

5 Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres

5.1 Christchurch Town Centre and Highcliffe Centre are the main shopping centres for Christchurch Borough and provide a focus for leisure, entertainment, recreation and employment opportunities. Over the next 15 years these centres are likely to face significant change in accommodating a range of development including retail, housing, employment and transport infrastructure improvements. Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres have the opportunity to further establish themselves as niche shopping destinations providing a range of facilities to the local community within an attractive environment. It is also important that these centres maintain their market share of local retail expenditure in the context of other centres in South East Dorset.

5.2 This section of the Core Strategy establishes an approach toward achieving the long term vitality and viability of Christchurch and Highcliffe centres by addressing the following:

- **The definition of a town centre boundary defining the focus for town centre related development.**
- **Establishing visions guiding the future of Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres over the next 15 years addressing the following:**
 - The focus for future development (retail, housing, employment and essential facilities)
 - Improvements in the urban environment
 - Enhanced retail offer and provision of essential services and facilities
 - Improvements to open space and public areas
 - Improvements to public transport and other transport infrastructure
 - Car parking provision
- **Primary and secondary shopping core boundaries and associated development management policies.**

5.3 Options set out in this section have been established following responses received to the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation (March 2008) and informed by the evidence base. For further detail concerning the development of options contained in this chapter please refer to the following documents:

- **Key Issues Paper: Town, Village and Neighbourhood Centres Vitality**
- **Christchurch Town Centre Area Profile (2010)**
- **Highcliffe and Walkford Area Profile (2010)**

Rules, Regulations and Advice

The Economy, Town and Local Centres and the Location of Development

5.4 National

- Locate development in or on the edge of existing settlements, where employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities should be provided close together. (PPS4)
- New economic growth and development of main town centre uses should be focused in existing centres.
- Sustainable patterns of development should be achieved that reduce the need to travel, especially by car. Planning policies should make it easier for people to get to work and key facilities by sustainable transport modes, especially walking, cycling and public transport.
- As part of the economic vision for the area, a strategy should be set out for the management and growth of town centres for the period covered by the Core Strategy.

5.5 Local

5.6 Christchurch Community Strategy

- Need to improve the range of retail outlets and promote tourism.
- Regenerate Saxon Square and address the run down appearance of the Town Centre.
- Need to address the issue of pedestrian access between the High Street and Bargates.
- The evening economy should be supported in town centres.
- Sufficient open spaces and parks should be provided in our centres.
- Pollution from road traffic should be reduced.
- There are issues of traffic congestion in the Town Centre, Fairmile, Barrack Road, Fountain Roundabout, A35 and Parley Lane.
- Flood defences need to be provided for areas at risk in the Town Centre.

Christchurch Town Centre

Where are we now?

Key Facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parts of the Town Centre including the High Street, Church Street, Wick Lane, Castle Street and Bridge Street are in the Christchurch Central Conservation Area (Local Plan). • Part of the town centre including Stour Road, Wick Lane and Bridge Street is affected by high flood risk (zone 3a) (Christchurch Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2009). • There is no need for further supermarket floorspace in the Town Centre (Joint Retail Study, 2008). • There is a need for in the region of 6,900 – 8,000sqm of additional non food retail floorspace to 2027 (Joint Retail Study, 2008). • A fifth of the Borough's firms are located in the Town Centre (420 firms, employing 3,200 people) (Annual Business Inquiry 2007, ONS). • There is not a high demand for office accommodation in the Town Centre (Christchurch and East Dorset Employment Land Review). • There is sufficient quantity of open space provision in the town centre but improvements could be made to Druitt Gardens (2007 Open Space Audit). • There are significant issues of traffic congestion in the Town Centre, Fairmile, Barrack Road, Fountain Roundabout, and A35. • The Christchurch Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment identifies potential for 347 new dwellings in the Town Centre by 2027.

5.7 Christchurch Town Centre is the main centre for the Borough, and is the largest centre across Christchurch and East Dorset in terms of retail provision. The historic town centre is located within the Christchurch Central Conservation Area and is a significant draw for tourists.

Retail Provision

5.8 The centre performs a number of important functions such as providing a range of shopping, leisure, entertainment, recreation and employment opportunities. There is a library, the Regent Centre Theatre, Argos, Boots, Marks and Spencer, New Look, Co-Op, WH Smith and Waitrose and a high number of small independent retailers. The shopping area is concentrated along Bargates and the High Street, with some shops located within the Saxon Centre and Saxon Square, where farmers' markets are also held.

5.9 The Borough as a whole has several large food stores including Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Marks & Spencer and Co-Op. There is a high retention rate for convenience food shopping within the Borough. However, there is also a reasonable level of supermarket expenditure outflow to stores in Bournemouth, which is also the main destination for non-food shopping items (Joint Retail Study 2008).

5.10 There are a relatively low proportion of national multiples in the town centre and overall the retail offer is perceived as too 'down market'. However, the quality and proportion of specialist independent traders and uses associated with the evening economy (public houses, bars, restaurants and entertainment uses is positive). There is significant opportunity for improving the range of retail outlets in the centre to enhance its vitality.

5.11 Christchurch Town Centre does not have a requirement for new supermarkets, but requires new non food retail outlets to meet the needs of a growing population and to enhance its position as a niche retail destination within South East Dorset. In Christchurch there is a requirement for around 9,000 – 11,000sqm of additional non food retail floorspace over the next 15 – 20 years. Christchurch Town Centre has the capacity to accommodate between 6,900 - 8,000sqm of additional non food retail floorspace. The centre has a limited but adequate selection of commercial, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities, but there is good access to other facilities outside of the Borough in Bournemouth and Poole. The centre has scope to improve provision of health and fitness facilities and appropriately located restaurants and bars which can enhance the economic vitality of the centre, in addition to the requirement for new retail floorspace.

