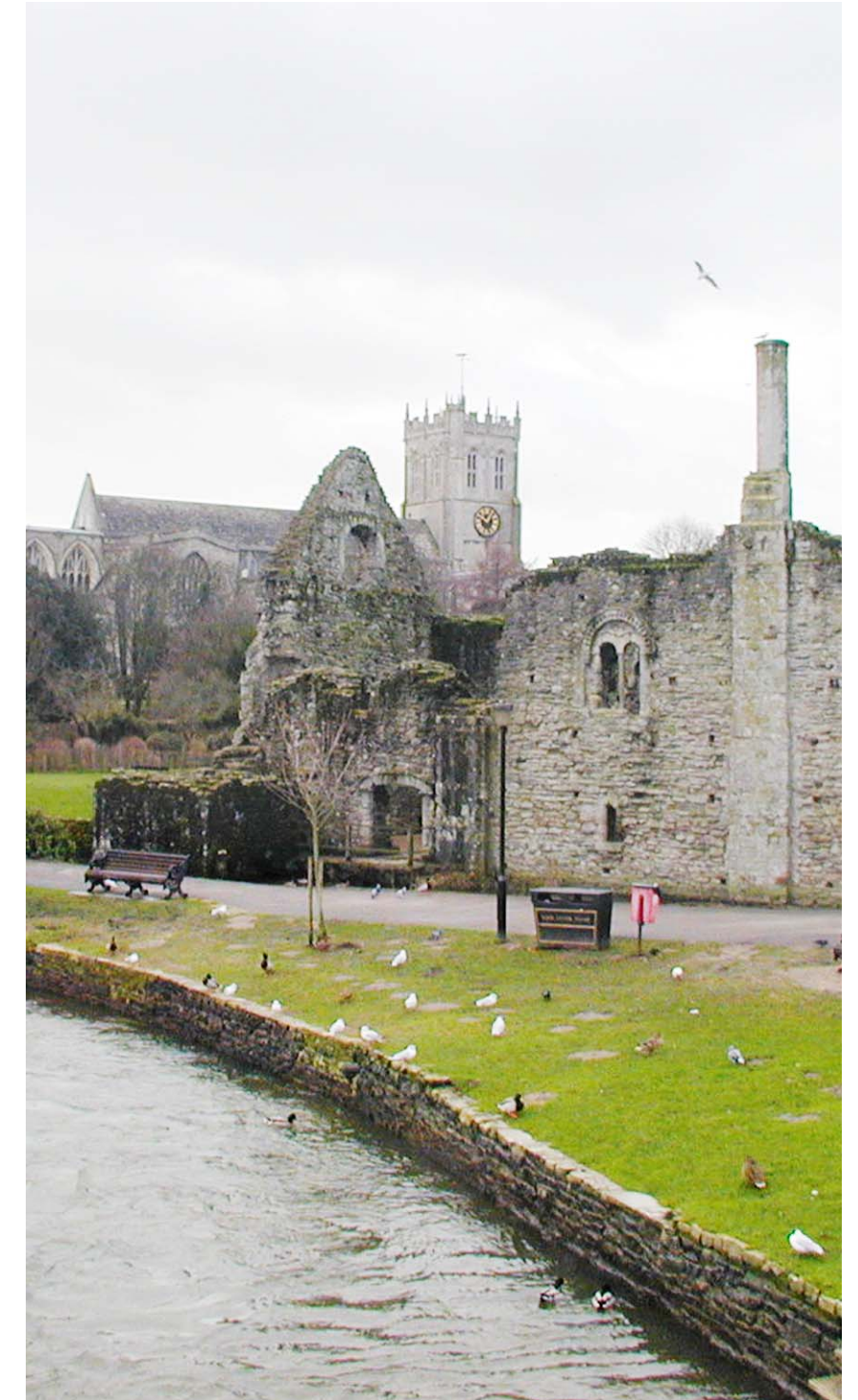
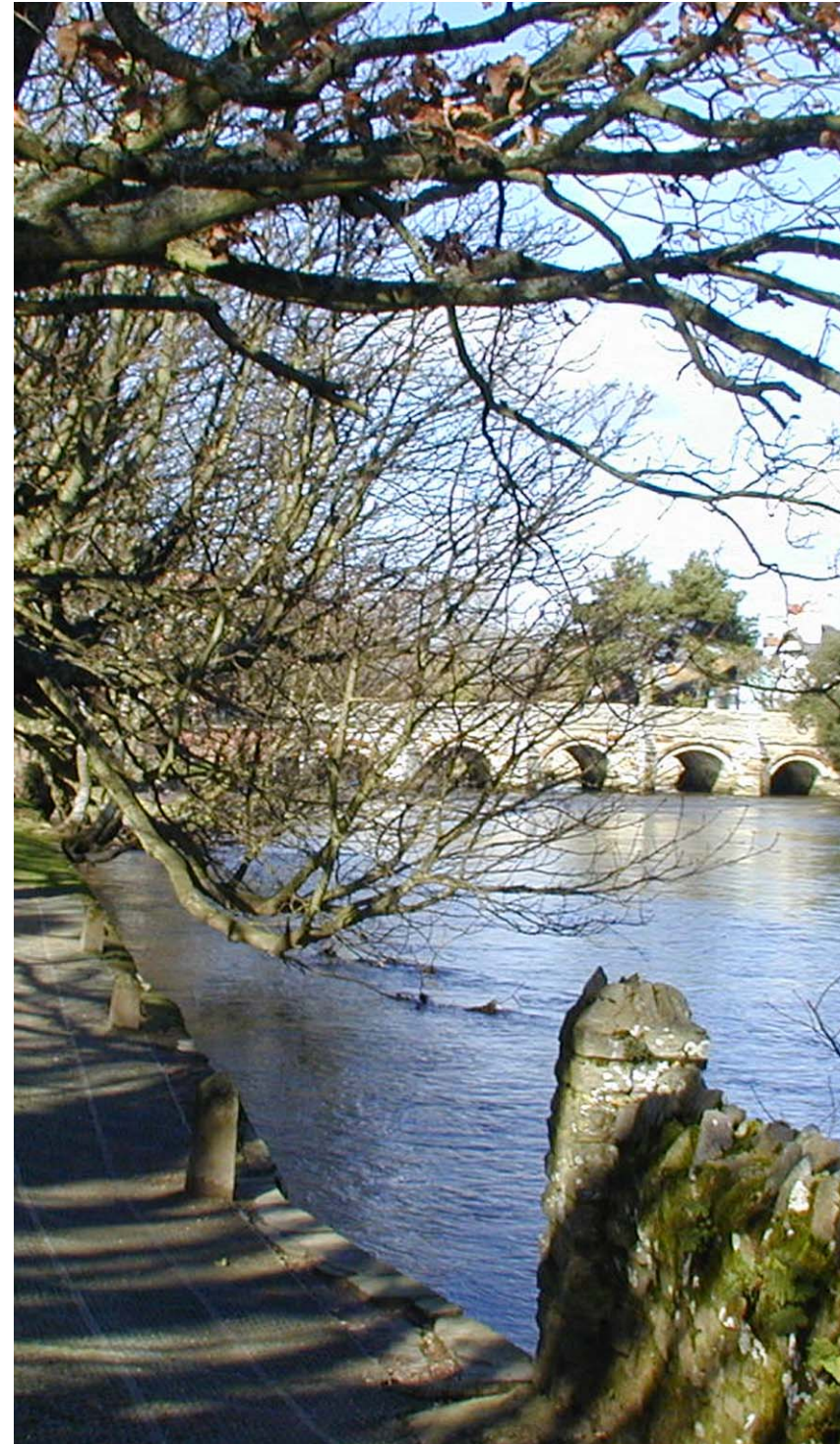


