

## 9 Corfe Mullen Housing and Centre Options

**9.1** This chapter considers a number of important issues for the village of Corfe Mullen. These include:

- Whether there should be new housing, and if so where and how?
- How can we create a better heart to the village?
- How can we improve the provision of open space to encourage residents away from heathlands and increase access to the countryside?

### 9.2 Overview of the village

**9.3** Corfe Mullen is situated on the south western edge of the District. The majority of the settlement is located on the edge of Broadstone and forms part of the outer suburbs of the main Poole and Bournemouth conurbation.

**9.4** The settlement has two distinct parts, with the old village in the north lying in the Stour Valley near the junction of the Blandford Road with the A31(T). The larger, more recent part of the village lies to the south along either side of the Wareham Road on a high plateau and previous planning policy has resisted development spreading down the slopes which flow away from this area of high ground.

### 9.5 Where are we now?

#### Key Facts

- The population of the settlement has grown rapidly over the last 40 years – from 4,590 in 1971 to 10,200 in 2008.
- Corfe Mullen is one of the 25% least deprived areas in the Country.
- The proportion of residents over retirement age is lower than that of the District as a whole, although is above the national average.
- Existing house prices are higher than the District average, which is significantly higher than the national average.
- The village contains one Conservation Area, around Sleight Lane and Brog Street to the north-west of the main built up area.
- The village has a very limited public transport system, and has a very high rate of car ownership, with a correspondingly high level of multiple car ownership per household.

**9.6** The village is set within the South East Dorset Green Belt, which to date has largely contained the settlement on the top of the plateau and has prevented development extending down the slopes to the north, west and south.

### 9.7 The Natural Environment

**9.8** Corfe Mullen lies adjacent to significant areas of protected heathland. The sites that are protected under European legislation, due to their fragility and nature conservation importance, are very sensitive to the impacts of nearby additional residential development. Therefore, housing development is not permitted within 400m of these areas. This has an implication on the areas suitable for residential development, especially within the existing built up area, and the need to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces to reduce the pressure of existing and proposed residential development on these sensitive areas.

### **9.9 Existing Retail, Community Facilities Provision and Future Requirements.**

**9.10** The village itself has limited facilities, but those required to support the community are near at hand in Broadstone and Poole. Shopping facilities are limited for the size of the settlement and are found in two small clusters at the northern and southern ends of Wareham Road.

**9.11** Modern Corfe Mullen is an outer suburb of the south east Dorset conurbation. It contains two small areas of shops at the northern and southern ends of Wareham Road, which is the main road which passes north-south through the settlement. The northern group also contains a range of community facilities. This area forms the main centre, although one which is relatively modest for a settlement of this size.

**9.12** Consultants have advised that the settlement has the capacity to accommodate another retail store, which would provide predominantly food with some comparison goods floorspace.

### **9.13 Sports and Recreation**

**9.14** In 2007 the Council commissioned a Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 Survey of Open Space, Sport and Recreation. The study concluded that the north of the village around the Recreation Ground and Lockyer's School has the large majority of facilities. These are to a high standard, yet for many residents in the centre or south of the village, are considered inaccessible by foot and require car transport. There is an area of informal open space at the southern end of the village, off Springdale Road, but this has a high nature conservation interest which limits the recreational use of the land. There are few areas of open space within the main built up part of the village.

### **9.15 Education**

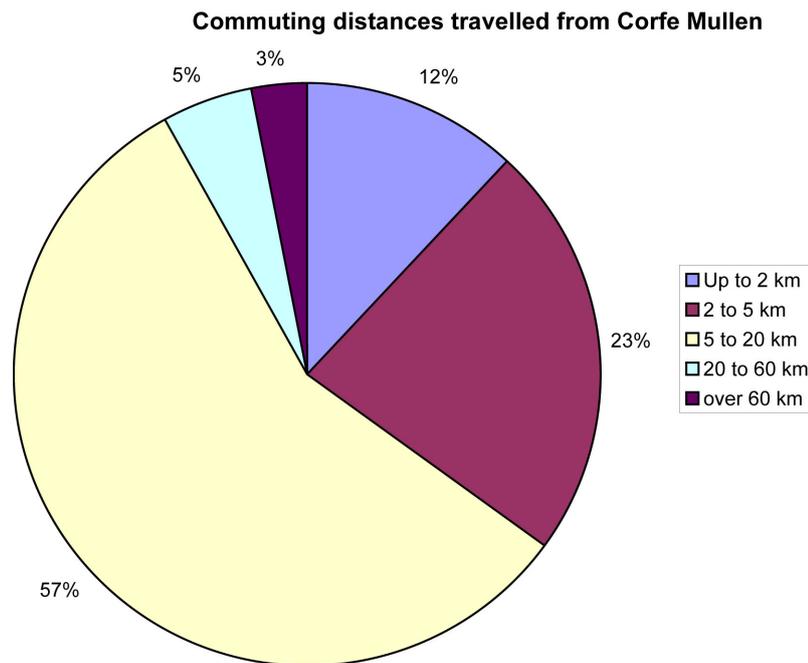
**9.16** Additional residential development in Corfe Mullen will have implications for school provision within the village. Lockyer's Middle School is currently under-subscribed and the site has the capacity for redevelopment to accommodate additional pupils. There is also the possibility that the current school site could be redeveloped for alternative uses and the school re-built elsewhere in the village. The two First Schools have some capacity to accommodate additional pupils. Corfe Hills Upper School has very little additional capacity, and due to its location immediately adjacent to protected heathland has no potential for expansion. Q.E School in Wimborne also has no capacity for a significant number of additional pupils.