Sports, Leisure and Recreation Facilities

5.12 The 2007 Open Spaces Audit identified sufficient provision of open space in the centre but improvements are required to Druitt Gardens. The Druitt Gardens Planning, Design and Development Framework (2005) identifies opportunities to create a new woodland garden and centre piece for the town's cultural centre. This represents an opportunity to upgrade and manage the garden, and provide for frequented recreation grounds within the centre.

Employment

5.13 Office occupancy levels in the centre are good, with offices located above ground floor retail units. There is not a strong market for office provision in the town centre, but over the next 15 years it is anticipated that there will be future requirements for additional provision.

Transport and Urban Environment Improvements

5.14 The Joint Retail Assessment 2008, Town Centre Strategy (2003) and Parking, Access and Signage Strategy (2006) identifies the main areas for improvement in the Town Centre that include:

- Impaired movement in and around the town centre due to vehicular/pedestrian conflict.
- Improvements required in accessibility to the town centre by public transport, walking and cycling and well signed / located car parks.
- Improved pedestrian linkages between the High Street and Bargates.
- Upgrading Saxon Square and the shopping precinct.
- General low standard of the streetscape and urban environment.
- There is sufficient car parking in the town centre, but better use can be made of underused car parks in the centre.

Housing

5.15 There is opportunity for higher density residential development in the Town Centre as it is located near to local shops, facilities and public transport. The Key Strategy section of the Core Strategy sets out options for the broad locations and potential scale of retail, employment and housing growth.

What you said at Issues and Options

Christchurch Town Centre	
Priority Centre Uses	Centre Improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail uses with an enhanced mix increasing the number of national multiples • Uses associated with the evening economy and tourism • Recreation/open space • Residential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements are needed in the centre, particularly the quality of the built environment and the need for the use of design standards • Improvements to public transport/parking were identified which will need to address pedestrian / vehicular conflict, general accessibility to the town centre by public transport, walking and cycling and improved pedestrian linkages between the High Street and Bargates

Other measures to enhance town centre vitality in Christchurch

- The need to clearly define a boundary for Christchurch town centre received both positive and negative responses.
- The need to designate core retail areas where non retail uses will be restricted was supported.
- The need to protect local shopping areas and services was clearly identified.

The Options**5.16 Christchurch Town Centre****5.17 Issue: What should the vision be for Christchurch Town Centre?**

Preferred Option CH 1

Christchurch Town Centre Vision

Christchurch will continue to act as the key town centre in the Borough and will be the main focus for retail development. This is primarily because it is served better by public transport and there are more development opportunities within the centre. The retail offer will be enhanced and the shopping environment improved to provide a more pleasant and pedestrian friendly townscape. Improvements in public transport services will be supported in conjunction with localised infrastructure improvements. Essential services and facilities will also be enhanced within the centre serving residents and local visitors to the town.

To achieve this vision:

1. Retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre. The strategy will seek to enhance the niche retail offer and improve the presence of national multiples to provide for better choice in comparison shopping. The regeneration of the Saxon Square Shopping Centre will attract national multiples whilst niche retail shops will continue to thrive on the High Street.

2. Residents of the Borough will continue to have access to a variety of community services and cultural facilities; important town centre uses (such as the Regent Centre, the Central Library) will be retained and where possible enhanced. An opportunity exists to expand the health and fitness offer in the town centre.

3. Expansion of evening economy uses such as restaurants/café/pubs will be encouraged especially along Church Street. This will enhance the vitality of the centre, making it a more vibrant place in the afternoon and evening hours.

4. The following sites have been identified as strategic sites that will play a pivotal role in delivering the town centre vision and Key Strategy. These sites will be brought forward in accordance with site specific development briefs and further detail will be set out in a Site Specific Development Plan Document:

- The Magistrates' Court Site
- Saxon Square
- The Lanes
- The former Gasworks Site
- Stony Lane

5. Druitt Gardens will be enhanced to provide an attractive area of open space within the town centre. This will benefit tourism and contribute to the promotion of healthy lifestyles by providing high quality open space.

6. High density residential development will take place alongside the projected requirement for retail to provide a balanced, mixed use environment in areas outside those affected by high flood risk.

7. The town centre will accommodate limited office development that doesn't adversely affect the vitality and viability of office development in Bournemouth and Poole town centres.

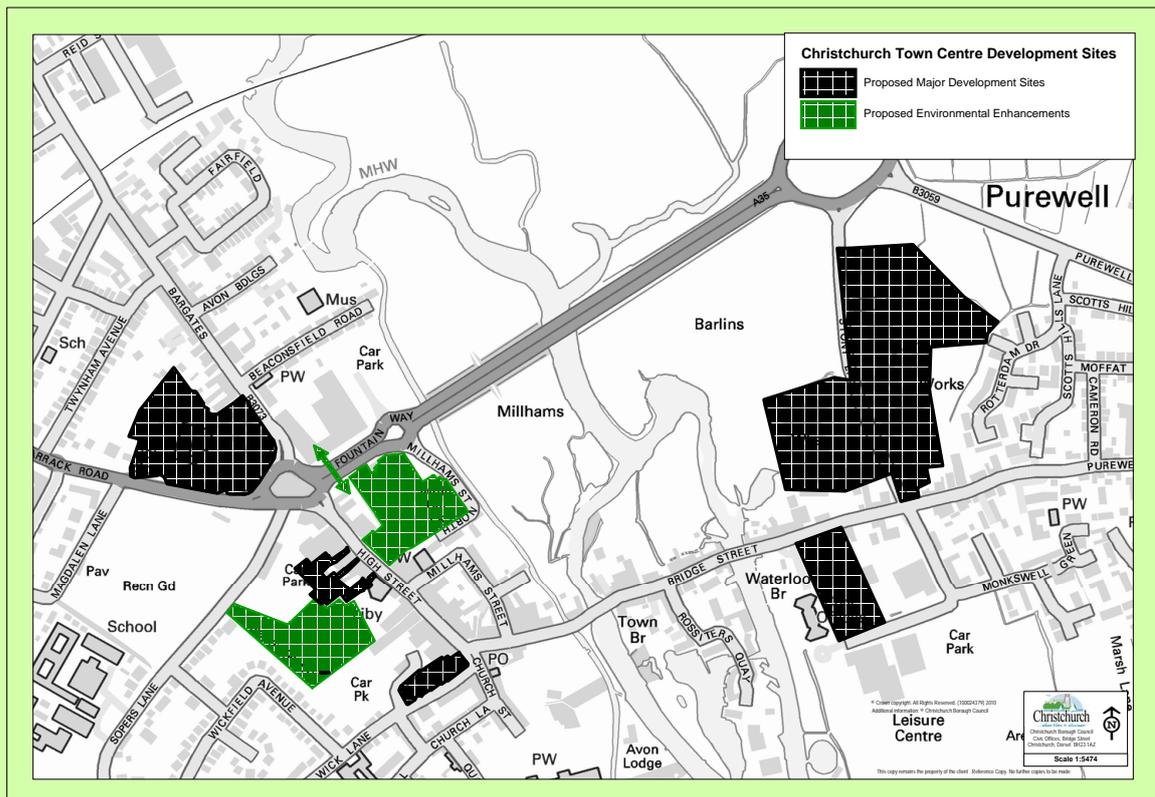
8. Townscape quality will be enhanced by sensitive development and improvements incorporating the built form and the spaces between, including streets, squares, parks, waterfront and car parks. Only high quality development proposals that respect and enhance the historic character of the centre, and improve ease of movement and legibility, will be permitted.