Christchurch Town Centre Strategy



Christchurch Town Centre Strategy

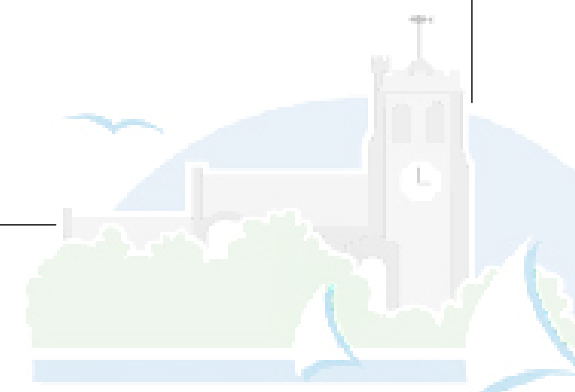
Prepared by
DTZ Piedad Consulting
In association with
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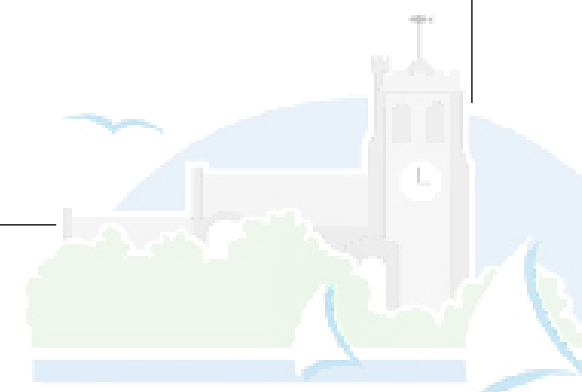
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1.0 Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 DTZ was commissioned in February 2002 by Christchurch Borough Council to undertake a three part consultancy appointment:
- a Borough-wide Character Assessment;
 - a Town Centre Strategy; and
 - a Development Brief for the Former Magistrates Court Site.
- 1.2 The brief for the Town Centre Strategy has recognised the likelihood of a number of significant development opportunities being realised during the course of the next few years.
- 1.3 The establishment of the Town Centre Forum in July 2000, and the SWOT analysis it undertook at that time, recognised that new development opportunities needed to be carefully handled to ensure that the future strength of the town centre should be built on its heritage assets and that these need to be protected and enhanced.
- 1.4 This is further emphasised by English Heritage's concern that the archaeologically rich landscape of the Borough needs to form the basis for decisions regarding potential impact on the historic character and sense of place of the town centre.
- 1.5 It is also significant that the study has been supported by Dorset County Council, who have highway and significant property interests in the town, the Dorset Police Authority who have important property interests in the Former Magistrates Court Site and SWERDA, who have regeneration and environmental interests for South-West England.

The Study Area

- 1.6 Figure 1.1 defines the study area. It is bounded in the north by the railway line and Christchurch Station, to the west by Stour Road, the recreation ground, Twynham Comprehensive School and playing fields, to the south by Willow Drive and the River Stour, including the public water frontages of the Quomps and Priory Quay and to the east runs north along the River Avon, incorporates the Bridge Street/Stony Lane sites and continues to follow the

River Avon to meet the railway line on the eastern edge of Bargates.

- 1.7 Christchurch Central Conservation Area, designated in 1969, enlarged in 1975 and amended in 1991, occupies a substantial part of the study area. There is also the Avon Buildings Conservation Area designated in 1991, a small area located in the centre of Bargates with open views of the River Avon and water meadows. (See Figure 1.1)

Objectives

- 1.8 The brief sets out the following key objectives:
- to clarify a vision for the development of the town centre over the next 20 years;
 - to provide a framework to accommodate change whilst protecting the range of high quality heritage assets;
 - to examine and make proposals for improvements to the existing transportation network;
 - to enhance present levels of vitality and viability;
 - to provide a response to PPG6;
 - to inform preparation of a Community Plan/Strategy, together with reviews of the Structure Plan and Local Plan (but taking into consideration likely changes to the planning system as presently being advanced by the Government); and
 - to assist bids for public sector external funding and to attract private sector investments.

- 1.9 In order to address the main objectives of the strategy, DTZ has necessarily worked in partnership with Christchurch Borough Council, Dorset County Council, Dorset Police Authority and South West England Regional Development Agency (SWERDA). Indeed, at inception, a client working group of key politicians and officers of Christchurch Borough Council, Dorset County Council and SWERDA was created to work closely with the DTZ team. This has meant that all stages of the strategy process have been founded on the client working group's in-house expertise and knowledge of the local area.

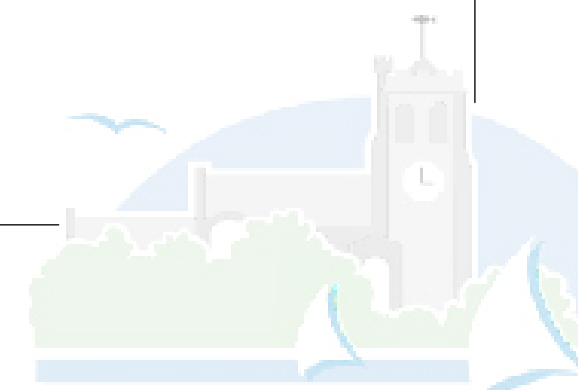
- 1.10 DTZ's analysis of the development potential of the retail core is grounded in market reality and draws on their wider expertise and involvement in the property market. DTZ has undertaken an assessment of property market trends at national and local levels, as well as a preliminary review of retail and business demand for representation in Christchurch town centre.

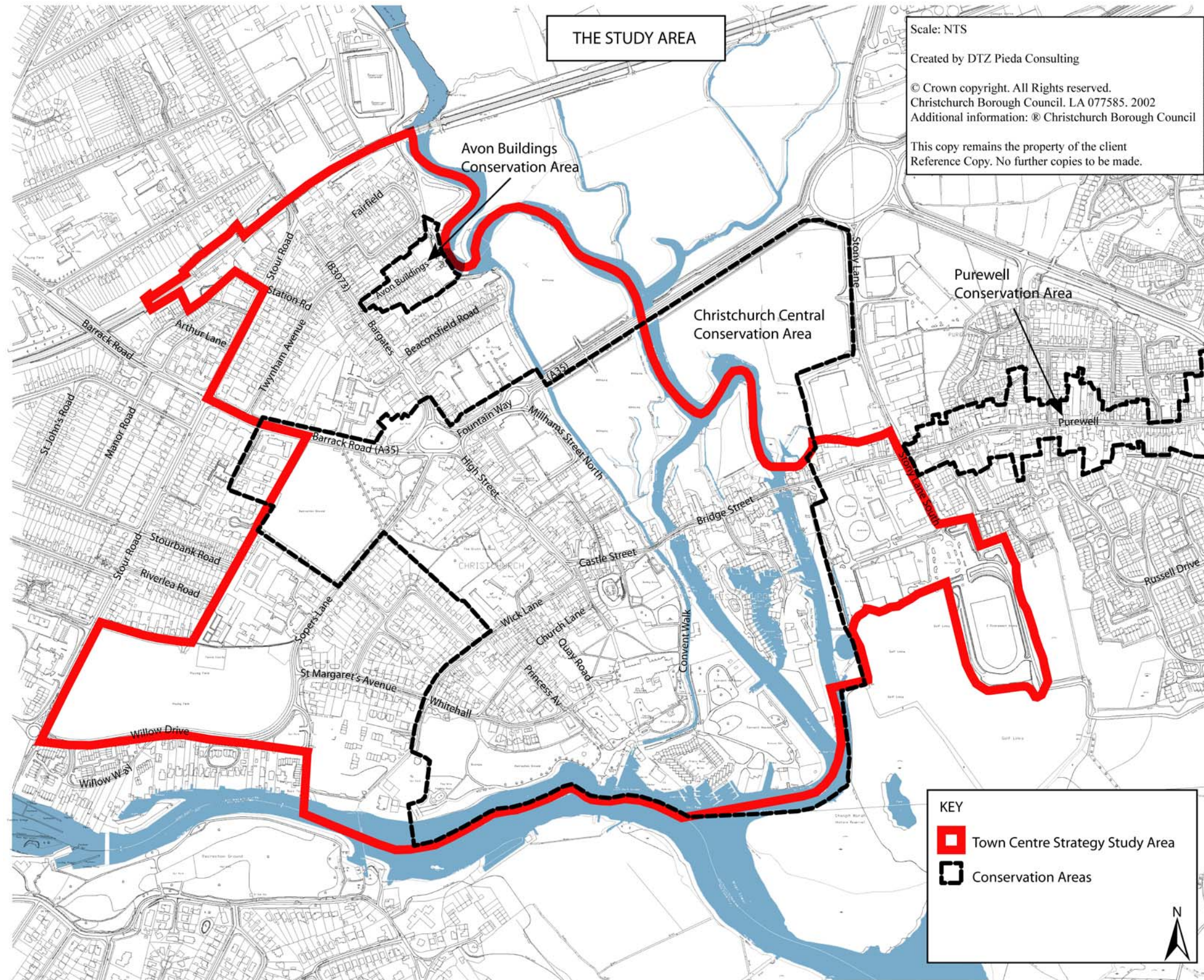
- 1.11 The brainstorm sessions with the client group, and subsequently the full Council and Town Centre Forum, were extremely informative with regard to the following key issues:-