### **9.17 Transport**

**9.18** The village is poorly served by public transport, but has good road links to the conurbation and the A31(T). The 2001 Census identified that 86% of commuters were car drivers or passengers.

### **9.19 Employment**

**9.20** There are very few employment opportunities within the settlement, with only one small site at Cogdean Elms to the north of the village. Only 22% of the workforce in Corfe Mullen lived and worked in the village according to the 2001 Census. About 37% worked in Poole, 14% elsewhere in East Dorset and 10% in Bournemouth.



## The Housing Debate

**9.21** The Key Strategy Chapter of this document sets out the over-arching issues relating to the provision of additional residential development within the Plan area by way of the need for new neighbourhoods to existing settlements and the justification for amending the Green Belt boundary. It has been recognised for many years that there is a significant need to provide affordable housing in East Dorset. This is because house prices are high compared to wages, the number of public sector homes is very low and there are consequently a large number of residents who cannot afford to live in the private sector and cannot access appropriate affordable housing. The Council recognises this problem and, therefore, considers it necessary to put forward new neighbourhood options for communities to comment upon.

**9.22** An area of search was identified on the edge of Corfe Mullen within the draft Regional Spatial Strategy to provide, in conjunction with two other areas, 2,400 new homes. The Regional Spatial Strategy has now been abandoned, so the specific requirement to build this number of homes no longer exists. However, the accessibility to services, facilities and employment opportunities means that Corfe Mullen is proposed as a Main Settlement within Chapter 3 of this Strategy. This status means that the village is considered an appropriate place to consider housing options to help meet the local needs of the District.

### 9.23 Key Issue

- Can sites for new neighbourhoods on the edge of the existing village be provided in a sustainable form so as to add to the vitality and viability of the village and if so, where and how?

**9.24** 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 development options contained in this chapter please refer to the following documents:

- Corfe Mullen Area Profile (2010)
- East Dorset Housing Options Master Plan Report(2010)
- East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2008 and 2009)
- Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand (2008)
- Corfe Mullen Focus Group (2008)
- Corfe Mullen Parish Plan (2006)

**9.25** For supporting information regarding the need for, and provision of, open spaces to support these options please refer to the following documents:

- Protecting the Natural Environment Key Issue Paper.
- Improving Sports and Leisure Facilities Key Issue Paper.

## **9.26 Rules, Regulations and Advice**

### **9.27 National**

**9.28** The Government's key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. (PPS3)

**9.29** The specific outcomes that the planning system should deliver are:

- High quality housing that is well-designed and built to a high standard.
- A mix of housing, both market and affordable, particularly in terms of tenure and price, to support a wide variety of households in all areas, both urban and rural.
- Housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.

**9.30** Bring forward sufficient land of a suitable quality in appropriate locations to meet the expected needs for housing, .... taking into account issues such as accessibility and sustainable transport needs, the provision of essential infrastructure, including for sustainable waste management, and the need to avoid flood risk and other natural hazards. (PPS1)

### **9.31 Local**

#### **9.32 *Dorset Community Strategy***

**9.33** The main issue facing the south-east part of the County is how to reconcile the pressures to improve prosperity and meet demands for housing with the need to conserve and enhance the internationally and nationally recognised environmental quality of the area.

**9.34** Dorset's economy is affected by the housing market. Locally the shortage of affordable homes can lead to recruitment and retention problems.

**9.35** With a growing number of older people there will be an increased demand for accessible and supported housing.

#### **9.36 *East Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy***

**9.37** Ensure that any new homes address in particular the need for affordable housing and are developed and built with adequate community facilities and associated infrastructure so that there is minimal impact on the environment and quality of life of existing communities.

**9.38** Support the provision of increased affordable housing opportunities for young people in order that they can have the same opportunities to live and work within their own local communities.

**9.39** Support initiatives which seek to ensure families are appropriately housed near to services they require.

### **9.40 What you said at Issues and Options**

**9.41** The Issues and Options consultation asked specific questions relating to the development of an urban extension within an area of search to the north and west of the village set out within the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy. This has now been abandoned, but the responses are still relevant to the consideration of how we provide homes to meet the local needs of the District.

#### 9.42 Where should the development go?

- The vast majority of respondents objected to the principle of urban extensions and development in the Green Belt and wanted to see no further expansion of Corfe Mullen.
- A significant proportion objected to development in the visually attractive Waterloo Valley.
- Objectors considered that the proposed figure of 700 new dwellings was too high for the village and its existing infrastructure to cope with.
- Access from Pardy's Hill to serve development in the Waterloo Valley would be a problem as it is too steep and there are limited opportunities to create accesses from elsewhere.
- A number of respondents suggested land to the south of the village as possibly suitable for development, if land had to be released. (However, all the land in question is within 400m of heathland so is not suitable for residential development, and much of it is also outside of the District)
- Land around and including Lockyer's School was proposed as a suitable location for more limited development.