- Saxon Square will be refurbished so it relates more appropriately with the historic core of the High Street, and provides for a more attractive shopping environment and provision of units more attractive to retailers.
- The redevelopment of the Lanes, comprising the area between Sopers Lane and Wick Lane, will provide an opportunity for environmental enhancements by encouraging mixed used development, including residential, retail and community uses.
- Improvements to the linkage between the High Street and Bargates will be promoted in an effort to increase the flow of pedestrians between the shopping areas.

9. To minimise congestion and air pollution, the use of sustainable modes of transport will be encouraged. Christchurch benefits from a comprehensive public transport network providing links both within the Borough and its surrounding areas via bus and rail services.

10. The Council will ensure that adequate parking levels are maintained within the town centre so as not to adversely affect vitality and viability.

More effective management of car parks will reduce pressure on 'core' car parks and, in the long term, town centre car parks will be relocated as close as possible to the A35. A strategic signing strategy will also assist in making the best use of town centre car parks and in reducing congestion.



Christchurch Town Centre Vision

Why is it the Preferred Option?

- Minimises factors contributing to climate change.
- Promotes vitality and viability of town centre.
- Provides community and cultural facilities.

Helps meet housing need.

Locates development in areas of lower flood risk.

Improves public transport and transport infrastructure.

Improves town centre urban environment and promotes good design.

Brings forward strategic sites for redevelopment: The Magistrates' Court Site, Saxon Square, The Lanes, The former Gasworks Site, Stony Lane.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

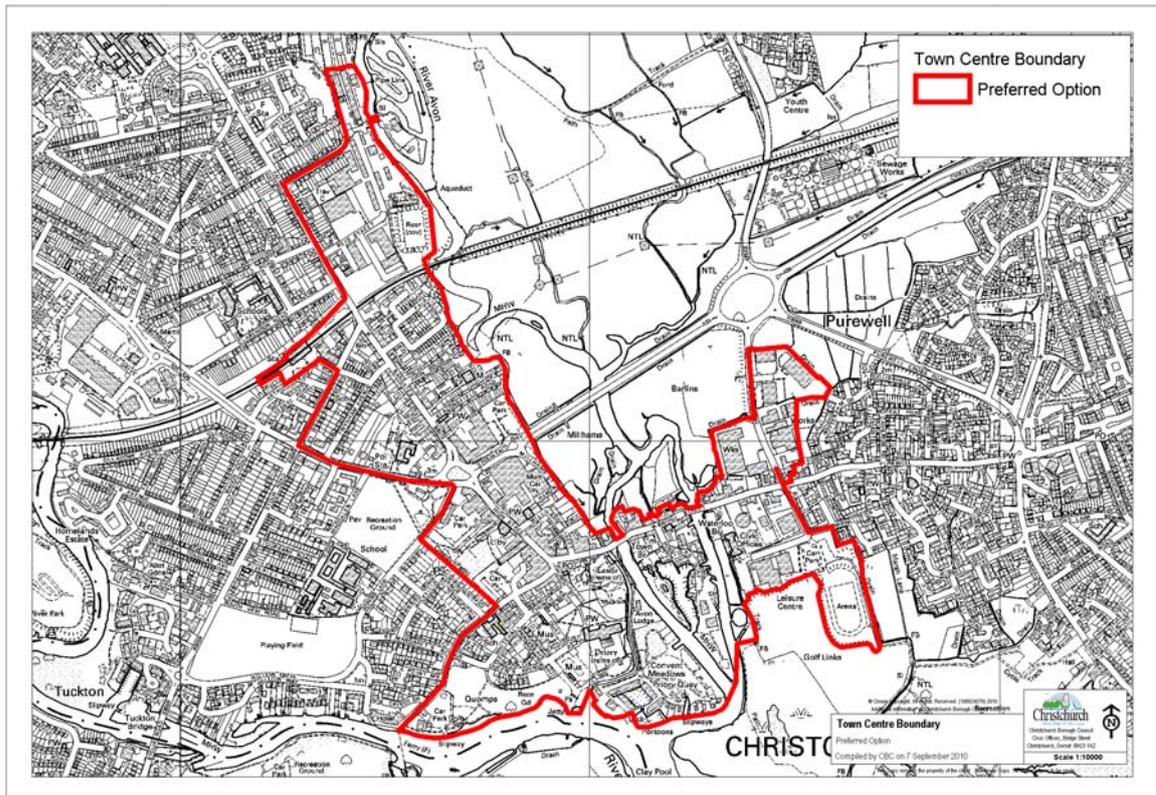
Yes

- Joint Retail Assessment (2008)
- Christchurch Parking, Access and Signing Strategy (2006)
- Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand (Local Authority report for Christchurch) (2008)
- PPG17 Open Space Study (2007)
- Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy and Delivery Plan (2008)

5.18 Issue: What should be the extent of the Christchurch Town Centre boundary?

Preferred Option CH 2

To designate a Town Centre Boundary to include the Stony Lane industrial estate and land north-east of the railway station.