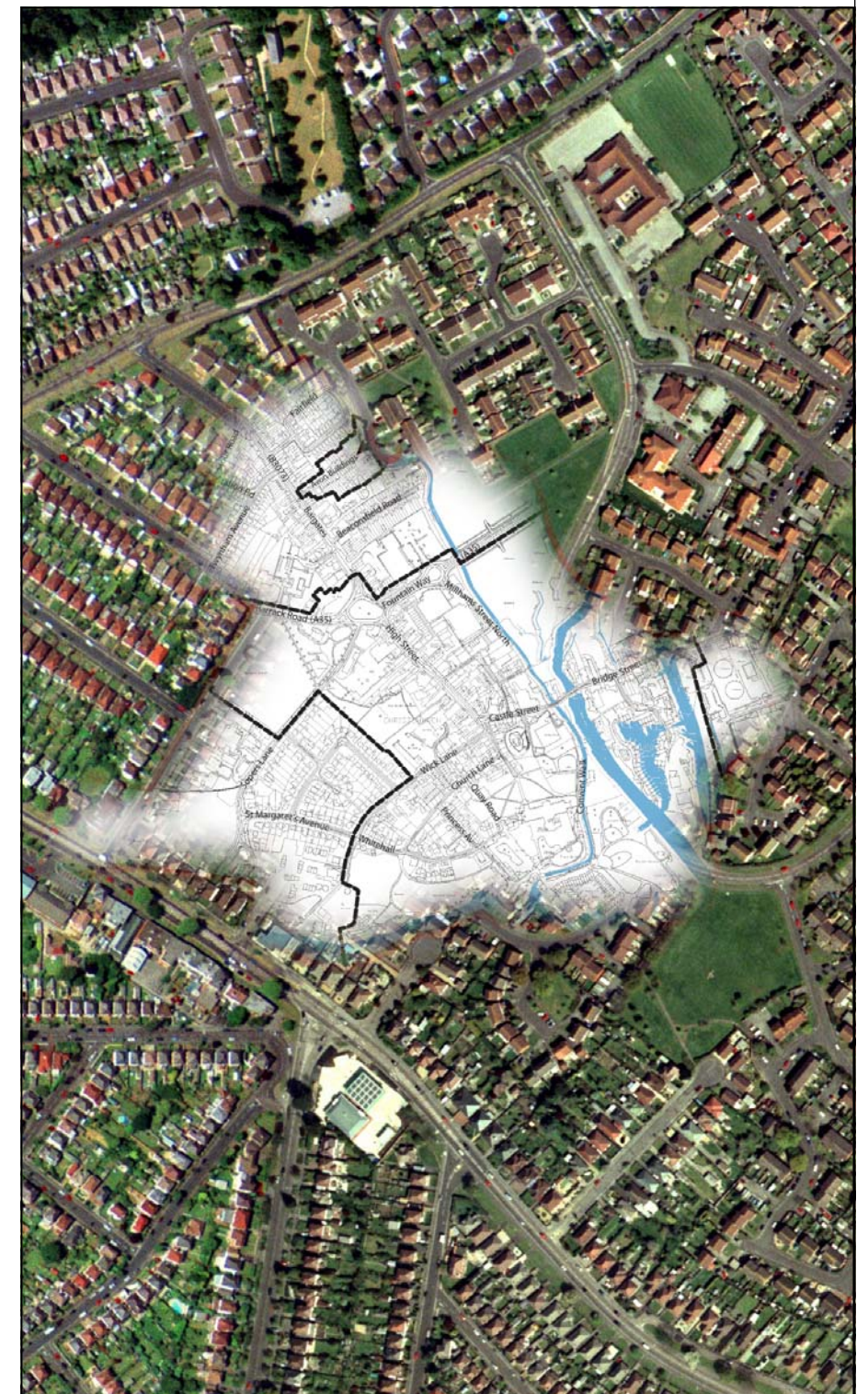
- transport and movement;
- townscape and development;
- historical and cultural; and
- leisure and events.

- 1.12 Appendix 2 summarises the brainstorm session with the Town Centre Forum in May 2002. The remainder of this report is divided into the following sections:-

- Section 2: Establishing a Vision for the Future
- Section 3: Historical/Cultural Context
- Section 4: Urban Design Issues
- Section 5: Transport and Movement Appraisal
- Section 6: Leisure/Visitor Attractions Appraisal
- Section 7: Property Market Review and Development Opportunities
- Section 8: Strategy for the Town Centre
- Appendices







2.0 Establishing a Vision for the Future

ESTABLISHING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

2.1 National Planning Policy Guidance seeks to protect and improve the vitality and viability of town centres (PPG 6) and introduces sequential testing for new retail, employment, leisure and other key town centre uses (PPG 6), including residential development (PPG 3). Sustainable and mixed use development, together with the redevelopment of brownfield sites is encouraged (PPG 1) while the Government is seeking to establish an integrated approach to transportation and land-use planning with the aim of reducing reliance on the car (PPG 13). National policy guidance also places a duty upon public authorities to safeguard the historic environment (PPG 15) while Regional Planning Guidance and Structure Plan policy are supportive of developing appropriate mixed uses within town centres in order to regenerate them as living communities. Consideration has also been given to the objectives of the series of Planning Policy Statements that have been issued as consultation documents by the Government.

2.2 **The Borough Council's Corporate Plan (2004 – 2008)** sets out the following key themes which affect quality of life in the Borough:-

- Transportation;
- Community Safety;
- Balancing Housing Needs;
- Investing in Youth;
- Improving Prosperity;
- Improving the Environment; and
- A Well Managed Council.

The Plan identifies objectives for each theme which, if met, will make a difference to the lives of people in the Borough. Relevant objectives for the town centre include: an Access and Car Parking Strategy, reduced congestion and improved road safety, reduced crime, reduce fear of crime, reduce anti-social behaviour, more awareness of drugs mis-use, more affordable housing, more facilities for young people, more inward investment, more visitors, a cleaner and greener place and more local pride.

Some of the Corporate Plan's themes and objectives take forward actions from the Christchurch Community Plan

(see para. 2.18).

2.3 The Town Centre Local Plan (1995) provided guidance as to the geographical area of the town centre and its central core. This Local Plan was aimed at:-

- discouraging traffic passing through environmentally and historically sensitive areas;
- promoting additional shopping;
- promoting additional high quality public open space, tourist accommodation and recreational facilities;
- improving environmental quality; and
- Policy SH2 proposes a planning brief for mixed use development (retail, residential, community facilities, car parking and public open space) to the west of High Street (Lanes/Bassage developments). See para. 2.5.

2.4 However, it must be recognised that the geographical location of the town centre changes depending upon the user, i.e. a shopper may consider the High Street and Saxon Square as the town centre while a tourist may include the Priory Quarter, parts of Christchurch Harbour and the Quomps as being within the town centre. In consequence, we need to establish the extent of these different centres in order to identify a central core. The initial concept (Figure 8.1) identifies these areas and the Strategy Framework (Figure 8.2) relates them to the development opportunity areas.

2.5 **Planning Brief: the High Street and Land to the West (1995)** provided policy and development guidance for an area of land including the High Street and otherwise bound by Sopers Lane, Wick Lane and the western edge of Druitt Gardens/Wick Lane car park. The Brief proposed:-

- a land transfer between Dorset County Council and local land owners to enlarge Druitt Gardens and produce a viable development site for the Lanes scheme;
- the establishment of a charitable trust to manage Druitt Gardens;
- the retention of Druitt Gardens as a 'secluded woodland' with improved footpath links;
- around 1,000 sq. m of retail development behind 15 –27 High Street (Lanes development) plus a further 375 sq. m of retail behind Woolworths (Bassage development)

– both with servicing from the High Street (Bank Close, access between Mathews & Alliance + Leicester and the Library access).

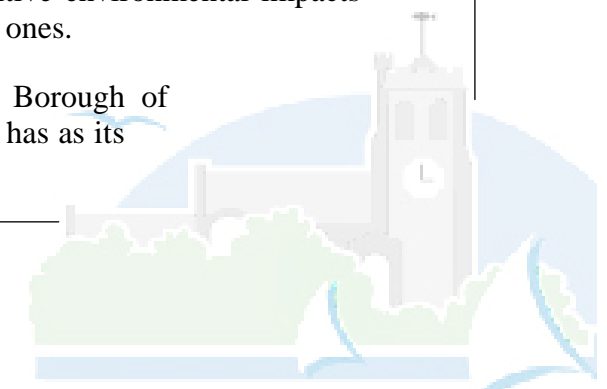
- the redevelopment of the Post Office site (mixed use with emphasis on retail/residential) together with limited residential redevelopment of properties fronting Wick Lane;
- new service road off Sopers Lane to serve Iceland and others;
- restructuring car park pricing, i.e.:-
 - Bank Close)
 - Wick Lane) Shoppers' Parking
 - Saxon Square)
 - Pioneer)
 - Pit Site)
 - Willow Way) Long stay
 - Magistrates Court)
- improved pedestrian environment to the High Street;
- rationalisation of pedestrian linkages in/around the Town Centre;
- the relocation of the market into the High Street (completed);
- improved security (CCTV);
- restricting vehicular access into the High Street (only buses/taxis during core trading hours), linked to the traffic calming of Bridge Street; and
- rebuilding of Druitt Hall on its present site or relocating it.