#### 9.43 Do you think Lockyer's School should be considered as part of the urban extension?

- About half of the respondents suggested the school should be rebuilt on its current site and not be considered for housing.
- The remaining half thought the school should be rebuilt on the Recreation Ground, where the sports fields can be shared, and the existing site can be redeveloped for housing.
- A significant number of those who considered the school's redevelopment was acceptable wished to see the original, older school buildings retained for some sort of community use.
- There were two main other locations as to where the school could be relocated to – as part of the Corfe Hills School complex (which is within the Borough of Poole) or to the southern end of the Waterloo Valley.

#### 9.44 What other facilities and transport improvements does Corfe Mullen need to support development?

- A significant number of respondents suggested that the village would need better road links to the conurbation and that the A31(T) needed substantial improvement, such as dualling it from Ferndown to its junction with the A350.
- Better public transport links, to places of employment in particular.
- More shops of all kinds, including banks and retain the existing Post Offices.
- More health facilities, especially dentists and doctors.
- Employment opportunities.
- More schools.
- Facilities and entertainment for young people.
- Allotments, green spaces.
- Footpaths and cycleways, affordable housing.

#### 9.45 Corfe Mullen Parish Plan (2006)

**9.46** The residents of Corfe Mullen produced a Parish Plan in 2006 following wide –ranging discussions with local residents and other interested parties. This document was produced at the same time as the draft Regional Spatial Strategy identified Corfe Mullen. This led to significant local objection, which is reflected in the conclusions of the Parish Plan, which opposes the 700 dwellings proposed in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

**9.47** The Parish Plan sets out a wide range of facilities identified as needed by local residents, although on housing, the only action point relates to the opposition to the Regional Spatial Strategy proposals. The main issues relate to health and leisure (an additional NHS Dentist, retain the library and the post offices, and create more areas for nature conservation within the Green Belt and better footpath and cycleways),

- Environment: Preserve the Green Belt, especially down the Waterloo Valley, create more facilities for walkers and cyclists within the existing built up area as well as creating more access into the countryside, and improve recycling.
- Youth and education: Concerns about the 2-tier/3-tier debate and the future of the existing schools, possibility of a school site being used for affordable housing, life long learning opportunities, youth café/meeting place and safe routes to school.
- Infrastructure: Concerns about the volume and speed of traffic through the village, support to retain the bus service through the village and seek information relating to the need for more employment opportunities.

#### **9.48 Issues and Options Consultation – Corfe Mullen Focus Group (2008)**

##### **9.49 Housing**

- We should recognise local identity.
- Do not want 700 houses in one location.
- Houses should have enough space within them, and have sufficient gardens, to allow for normal family life.
- Density should be 25 – 30 dwellings per hectare.
- Shortage of specialist housing for the elderly and disabled.
- Issues of gradient across the village.
- Safe walkways need to be built into the scheme.

##### **9.50 Lockyer's School**

- Raised many issues over the future of education provision in Corfe Mullen and that a strategic decision is needed in order to logically consider school sites and provision.
- Mixed opinion/open minded about moving the School from its current site.
- If the school is relocated, the original school building is seen as important to the village and should be preserved.
- The site could be used to give a heart to the village.
- There could be a joint use of the existing Recreation Ground playing fields with the school to free up land for development.

##### **9.51 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment**

**9.52** This was carried out in 2008 and 2009, and considered how many homes could be built within the existing built area of the Corfe Mullen. It identified that 130 new homes could be provided over a 15 year period, although this assessment will have to be revisited in the light of the Coalition Governments recent announcements on 'garden grabbing' and densities.

#### **Consideration of Options**

**9.53** The following considers further options for new housing which includes land within the existing South East Dorset Green Belt.

**9.54** The Council, before the Regional Spatial Strategy was revoked, engaged a firm of consultants to prepare master plans for the three urban extensions proposed in East Dorset as part of its evidence base to inform the Core Strategy. This work has been amended to reflect the abandonment of the Regional Spatial Strategy. The consultants have now been asked to identify reasonable options for the provision of new homes at the Main Settlements in the District, taking into account:

- The environmental impact.
- The impact on the purposes of the Green Belt.
- Infrastructure capacity, including access.

- The opportunity to support and improve services and facilities.
- The effect on local communities.

**9.55** This has involved an assessment of areas promoted by landowners for development as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The fact that the land has been promoted means that if options are taken forward they are likely to be deliverable. However, this must be balanced with the need to create sustainable communities and not all of the locations being promoted will meet sustainability objectives.