Town Centre Boundary: Preferred Option

Why is it the Preferred Option?

This option provides the most potential for new commercial and retail development by including Stony Lane and Avon Trading Park within the town centre boundary.

Services and facilities will be concentrated in the town centre which is accessible by a range of transport modes.

This option encourages a sustainable pattern of development.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

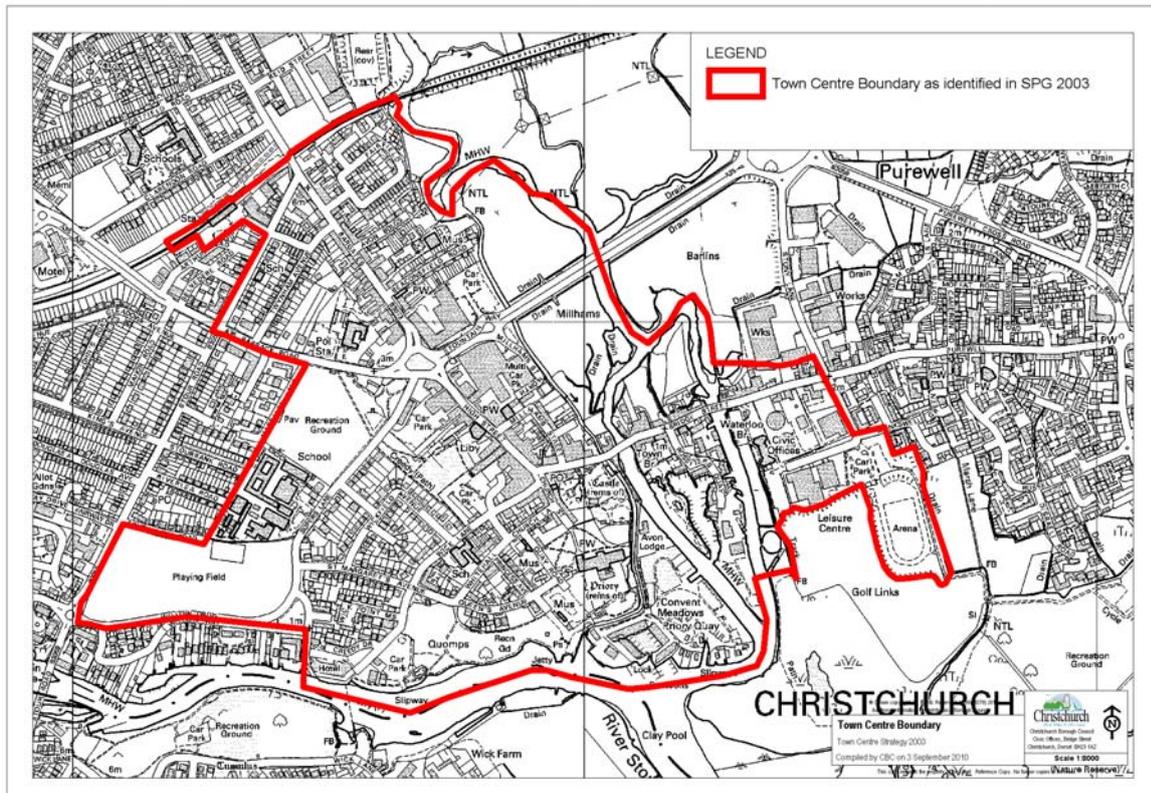
National	Yes	Local	Yes
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Is it informed by evidence?	Yes
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The basis for establishing a town centre boundary to guide the focus for town centre related development, is primarily from the policy framework which includes Planning Policy Statement 4 and the Christchurch Town Centre Strategy (2003).

Non Preferred Option CH 3

To adopt a town centre boundary in line with the boundary identified in the Town Centre Strategy (2003)



Town Centre Boundary identified in the Town Centre Strategy (2003)

Why is it not a Preferred Option?

This option excludes Stony Lane and Avon Trading Park and provides less commercial and retail development potential.

It includes an area south west of the Town Centre in the High Flood Risk Zone which is not suitable for housing or significant retail/commercial development.

Services and facilities will be concentrated in the town centre which is accessible by a range of transport modes.

This option encourages a sustainable pattern of development.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National	Yes	Local	Yes
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Is it informed by evidence?

In Part

The basis for establishing a town centre boundary to guide the focus for town centre related development, is primarily from the policy framework which includes Planning Policy Statement 4 and the Christchurch Town Centre Strategy (2003). This option provides less flexibility to meet

future retail floorspace and employment land requirements identified in the Joint Retail Assessment and Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy (2008) with Stony Lane and Avon Trading Park excluded from the town centre.

5.19 Issue: What approach should be adopted to guide the location, scale and type of retail development in Christchurch?

Preferred Option CH 4

The determination of A1 thresholds for the Christchurch shopping cores

To resist the loss of ground floor retail uses in the identified retail cores at the Town Centre, Bargates and Highcliffe; non-retail uses in the Core Retail Frontages where non A1 uses will not exceed 20%.

Why is it the Preferred Option?

This option will help facilitate the delivery of projected requirements for A1 retail floorspace in the town centre by not eroding the stock of existing A1 retail units

This option will encourage a suitable balance of retail uses in the town centre to meet the needs of the local community.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

- Joint Retail Assessment (2008).

Non Preferred Option CH 5

To adopt a policy stipulating that non-retail uses in the core retail areas will not exceed 30%.

Why is it not a Preferred Option?