Although the Brief was not adopted in full as SPG, those proposals accepted have been taken forward in broad terms in the adopted Local Plan, such as the new retail development west of the High Street.

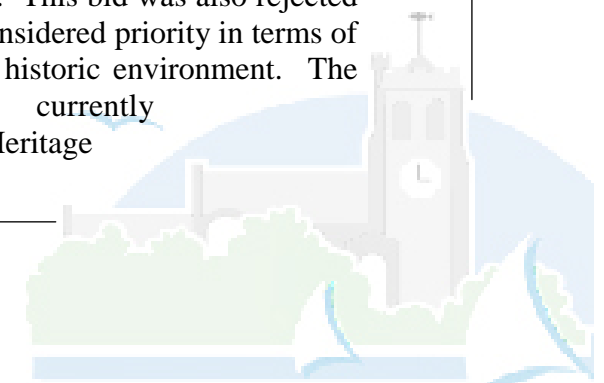
Borough of Christchurch Local Plan (Adopted 2001)

2.6 Christchurch Borough Council, in its aim towards promoting sustainability, has adopted an Environmental Management Policy. The Council recognises that there is a need to enhance its positive environmental impacts and mitigate its negative ones.

2.7 With this in mind, the Borough of Christchurch Local Plan has as its



- core principal that of sustainable development and delivering this through the implementation of land use policies and proposals. The Local Plan generally seeks to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Town Centre Conservation Area through resisting the loss of existing important buildings and townscape features, redeveloping parts of the High Street and improving the pedestrian environment. The loss of existing residential uses within the town centre is resisted and new residential development is encouraged. Policy EO3 proposes a mixed use redevelopment of the Mostyns/Transco site. Policy ES2 resists the loss of ground floor retail uses within the shopping core while Policy ES5 develops the earlier policy framework for the land west of High Street. Policy T8 proposes the introduction of traffic management into the High Street and the Priory Quarter and in Bridge Street (Policy T9). Parking policies are targeted at improving the capacity of Wick Lane car park and extending the Magistrates Court car park. Policy L4 designates Druitt Gardens as public open space.
- 2.8 A number of associated policy documents have influenced the Local Plan. The Local Plan conforms to the more strategic Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan and the South West Regional Plan. Transport policies are included in the Local Plan reflecting the County Council's proposals in the Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch Local Transport Plan. Affordable housing policy is developed in the Council's Affordable Housing Strategy. The Local Plan aims to guide development in a sensitive manner, in particular this Town Centre Strategy will be utilised as a tool to establish the likely impact and the sustainability of development proposals across the Town Centre. It supplements the Local Plan as Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 2.9 Due to pressure exerted along the coastal zone, the Council has adopted management plans for Mudeford Quay and Mudeford Sandbank and for Christchurch Quay. A Shoreline Management Plan prepared by operating coastal authorities is aimed at co-ordinating coastal defence. The Dorset Coast Management Plan has been prepared by the Dorset Coast Forum, which guides development and uses across the coast. A number of Management Plans have also been adopted, or are being drafted, for sensitive nature conservation sites, namely Stanpit Marsh, St Catherine's Hill, Steamer Point and Purewell.
- 2.10 The Council, in its role of leisure provider, has adopted a number of policies to assist this function, namely Use of Open Spaces Policy, Sports Strategy, Arts Strategy and Play Space Policy. The Borough is a popular tourist destination and the Borough Tourism Strategy aims to promote this.
- 2.11 Partly in recognition of the area's local distinctiveness, Conservation Area Appraisals are presently being prepared by the Council. Priority has been given to the production of the Christchurch Central Conservation Area Appraisal. This is to be followed by a conservation area strategy for Christchurch which will highlight such issues as the opportunity for Article 4 directions and detail any work which could be undertaken to enhance the character of the conservation area. These documents will be integrated into the local plan review and will also take into account the recommendations emanating from the Town Centre Strategy.
- 2.12 The remaining eleven conservation area appraisals will be undertaken in a rolling programme. Priority will be determined by development pressure and time constraints. However, commitments in the local plan will also be given a priority.
- 2.13 Christchurch became a member of the English Historic Towns Forum and the Association of Town Centre Management in 1998 and, as a result, the Christchurch Town Centre Forum was established. The Forum establishes a partnership approach between the key public, private and voluntary sectors with interests in the town centre. The Forum submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (May 2000) for match funding towards a Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative. The initiative identified four programme areas, i.e.:
- Priory Precinct: repairs to important buildings, reinstatement of historic/architectural features and traditional paving/carriageway materials;
 - Town Centre eastern approach; traffic management and improvement to bridges and original market place, refurbishment of Purewell properties;
 - Market Place and High Street frontages: relocation of the market in to the High Street, repairs to Corn Factor building, shop front improvements, infill of gap site, improvements to Regent Centre façade; and
- Milhams Street; repairs to Church and burial ground, reinstatement of traditional paving/carriageway materials and repairs to historic buildings.
- 2.14 The Council was advised that one of the reasons for the bid's failure was that it was not framed within the wider context of an established Town Centre Strategy. Since the submission of the bid, the Town Centre Forum has carried out a SWOT Analysis of the town centre while the Chamber of Trade has canvassed the views of local businesses in order to identify key issues. In broad terms, there is agreement that:-
- a long-term Vision (20 years) for the town centre is required, aimed at establishing Christchurch as a unique, competitive and differentiated centre (i.e. branding);
 - an essential part of the 'Christchurch brand' will be its high quality physical environment and heritage; and
 - Christchurch should develop as a multi-functional centre (retail, economic, residential, cultural, a 'destination', etc.) offering a high quality, safe visitor/user experience.
- 2.15 In Section 8, the recommended 20 year vision for the Town Centre is summarised under three headings in paragraph 8.7:
- Heritage;
 - Environment; and
 - Lifestyle.
- 2.16 DTZ's consultations confirmed that the business community agrees that one of the most important issues for the town centre is the management of traffic and pedestrians, while preserving its environmental quality and heritage.
- 2.17 A second bid under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative was submitted in May 2002. The bid concentrated upon the re-use, repair and management of the town's critical historic assets (i.e. its listed and other important buildings), together with the conversion of upper floors for residential use. This bid was also rejected as Christchurch is not considered priority in terms of perceived threats to the historic environment. The Borough Council is currently exploring with English Heritage



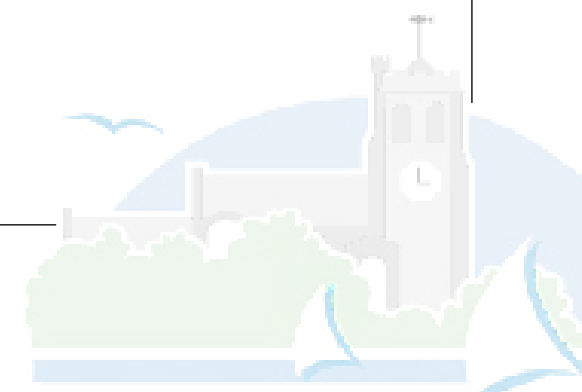
the potential for an historic buildings lead grant scheme focusing on specific elements (e.g. shop fronts). Given that this strategy forms a framework for the future prosperity of the town, it is hoped that the potential grant scheme will be progressed.