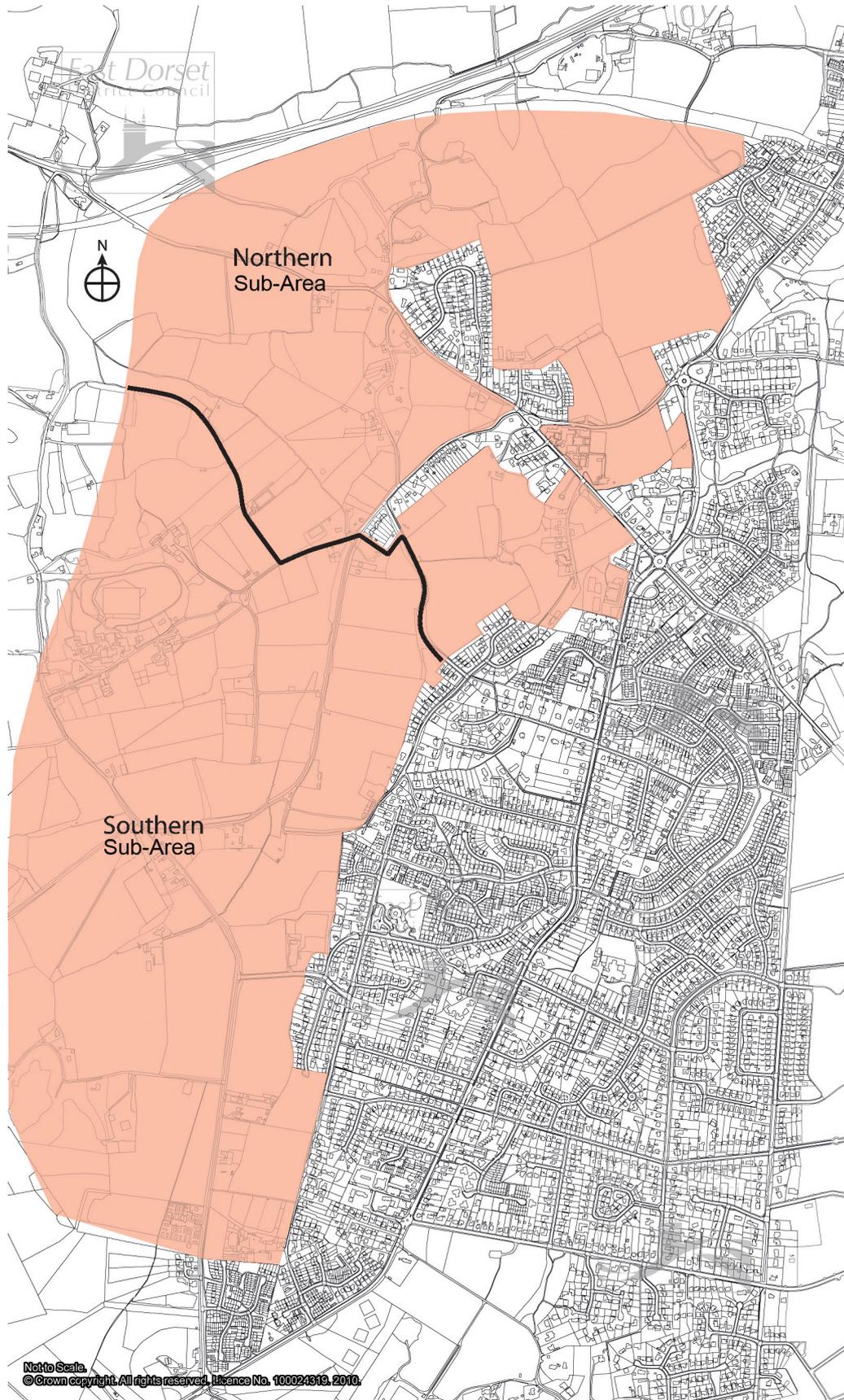
**9.56** The options put forward include a range of sizes, including some that are too small to normally be considered within a Core Strategy. However, they are included at this stage in order to provide information about whether comprehensive strategic planning scenarios are required for the area, involving transport, green spaces, provision of facilities and any necessary changes to Green Belt boundaries.

**9.57** For more detail on the assessment of options please refer to:

- East Dorset Housing Options Masterplan Report (2010).

#### **9.58** Area of Search

**9.59** The Corfe Mullen area of search covers a large swathe of land (approximately 260ha) to north and west of the settlement. The area mostly comprises valley/countryside and extends up from Upton Heath and Beacon Hill, through the Waterloo Valley. At its northernmost point the land slopes steeply down to the A31(T). The area of search also covers the recreation fields to the north of the settlement as well as land adjacent to the cemetery. Much of the southern extent of the area of search lies within a 400m Buffer Zone of the nearby heathland. The area of search also contains four internationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and a small area of flood zone. These are examined in more detail later in the report.



### 9.60 Refined Areas of Search

9.61 The area of search has been broken down into two sub-areas (northern and southern). They are appraised briefly below:

#### 9.62 *Northern sub-area*

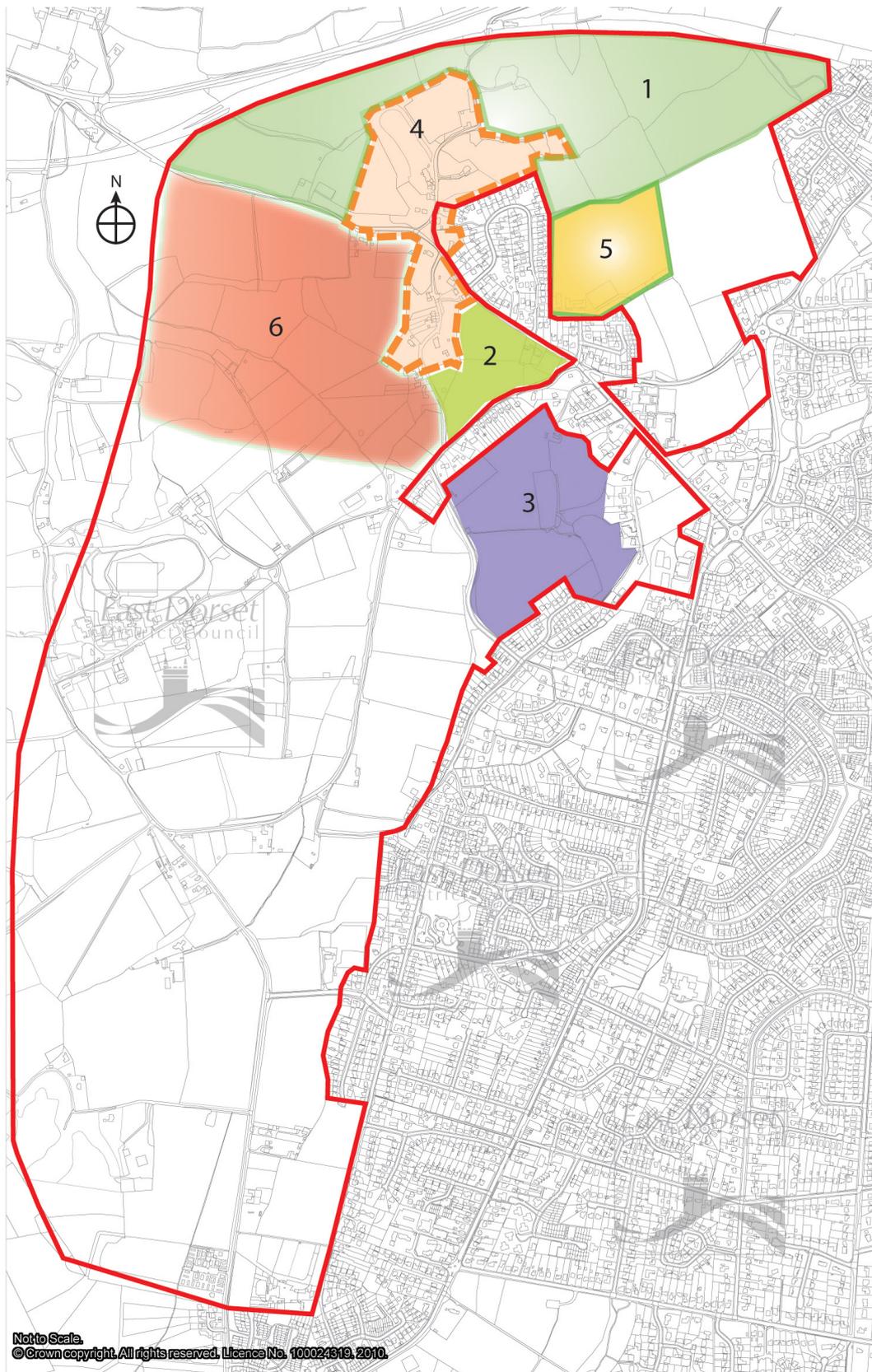
9.63 Large parts of this sub-area lie close to the village centre, though walking and cycling is not always attractive due to the steep gradients to the west. The area has no major environmental designations or coalescence issues.

#### 9.64 *Southern sub-area*

9.65 Although close to some limited facilities in the south of the village, this area is quite remote from the main facilities in the north. The main issue in this area is the plethora of major environmental designations, many of which prohibit or restrict development. These include Special Protection Areas, SSSIs, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and the Area of Great Landscape Value. *This area should not be considered for development.*

### 9.66 Site Specific Constraints

9.67 Parts of the northern sub-area that lie close to the urban edge are identified as appropriate locations for further consideration. The bullet points (number referenced to the attached plan) identify land areas within these locations that we consider are unsuitable for development.



### 9.68 Landscape

1. Land to the north of the recreation grounds falls away steeply and is visible from a wide area/distance. Development here should be discounted.

2. Land south of Blandford Road and west of Pardy's Hill has low landscape capacity and has views down the Waterloo Valley. It also has poor access and steep gradients between it and the village facilities. This area should be discounted.
3. Land to the east of Haywards Lane has only a medium landscape capacity and is, therefore, not wholly suitable for built development. Furthermore, development here could affect views down the Waterloo Valley. In addition, connections to the town are via a steep gradient and it is, therefore, not easily accessible. This area should be discounted.

#### 9.69 *Environmental and conservation designations*

4. Slight Lane/Brog Street conservation area should be protected from any further development. This area should be discounted.

#### 9.70 *Land use*

5. The western half of the formal recreational ground in the north of the settlement, (comprising the pavilion, tennis courts and formal pitches) should be retained. This area should be discounted for development. However, the eastern field is less formal and could be considered for development, subject to the appropriate replacement of facilities elsewhere.

#### 9.71 *Other*

6. Land to the south of Blandford Road and west of Slight Lane is relatively disconnected from the remainder of the village, in particular the village centre. Topography is also an issue here. This area should be discounted.