This option would make it difficult to deliver the projected requirements for A1 retail floorspace by enabling loss of A1 units up to the threshold of 30%.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

No

Local

No

Is it informed by evidence?

No

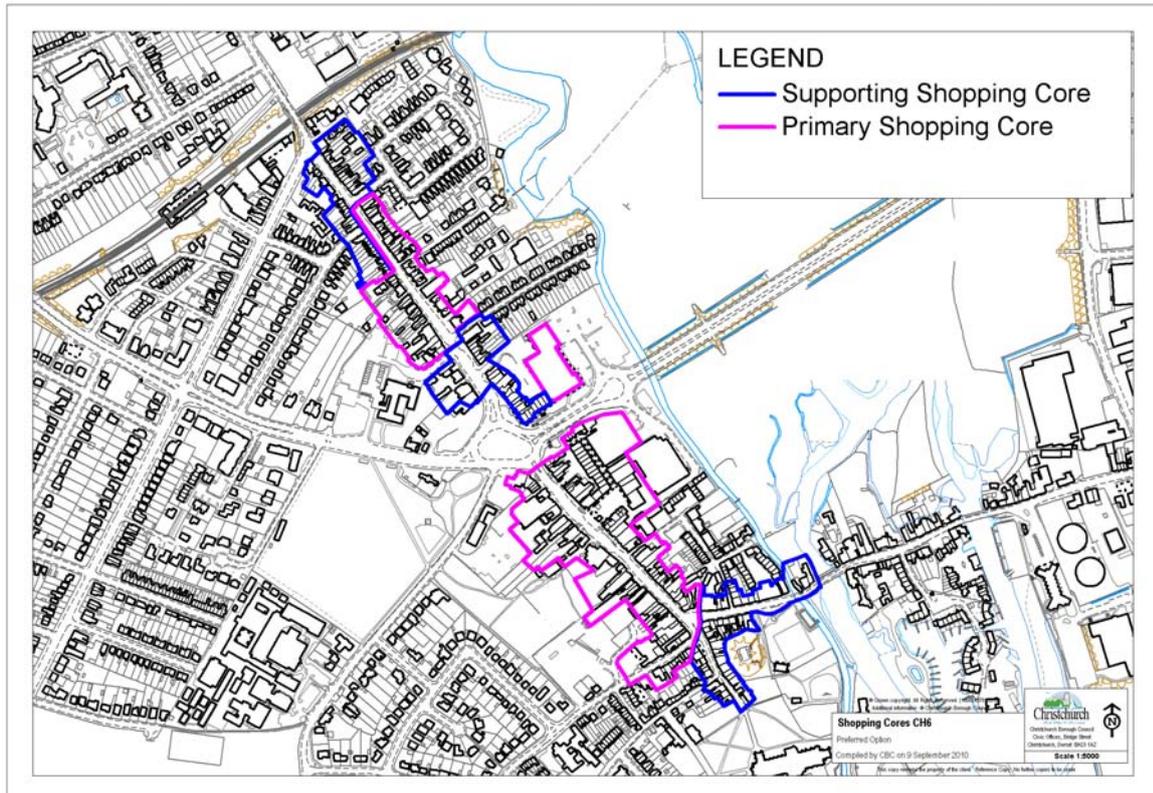
- The Joint Retail Study (2008) recommends a shopping core policy in line with Option A.

5.20 Defining primary and supporting shopping core frontages:

Preferred Option CH 6

Christchurch Town Centre Shopping Frontages

In Christchurch, to re-classify Church Street from Shopping Core to a Supporting Shopping Core to allow for the expansion of other town centre uses such as evening economy in the area (café's restaurants, pubs) and; delete Town Bridge as a Supporting Shopping Core.



Why is it the Preferred Option?

This option will promote the vitality of the town centre by enabling restaurants and cafés along Church Street assisting the evening economy as part of a strategy which maximises potential for A1 retail development elsewhere in the Town Centre.

Expansion of evening economy and leisure uses will enhance the distinctiveness of the town centre.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National	Yes	Local	Yes
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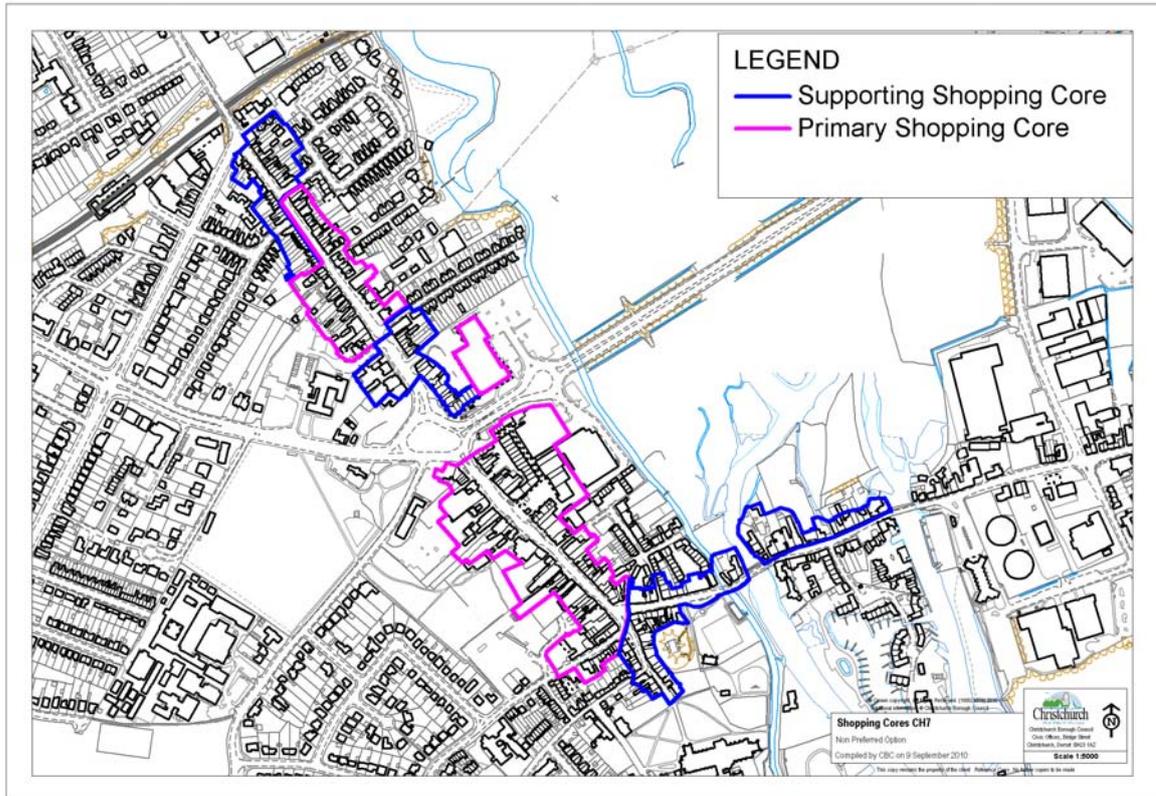
Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