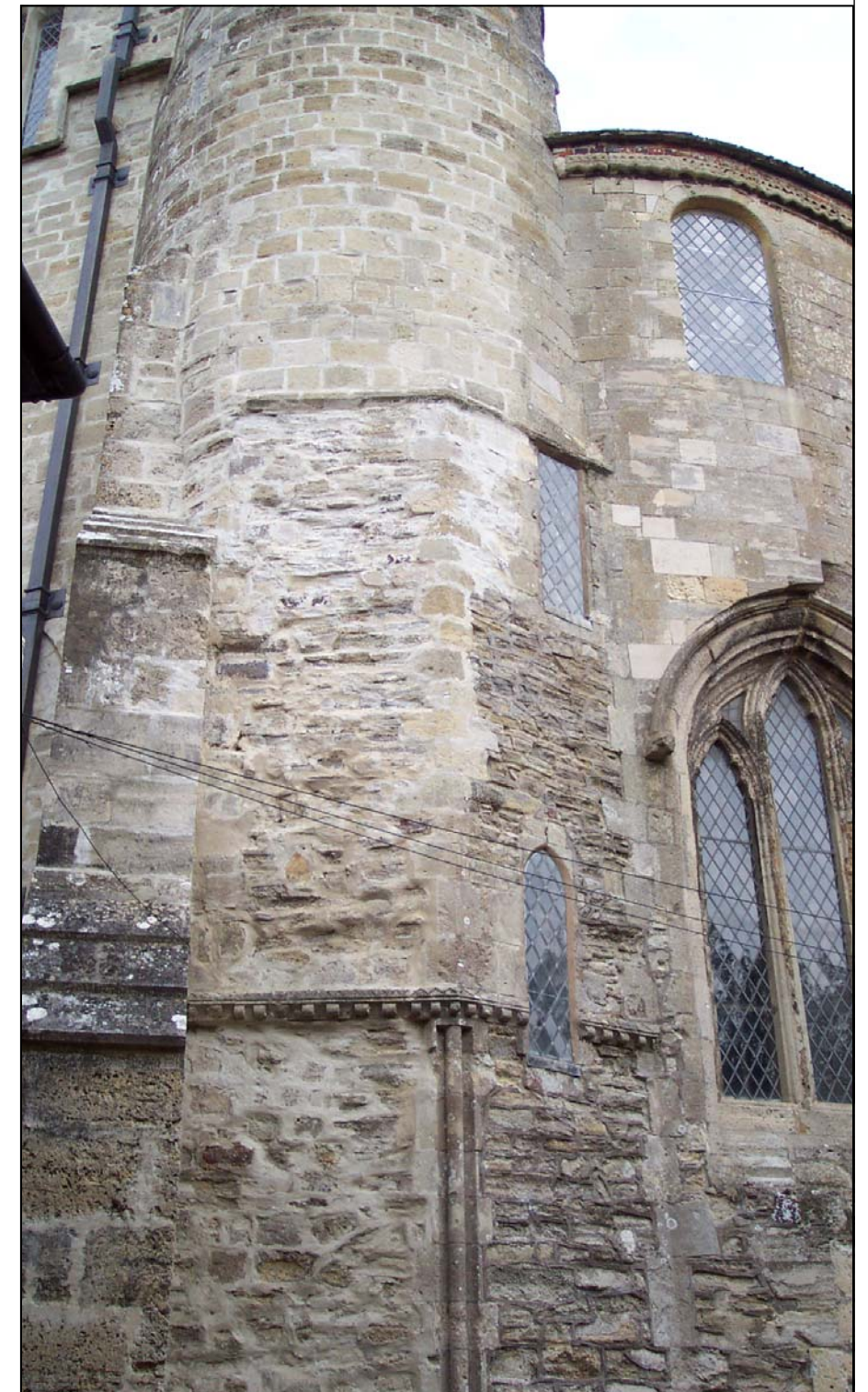
2.18 **The Christchurch Community Plan** has recently been launched by the Christchurch Community Partnership. The Partnership is made up of individuals, community groups and organisations, businesses and statutory providers of services and has been active since January 2003.

2.19 The Community Plan provides a vision for the Borough over the next 10 years and comprises a series of actions arising from community consultation and participation. All areas of the Plan impact upon the town centre with the main themes being:-

- Community Safety;
- Culture, Learning and Lifestyle;
- Generations;
- Health and Care;
- High Quality Environment;
- Affordable Housing;
- Increased Prosperity; and
- Travel and Access.

2.20 Agreed actions of relevance to the town centre include; the implementation of Alcohol-Free Zones, the provision of CCTV, the provision of a Town Centre Youth Facility, development of the heritage profile, guided walks using a heritage theme, increased affordable housing, improved understanding between the business community and the Council, increased social enterprise, encouragement of a café culture in the evenings, improved transport infrastructure, promotion of the provision of child care for working parents and improved signage.





3.0 Historical/Cultural Context

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL CONTEXT

Early Settlements

3.1 Christchurch owes its existence to its natural features. The town is surrounded by the marshes at the confluence of its two rivers, the Stour and the Avon. This strategic position gave Christchurch its former Saxon name Tweoxneam ‘the town between the waters’⁽ⁱ⁾. It has a long history as a settlement although much of its early history is unclear. Barrows on St Catherine’s Hill provide evidence of settlement during the Bronze Age (1800BC – 600BC) and also occur at Bargates, Friars Cliff, Wick, Stanpit and Hengistbury. There are traces of occupation during the Iron Age (600BC – AD43), particularly on Mill Plain⁽ⁱⁱ⁾. There is evidence to suggest that Christchurch was an important harbour in prehistoric times ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾.



Early defences in the Christchurch area
(Reproduced from Hodges, M. ‘Prepared for Battle some details of forts and sites in and near Christchurch)

Roman Occupation

3.2 There has been Roman finds reported at Christchurch Harbour besides the Hengistbury area. In the eighteenth century G. Brander reported a Roman Villa (probably Roman/British farm) at Mudeford. A Roman vessel was excavated in the Harbour in 1910; the location is uncertain but thought to be at the mouth of the Bure Stream. Roman coins have also been dredged from the Clay Pool area off Christchurch Quay, possibly a result of offerings to water gods at the confluence of Avon and Stour.

3.3 Some of the finds indicate that an high status building may once have stood in the town probably in the area which now contains the Priory ^(iv).

Saxon Origins

3.4 With the arrival of Saxon rule Christchurch became one of the burghs of Wessex; a fortified place which provided refuge during the Viking raids. The first written record of Christchurch appears in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and refers to the town being captured by Ethelwald in AD 900. The Domesday Book later describes Christchurch as a small town of 31 messuages (dwellings with adjoining land) and also mentions the Saxon monastery in the Church of the Holy Trinity (present site of the Priory Church) ^(v). Some buildings in the monastic precinct remain e.g. Porter Lodge and Gift Shop and the brewhouse in what is now the Priory car park. Other buildings were destroyed and some of the stone was used to build walls and houses in the town. The Priory Precinct is still defined by medieval masonry walls and the remains of two turrets/lookouts still survive.

3.5 The Saxon defences at Christchurch ran west from the Mill Stream across the High Street (just south of Bow House) through what is now Bank Close to Druiitt Gardens. There it turned south to run across Wick Lane to what is now Whitehall. It did not then need to continue further down to the Quay because the River Stour and its marshes came up to the wall. Later the defences were extended to where the Priory Wall of the church car park runs to the quay, west of Place Mill. Also a wall enclosing that side of the town later defended the west side of the Mill Stream. The Mill Stream itself was deeper than today ^(vi).

3.6 Excavations uncovered part of the Saxon defences; a bank and a ditch, near where Bow House now stands in the High Street. The corner of an ironstone Saxon wall is visible at

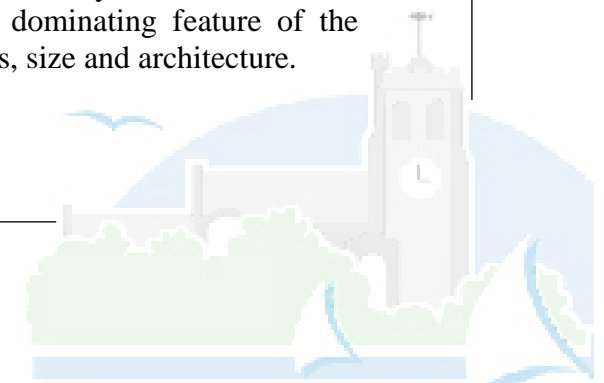


Burgh of Tveoxneam
(Reproduced from Hodges, M. ‘Prepared for Battle some details of forts and sites in and near Christchurch)

the junction of Druiitt Gardens and Bank Close car park. A pagan Saxon cemetery was also discovered at the rear of Bargates by the Mill Stream.