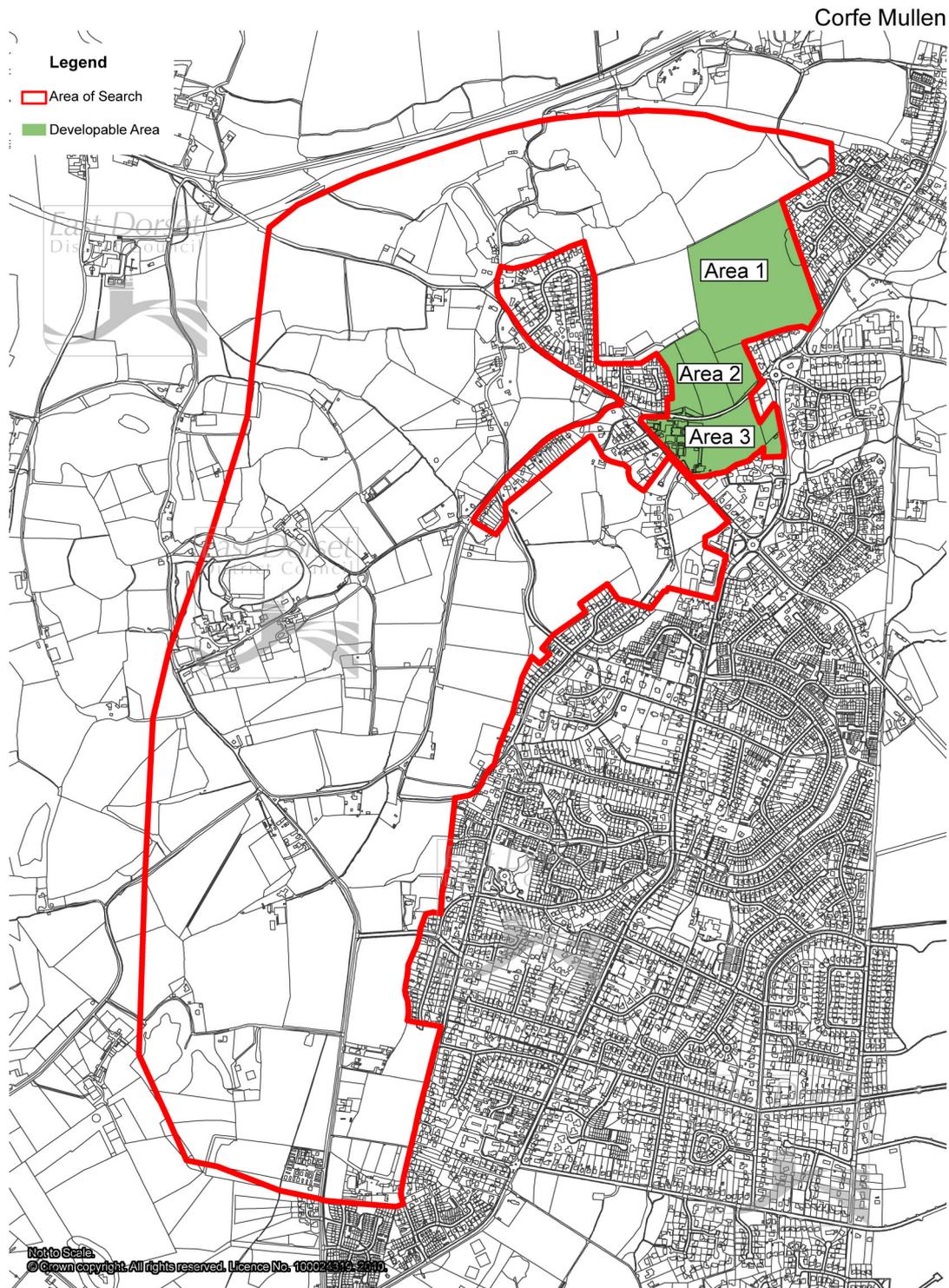
#### 9.72 Sites Assessed as Suitable for Consideration

1. Land off Violet Farm Close
2. Lockyers School
3. Eastern part of recreation ground

#### 9.73 Infrastructure Requirements/ Thresholds

9.74 The following social and community infrastructure could be required as part of the development of this area:

- Local shops (including 2,000 sqm convenience store – as set out in retail report)
- Replacement middle (primary) school for Lockyers
- Open space (between 3.03ha and 6.06ha)
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (between 6.46ha and 25.82ha)
- Possible Combined Heat and Power plant



### 9.75 Common Requirements

9.76 All of the options will require:

9.77 Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces will need to be provided in perpetuity to mitigate the impact of people on nearby heathlands, with provision phased in advance of the occupation of dwellings on the site.

9.78 If new neighbourhoods are provided it will be expected that at least 40% of the new homes will be affordable i.e social rented or shared equity.

9.79 The Green Belt boundary to be revised to incorporate necessary land into the urban area of Corfe Mullen required for development.

**9.80** Progress of any option will need to take into account amongst many factors:

- Mix of house types and densities
- Open space and play space provision
- Design
- Access and movement

### **Reasonable Options for Consideration**

#### **9.81 *Lockyers School***

- The site should be considered for housing and community facilities (e.g. shops)
- The potential relocation of the school will need to be considered. This could be located to site 1 or a site elsewhere within or on the edge of the village.
- North-south connections will need to be promoted through the site.
- The old school building will need to be retained – key landmark.