- Joint Retail Assessment (2008).

Non Preferred Option CH 7

Change Church Street to a Supporting Shopping Frontage and retain the existing frontage designations.



Why is it not a Preferred Option?

This option does not include the deletion of Supporting Frontage after Town Bridge which is not an active retail frontage. Maintaining a Supporting Shopping Frontage in this location also restricts the potential for other uses such as residential.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National	Yes	Local	No
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Is it informed by evidence?

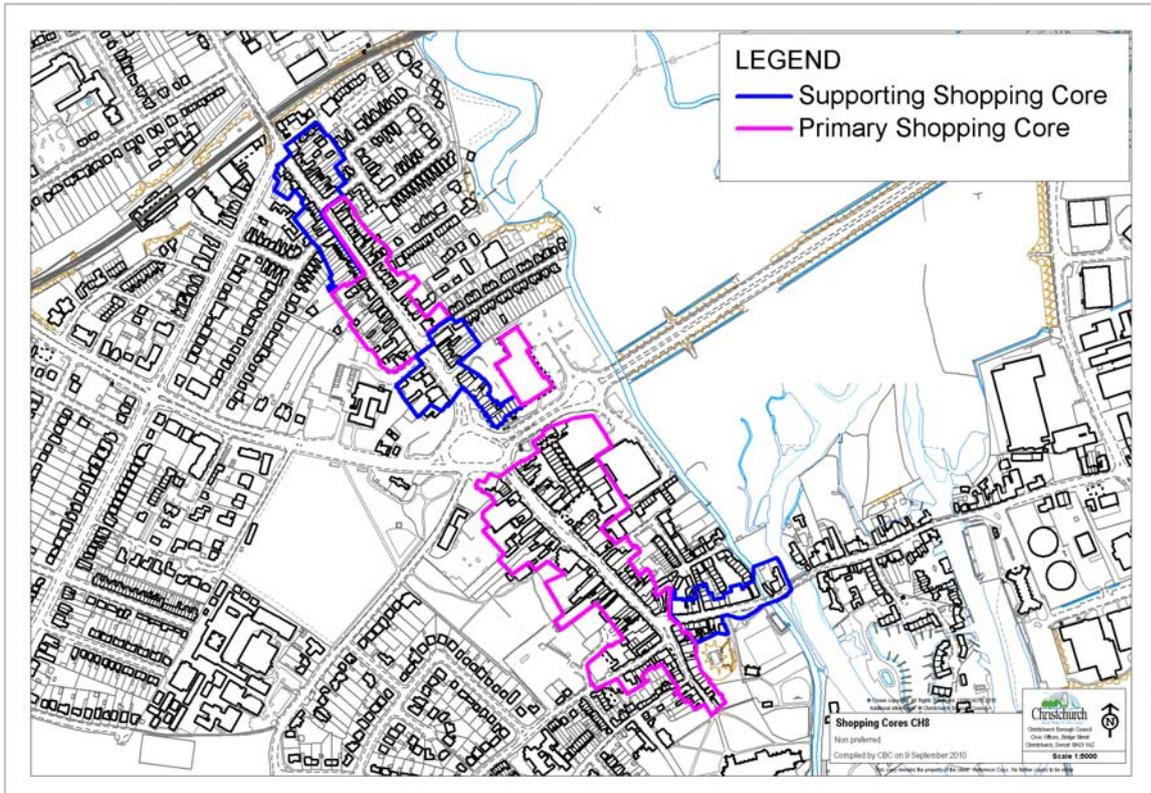
In Part

This option reflects part of the recommendation set out in the retail study. The complete recommendation is set out in Option A. It is supported in part by the Joint Retail Assessment (2008).

5.22

Non Preferred Option CH 8

Delete Supporting Shopping Frontage after the Town Bridge and retain the existing frontage designations.



Why is it not a Preferred Option?

This will not enable further development of cafés and restaurants on Church Street which contribute to the evening economy and town centre vitality.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