Norman Period

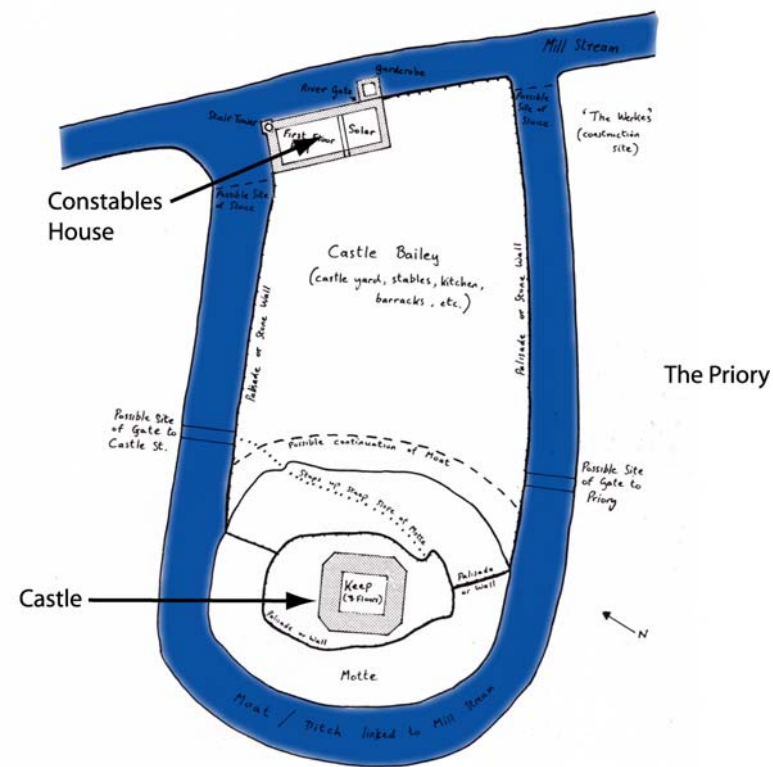
3.7 In 1094 the Saxon Minster and its associated chapels were pulled down and work on the stone Priory begun (it took about 400 years to complete the building as it is today). During the Norman period the new Priory was constructed and the town subsequently became known as Cris-Churche de Twenham, which eventually became Cristes-Chirche. The Priory became the dominating feature of the town famous for its relics, size and architecture.



- 3.8 At this time, Henry I gave the manor of Christchurch to Richard de Redvers who granted the first Charter to the town in 1150. He built the Norman motte and bailey castle on the site of the main Saxon building in the heart of the growing town. The motte was probably made from the earth and ironstone Saxon town walls and from the spoil of the castle ditch. The bailey ran from the Mill Stream to the motte and was defended by an outer ditch and wooden palisade (much of the bailey is now a bowling green). The castle provided protection for the feudal family and protected the harbour from seaborne raiders.
- 3.9 It may have been Richard's son Baldwin or his grandson Richard who built the stone Castle Hall (Constables House) in the north east corner of the bailey overlooking the Mill Stream. The House remains today as a substantial ruin ^(vii).

Medieval Period

- 3.10 The town became prosperous during the early Medieval period and was further enhanced by Baldwin de Redvers who granted the town a market.



Castle Bailey (Possible Scenario)
 Reproduced from Hodges, M. 'Prepared for Battle some details of forts and sites in and near Christchurch)

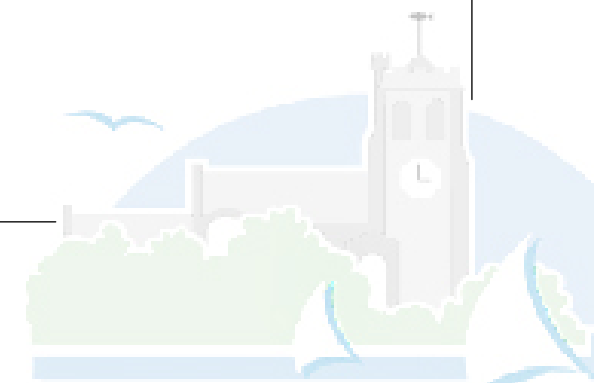
- 3.11 The market was located in the High Street in the centre of the town at the junction of Castle Street, Church Street, High Street and Wick Lane. It dealt mainly with subsistence items like food, clothing and tools. The first market house was the Toll House called Old Tolsey at High Street on the south corner with Millhams Street. The Council later built the Market House or Town Hall which was later moved to its present location where it is used as the Mayor's Parlour.
- 3.12 The market grew too large for the Market Square and so spread down the High Street; it is for this reason that the High Street has its present width. The Bargate, opposite Bow House, was a choke point for the market. During fairs the market would spread down Bargates to Fairfield and the start of Fairmile ^(viii).
- 3.13 The effects of both the Reformation and the Civil War eventually led to the decline of the town. Shortly after the civil war an order was issued for the demolition of the castle. After this, Christchurch dwindled to a small fishing town ^(ix). A scheme to improve the town and develop ship building in the Harbour was investigated in the 17th century by the Earl of Clarendon, the lord of the Manor. He proposed to make the River Avon navigable from Salisbury to Christchurch and had an Act drawn up in 1675-6 for the purpose. This scheme never came into fruition.
- 3.14 The harbour at Christchurch became too shallow for the larger vessels of the late Middle Ages. Places like Poole and Lymington separated from Christchurch, as did Poole from Wareham and such places obtained their own charters ^(x).

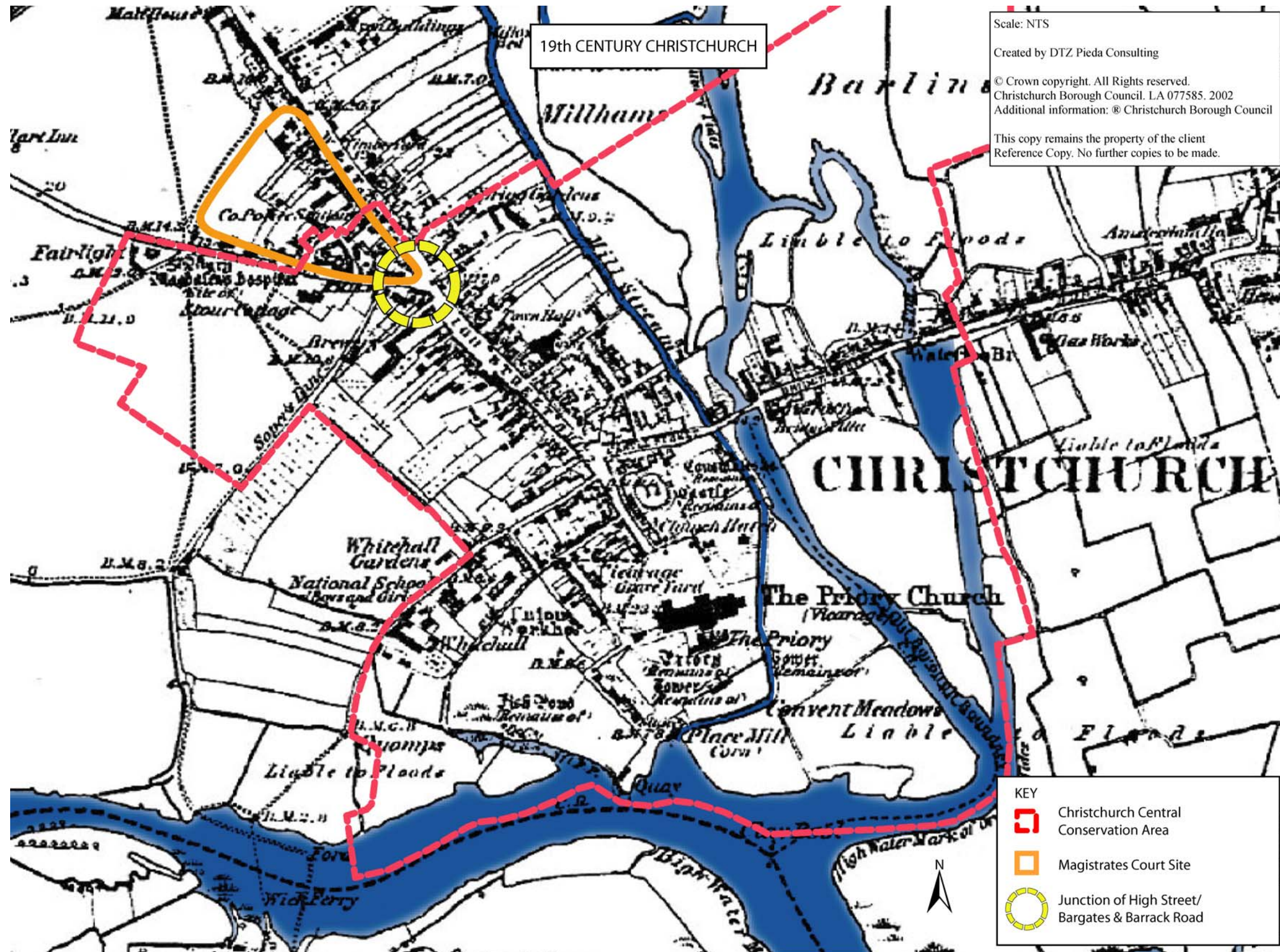
Early Industry

- 3.15 During the 17th and 18th century the nearby harbour and the close proximity of the New Forest enabled Christchurch to develop a new industry of smuggling. Tea and tobacco were the most popular items to be smuggled into the country due to the high duty on them. Other items included wine, brandy, sugar, silks and laces. The smuggling trade consumed the whole community with all classes involved until the 19th century when duty tax was dramatically cut ^(xi).
- 3.16 During the 19th century a small boat building enterprise began to flourish while other local industries developed

including fishing, brewing and the manufacture of watch and fusee chains and hooks ^(xii). There are some fusee chain factory buildings which remain: The Fusee, 20A Bargates, off the eastern side of High Street and another opposite the Civic Offices in Bridge Street.