### Option CM 1

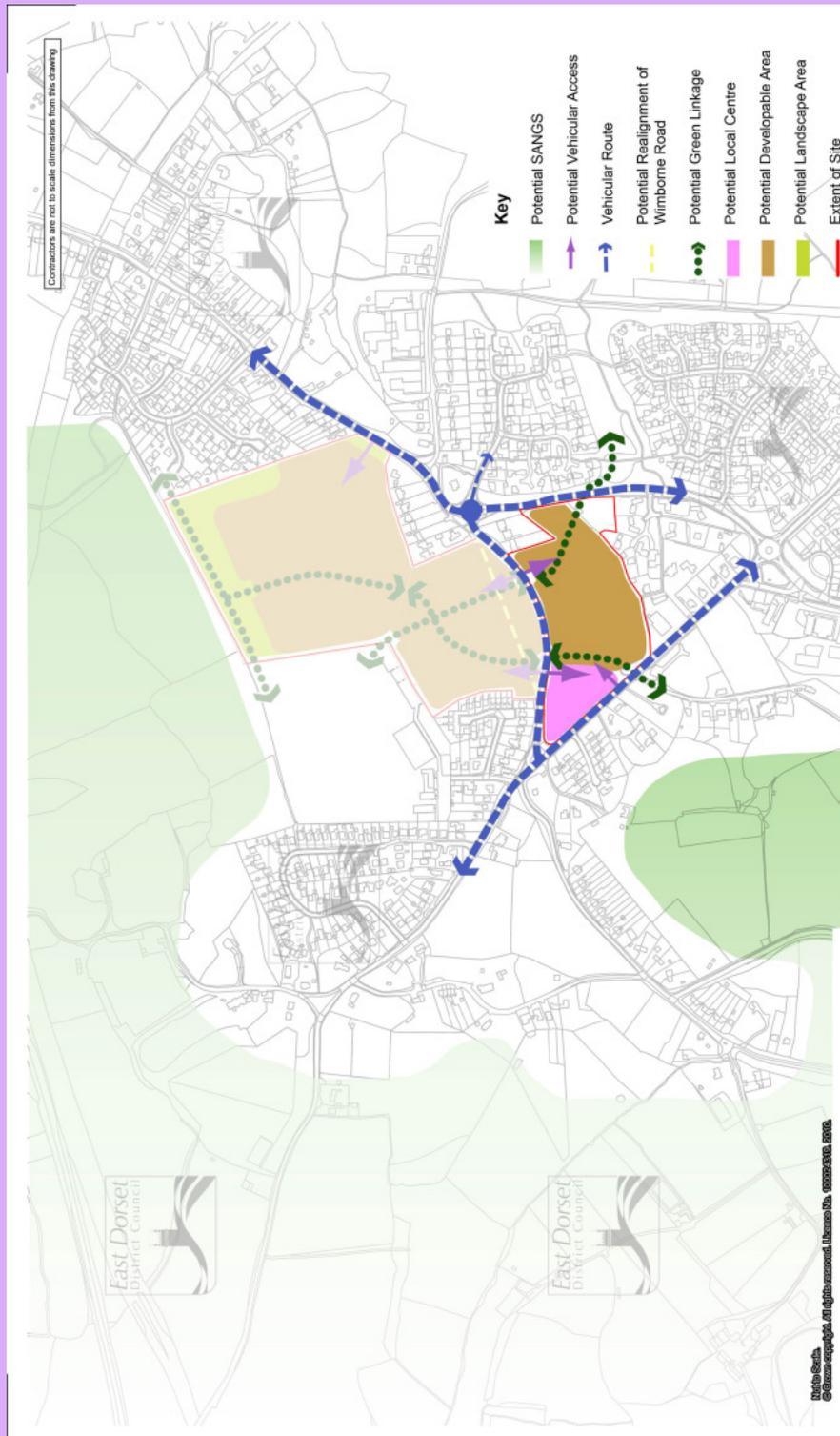
Development could take place on land on the northern edge of the existing village involving the majority of the existing Lockyer's Middle School site.

This could involve:

- Redevelopment, or relocation of Lockyer's School.
- The provision of new retail and community facilities.
- The provision of about 80 homes.

The development of this option would be dependent on:

- The redevelopment of Lockyer's School or relocation elsewhere in the village if required by the Education Authority.



### Why is it an Option?

This option does not involve Green Belt land unless the School would need to be relocated.

The option provides an opportunity to meet some of the local housing needs.

This is a good location in terms of accessibility to important services, facilities and work opportunities.

The development could provide valuable green infrastructure that would benefit residents and divert pressures away from heathlands.

The option offers the opportunity to create a distinctive centre for the village.

The option provides the opportunity to improve school facilities.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?			
National	Yes	Local	Yes
Is it informed by evidence?			Yes

The East Dorset and Christchurch Housing Needs and Demands Surveys (2008)

The East Dorset and Christchurch Housing Market Assessment (2008)

The East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009)

East Dorset Housing Options Master Plan Report (2010)

**9.82 Land off Violet Farm Close**

- The site should be considered for housing
- The allotments will need to be relocated elsewhere within the village (possibly to a location nearby or in the Waterloo Valley).
- Access through the site will need to be provided. This will help provide access to the recreation ground to the north - for any potential housing or school.

## Option CM 2

Development could take place on land on the northern edge of the existing village involving land east of Violet Farm Close (See plan in Option CM1).

This could involve:

- The provision of about 80 homes.

The development of this option would be dependent on:

- The suitable relocation of the allotments to other location(s) within the village.



### Why is it an Option?

The option provides an opportunity to meet some of the local housing needs.

This is a good location in terms of accessibility to important services, facilities and work opportunities.

The development could provide valuable green infrastructure that would benefit residents and divert pressures away from heathlands.

Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?			
National	Yes	Local	Yes
Is it informed by evidence?			Yes
The East Dorset and Christchurch Housing Needs and Demands Surveys (2008)			
The East Dorset and Christchurch Housing Market Assessment (2008)			
The East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009)			
East Dorset Housing Options Master Plan Report (2010)			

### 9.83 *Eastern part of the recreation ground*

- This site should be considered for housing and open space
- The recreation provision should be relocated elsewhere within the village (e.g. possibly within Waterloo Valley or south of the village off Wareham Road). This would help balance the provision across the village.
- Development should be set back from the ridge line.
- The site may need to accommodate a relocated school (Lockyers), though this could potentially be relocated elsewhere in or on the edge of the village.
- Access onto, and the role of, Wimborne Road will be important.

### Option CM 3

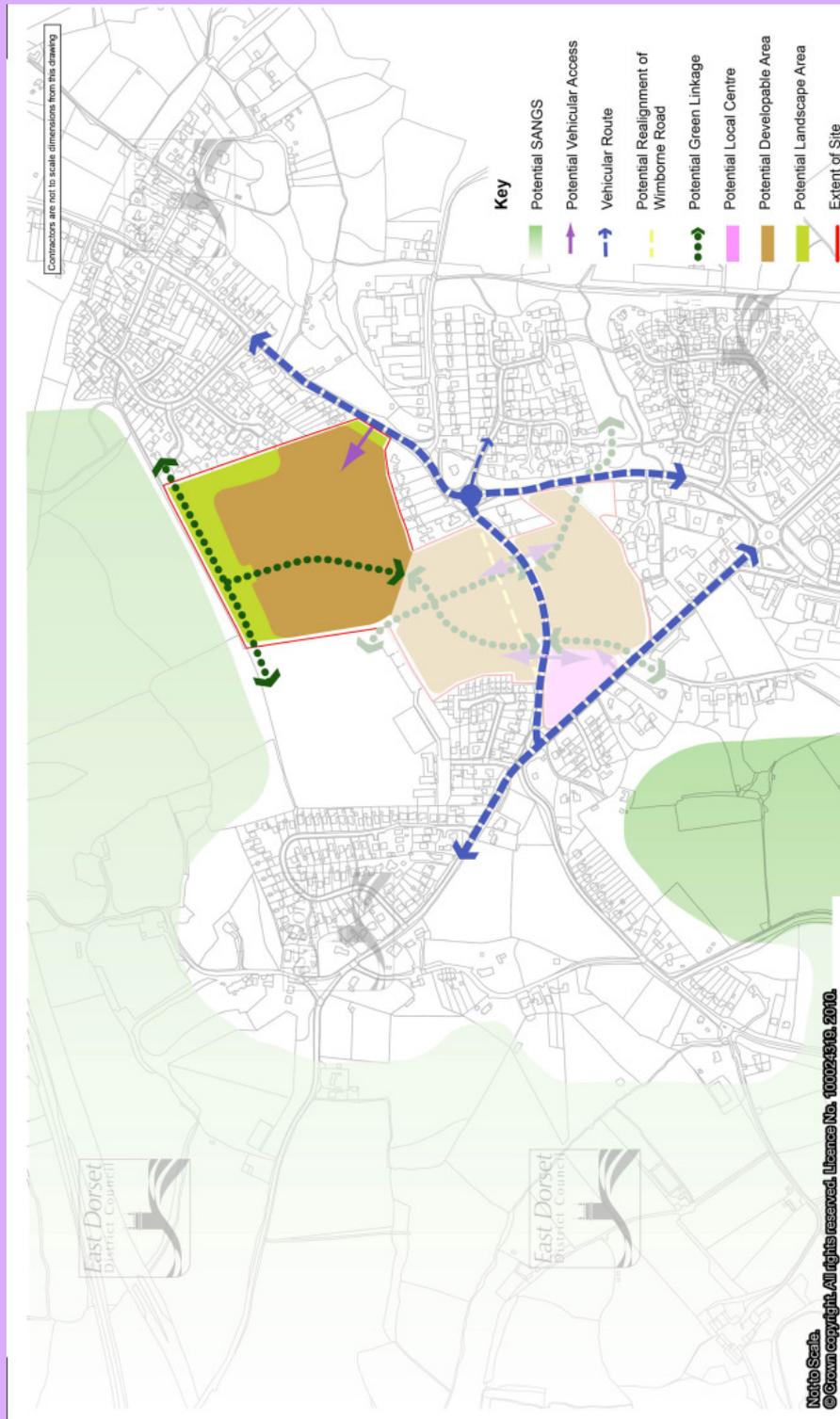
Development could take place on land on the northern edge of the existing village involving the eastern end of the Recreation Ground (See plan in Option CM1).

This could involve:

- The provision of about 150 homes.

The development of this option would be dependent on:

- The suitable relocation of recreational facilities to elsewhere in the village.



### Why is it an Option?

The option provides an opportunity to meet some of the local housing needs.

This is a good location in terms of accessibility to important services, facilities and work opportunities.

The development could provide valuable green infrastructure that would benefit residents and divert pressures away from heathlands.

The option provides the opportunity to redistribute formal open space, so that the southern end of the village has more accessible facilities.

**Does it conform to the rules, regulations and advice?**

**National**

**Yes**

**Local**

**Yes**

**Is it informed by evidence?**

**Yes**

The East Dorset and Christchurch Housing Needs and Demands Surveys (2008)

The East Dorset and Christchurch Housing Market Assessment (2008)

The East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009)

East Dorset Housing Options Master Plan Report (2010)