No

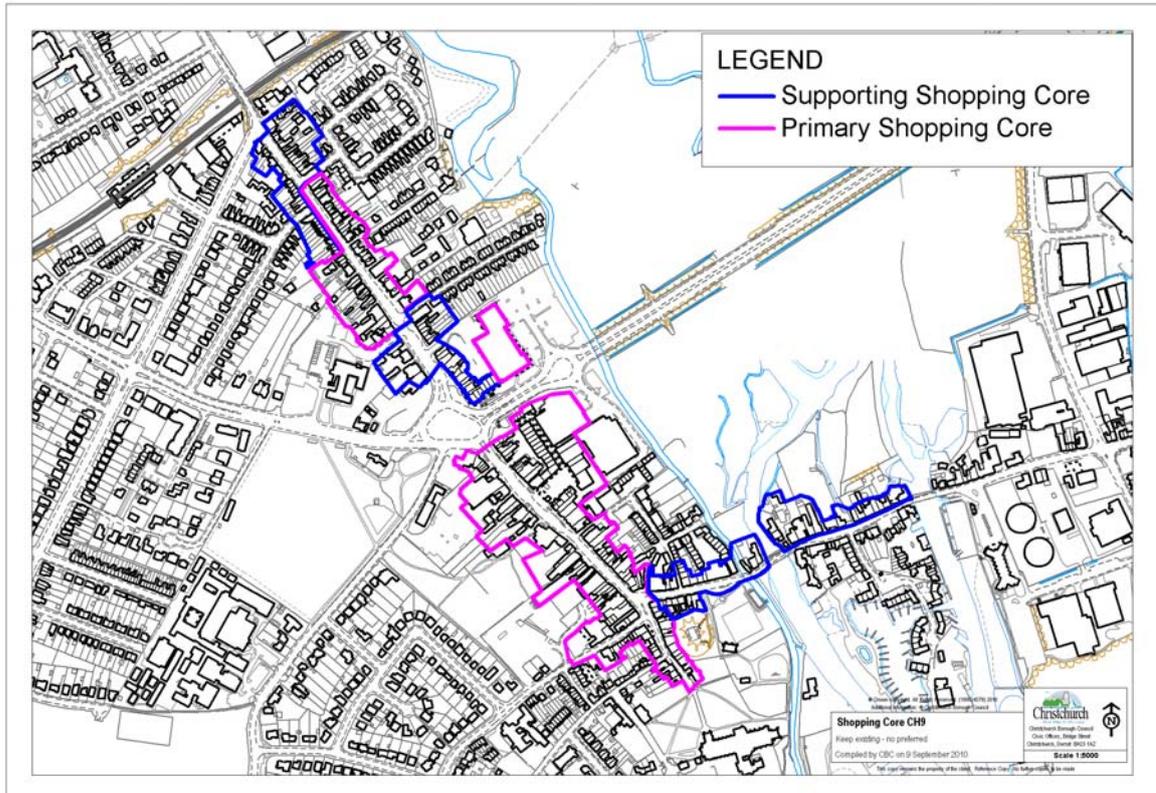
Is it informed by evidence?

In Part

This option reflects part of the recommendation set out in the retail study. The complete recommendation is set out in Option A. It is supported in part by the Joint Retail Assessment (2008).

Non Preferred Option CH 9

To keep the current Shopping Frontage designations.



Why is it not a Preferred Option?

This will not enable further development of cafés and restaurants on Church Street which contribute to the evening economy and town centre vitality as part of a wider strategy that also maximises potential for A1 retail development elsewhere in the town centre. This may adversely affect potential to establish a locally distinctive retail offer.

This option does not include the deletion of Supporting Shopping Frontage after Town Bridge which is not an active retail frontage. Maintaining a secondary shopping frontage in this location also restricts the potential for other uses such as residential.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National	No	Local	No
Is it informed by evidence?			No

The Joint Retail Assessment (2008) makes recommendations for changes in the shopping frontage designations in Christchurch Town Centre in accordance with option CH6.

Highcliffe Centre

Where are we now?

Key Facts

- There is no need for further supermarket floorspace in Highcliffe to 2027 (Joint Retail Assessment 2008)
- Highcliffe Centre can accommodate in the region of 800sqm additional non food retail floorspace to 2027 (Joint Retail Assessment, 2008)
- There is a lack of cafés and restaurants which could contribute to the evening economy
- There is likely to be an increase in demand for services and facilities for the elderly, such as community meeting spaces, medical and social care
- There is a lack of sports/recreation facilities to accommodate the needs of children and young people (Open Space Audit 2007)
- The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment identified potential for 371 new dwellings for Highcliffe and North Highcliffe/Walkford by 2027 (Christchurch Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009)
- The A337 Lymington Road severs the ward into two areas. The route is heavily trafficked, and can suffer congestion during peak rush hours.

Retail Provision

5.23 The main shopping area of Highcliffe is concentrated along Lymington Road and provides for convenience shopping (Somerfields, Tesco Express, butchers, greengrocers and an off licence), small independent shops covering a variety of goods, public houses, restaurants, takeaways and other services. There are 120 outlets in the centre, 48 of which are comparison. The centre's 'Supporting Shopping Core' runs along the Lymington Road frontage, with the secondary Core continuing to run along the road after it's junction with Waterford Road. The centre is well used and there are few vacant units.

5.24 Highcliffe does not require additional supermarket floorspace during the period to 2027. In the Borough as a whole there is a requirement for additional non food retail outlets. Highcliffe has capacity to provide in the region of 800sqm additional non food retail floorspace to 2027. This is significantly less than Christchurch Town Centre which has far more capacity for retail development.

Sports, Leisure and Recreation Facilities

5.25 There are no parks and open spaces within the centre, although the seafront is a short walk away. There are no real opportunities for the provision of additional open space in Highcliffe Centre. In Highcliffe as a whole there is a requirement for amenity green space, active sports space, space for children and young people and allotments.

5.26 Highcliffe has a limited selection of commercial, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities, but this reflects the relatively small catchment population. There is relatively good access to leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities outside of the Borough, particularly in Bournemouth and Poole. The centre is not well served by restaurants and public houses and there is potential for improvement in provision to enhance the vitality of the centre.

Urban Environment

5.27 The Joint Retail Assessment (2008) identifies the quality of the urban environment within this centre as relatively poor.

Transport

5.28 Traffic congestion is also perceived to be a significant issue from traffic along the A337 Lymington Road and this acts as a physical barrier to pedestrians. The Christchurch Parking, Access and Signage Strategy (2006) concludes that existing public car parking is sufficient for the centre generally to meet current and future demand.

Housing

5.29 There is potential for further residential development within the centre and the Core Strategy addresses this within the Key Strategy chapter.

What you said at Issues and Options

Highcliffe Centre	
Priority Centre Uses	Centre Improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail • Recreation/open space • Employment • Uses associated with the evening economy and tourism • Residential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formation of design standards/guidance to improve the streetscape of the town centre • Public transport improvements which will also need to address the issue of pedestrian/vehicular conflict caused by traffic along the A337.