- 3.17 The town grew significantly in size during this period with improvements in road and rail. The town was connected by a direct line to Ringwood and Bournemouth and became 'incorporated' in 1886 when its population totalled 3,994 ^(xiii).



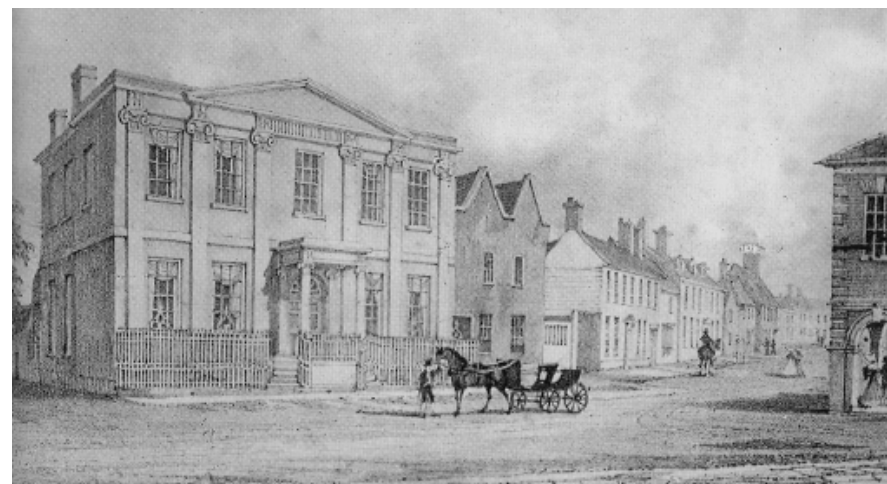


Military History

- 3.18 Christchurch was a defended area in the 1940's. Its natural features lent itself to the concept of an anti-tank island. Defence against German invasion, using the same water defences as the Saxons, plus concrete obstacles and pillboxes, some of which remain as scheduled monuments are 100m NE of Christchurch Station, adjacent to the road bridge.
- 3.19 During World War II Christchurch Airfield was the base for the USAF Thunderbolt Squadron. The Airfield, where military aircraft were built and radar was developed, was in use between 1922 and 1962. It was also during the Second World War that Donald Bailey gave the first demonstration of creating what was to become a Bailey Bridge, which was instrumental in the development of World War II military strategy ^(xiv).

Present Day

- 3.20 The town has undergone a number of significant changes in the post war era, many of which have had a detrimental effect on the character of the town, including a loss of historic townscape. The 'Square House' a late Georgian town house at the core of the original market place was replaced by a shopping arcade in the late 1950s, the by-pass divided the town centre in the early 1960s; and the large scale supermarket developments at the entrance to the town are examples of some of these changes ^(xv).
- 3.21 The erosion of the townscape quality has been



The Square House
(Reproduced from Christchurch Borough Council, Christchurch Townscape Heritage Initiative Application for funding)

accompanied by a declining quality in the pedestrian environment. The management of traffic access to and around the town centre has taken priority over the needs of pedestrians. The existing traffic management arrangements make it harder for visitors on foot to find their way around and to make the most of what the town has to offer.

Current Policy

- 3.22 However, the local distinctiveness of the area remains a key asset and the Borough's historic value is reflected in the designation of 12 conservation areas, 287 listed buildings, 12 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 3 nationally important archaeological sites and membership of the English Historic Towns Forum.
- 3.23 In particular, the Central Christchurch Conservation Area covers the majority of the study area and is now the subject of a reappraisal (Figure 3.2).
- 3.24 The key to the long term future of Christchurch is in the celebration of the heritage of the town and this is inextricably linked to the built heritage. The Town Centre Forum is of the view that the Town Centre's main strength is in its heritage (buildings, monuments, public realm, open spaces, art and history) and that the future well being of the town centre lies in protecting, enhancing and better promoting these assets ^(xvi).

The Dorset Heritage Strategy 2001

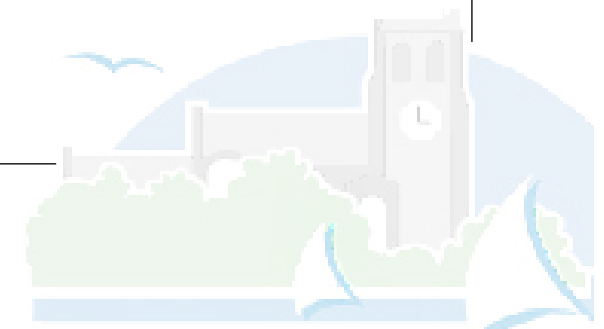
- 3.25 The Dorset Heritage Strategy 2001 recognised the need for the promotion of the historic heritage and public access to it are important aspects of Dorset's tourism industry. Much more could be done to produce accessible literature on buildings, and town walks on a local level.
- 3.26 The 'heritage' product is a fundamental part of the appeal to visitors in general and to particular niche markets. There are obvious links to market segments focused on walking, literary and film and TV connections and local history.
- 3.27 There is a potential for improving the 'product' in terms of further development of Country Parks and other amenity sites, archaeological sites, events, guided walks, information and attractive printed documents ^(xvii).



Aerial Photograph of the Town Centre, Circa 1980
(Reproduced from Christchurch Borough Council, Christchurch Townscape Heritage Initiative Application for funding)



View of Constables House and Bowling Green



Future Opportunities

3.28 The extensive consultations that DTZ's study team carried out with the Local History Society, the Borough Council and the Town Centre Forum have highlighted the following opportunities:

- **Historical Interpretation/Re-enactment**

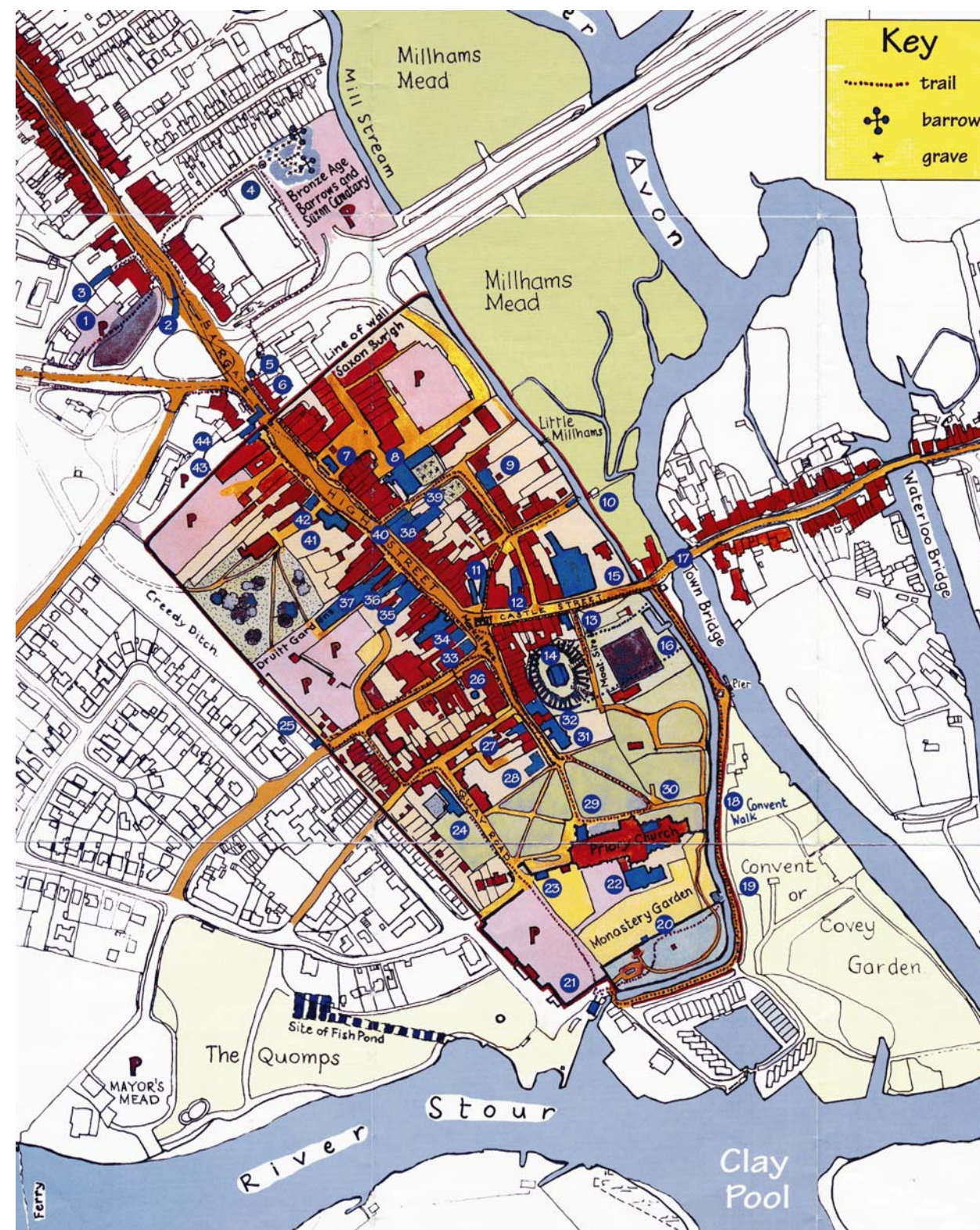
The Christchurch Local History Society produced in 2000, for the Millennium, the Blue Plaques Millennium Trail which commemorates important sites and people over the last millennium and consists of a trail around the town centre with eighteen cast-aluminium blue plaques full of detailed information and backed up with an impressive and colourful leaflet ^(xviii). The Society has many more ideas for historical interpretation and re-enactment opportunities including themes based around the Saxon, Norman history, Medieval life (Lord of the Manor, ale tasters, town crier), Morris Dancers, the smuggling trade, instruments of civic punishment and ghost walks.

