural areas where it is not viable or practical to establish new facilities.
- New open space standards based on quantity, quality and accessibility.