The Options

5.30 Issue: What should the vision be for Highcliffe Centre?

Preferred Option CH 10

Highcliffe Centre Vision

Highcliffe Centre will continue to act as a thriving and busy centre to the local population and visitors. The centre will accommodate further comparison retail floorspace, with Christchurch town centre remaining the principal centre for retail development in the Borough. The shopping environment will be improved to provide a more pleasant townscape, public transport routes supported, and facilities and services will continue to be located in this central location.

To achieve this vision:

1. Retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre. The strategy for Highcliffe will seek to enhance the niche retail offer to attract more visitors with unique, specialist shops.
2. Expansion of evening economy uses such as restaurants/cafés/pubs will be encouraged, especially in the designated secondary shopping cores. This will enhance the vitality of the centre, making it a more vibrant place in the afternoon and evening hours.
3. Better marked/signposted linkages between the Highcliffe beach front and the town centre will draw in more visitors to the centre that will benefit local trade.
4. The townscape quality of the centre will be improved: the objective is to secure a high quality environment that will give the centre a distinct character and enhance its sense of identity.

This will be achieved by providing new street furniture and planting in an effort to create an attractive, welcoming and pedestrian friendly environment. The pedestrian-vehicular conflict, apparent on the A337 Lymington Road will be minimised by the introduction of appropriate traffic calming measures and provision of more frequent pedestrian crossings.

5. High density residential development will take place alongside the projected requirement for retail to provide for a balanced, mixed use environment.
6. To minimise congestion and air pollution, the use of sustainable modes of transport will be encouraged.
7. The Council will ensure that adequate parking levels are maintained within the centre to ensure its vitality and viability.

Why is it the Preferred Option?

- Minimises factors contributing to climate change.
- Promotes vitality and viability of town centre.
- Provides community and cultural facilities.
- Helps meet housing need.
- Improves public transport and transport infrastructure.

Improves town centre urban environment.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

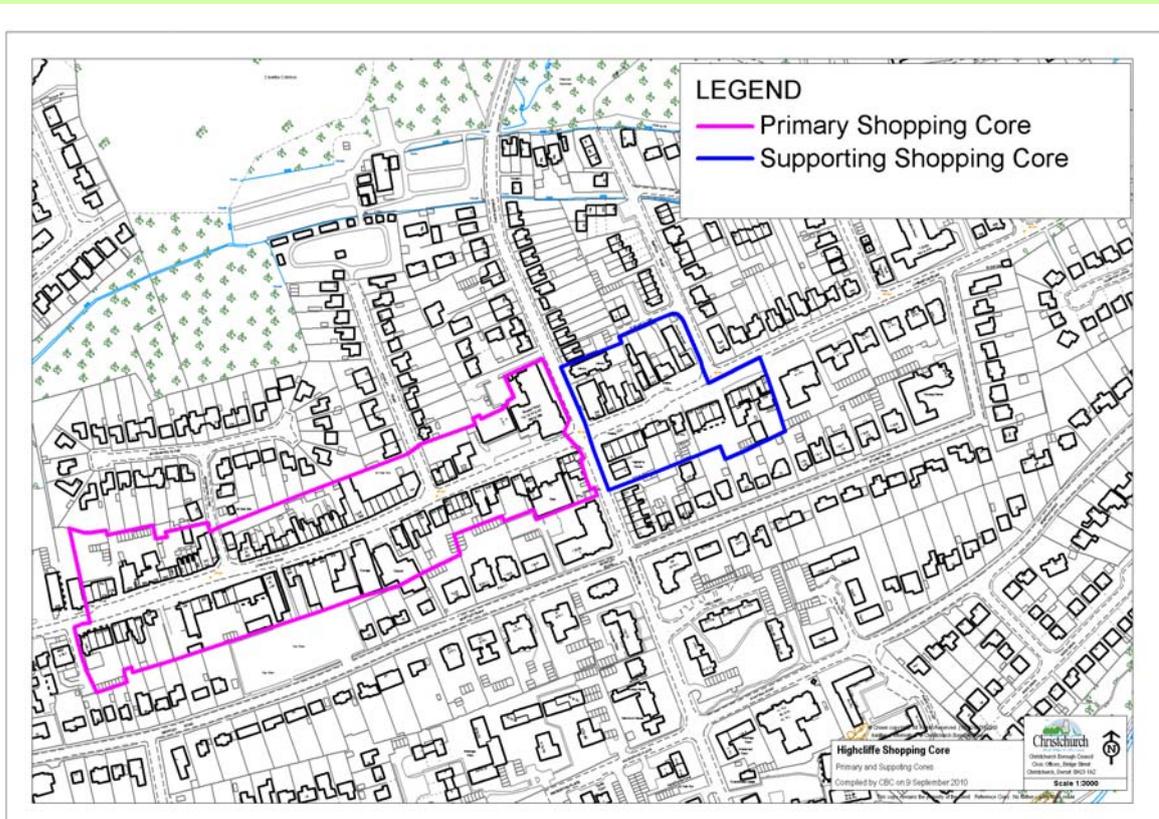
Yes

- Joint Retail Assessment (2008)
- Christchurch Parking, Access and Signing Strategy (2006)
- Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand (Local Authority report for Christchurch, 2008)
- PPG17 Open Space Study (2007)
- Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy and Delivery Plan (2008)

5.31 Issue: What approach should be adopted to guide the location, scale and type of retail development in Highcliffe?

Preferred Option CH 11

In Highcliffe to retain the existing retail frontages



Why is it the Preferred Option?

This option enables the provision of an appropriate range of retail uses to meet the needs of the local community and future needs of the economy.

This option is consistent with recommendations from the evidence base to promote the vitality of Highcliffe Centre

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?

National

Yes

Local

Yes

Is it informed by evidence?

Yes

Joint Retail Assessment (2008).