A geophysical survey of the castle mound and its environs has been carried out by the Christchurch Antiquarians. The results of the survey will form the basis of a developing programme of academic studies which will be invaluable in the future management and interpretation of these important historic sites.

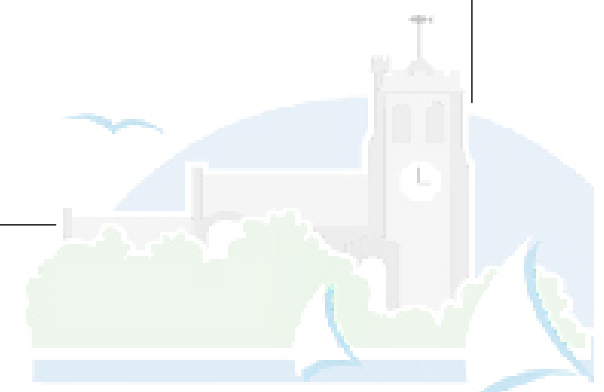
Such an initiative is sympathetic to interpreting the archaeologically rich landscape of the town centre. Indeed, as part of the future strategy, it will be important to encourage the championing of limited archaeological digs on an annual basis similar to other towns, such as Winchester, where major digs are a feature of the town events calendar every year.

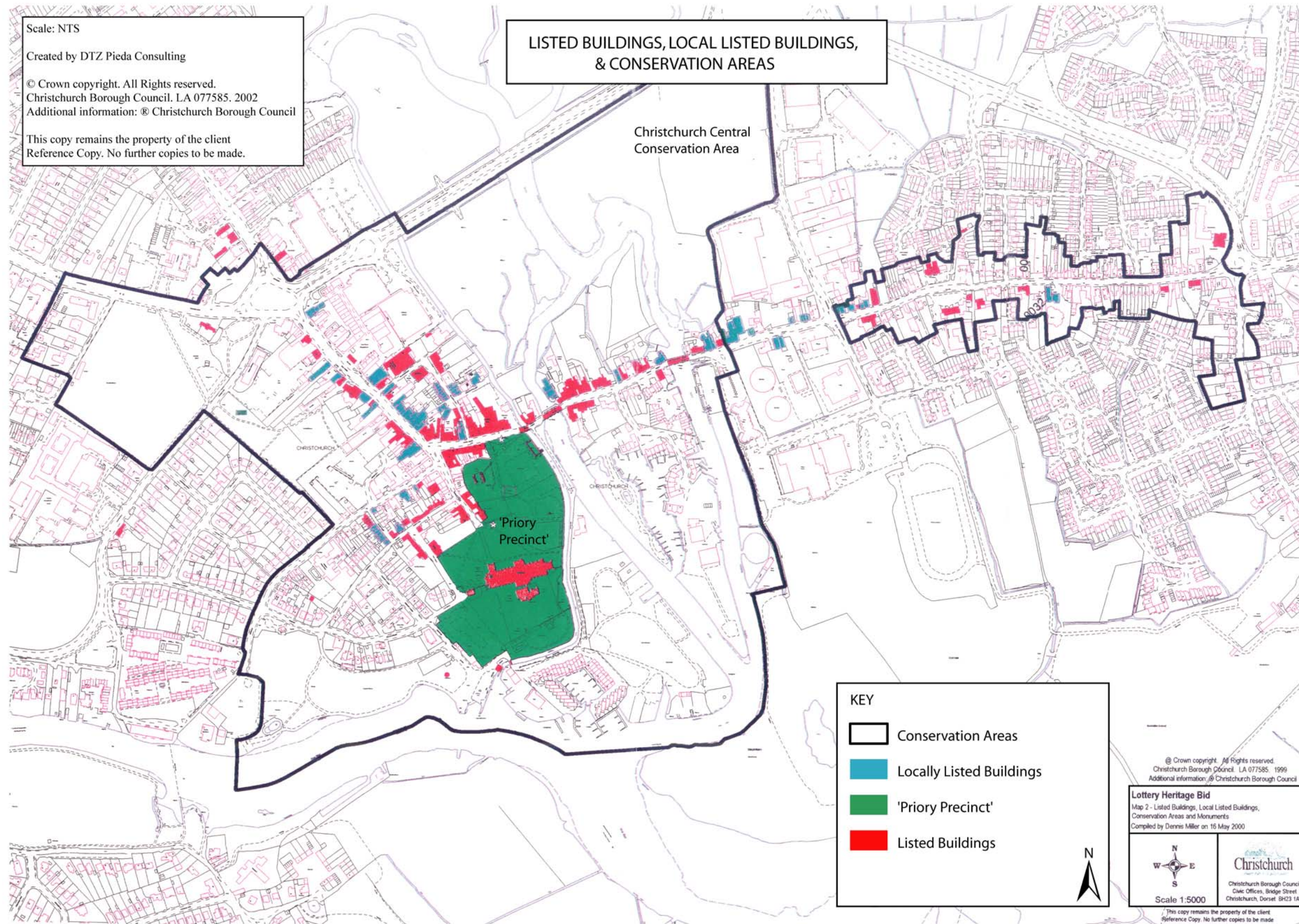
- **Visitor Centre**

There have been a number of ideas for a Visitor Centre in Christchurch. This would go beyond the constraints of the current Tourist Information Centre with informative displays of Christchurch's history and bringing the town's tourist package together in a more integrated way. Potential comparators for the centre are the New Forest Museum and Visitor Centre in Lyndhurst, the Chomley House Visitor Centre in Whitby and the Caerphilly Visitor Centre in South Wales. Case Studies are included in Appendix 4.



The Blue Plaque Millennium Trail
(Reproduced from Christchurch Local Historical Society leaflet)





Footnotes

- i Taylor, Christine, Christchurch A Pictoral History, 1994
- ii <http://www.christchurch.gov.uk/cs/history.htm>
- iii Taylor, Christine, Christchurch A Pictoral History, 1994
- iv M.A. Hodges of Christchurch Local History Society for Christchurch Town Centre Forum, Christchurch Occasional Papers, Dec. 2001.
- v Taylor, Christine, Christchurch A Pictoral History, 1994
- vi M.A. Hodges of Christchurch Local History Society for Christchurch Town Centre Forum, Christchurch Occasional Papers, Dec. 2001.
- vii M.A. Hodges of Christchurch Local History Society for Christchurch Town Centre Forum, Christchurch Occasional Papers, Dec. 2001.
- viii M.A. Hodges of Christchurch Local History Society for Christchurch Town Centre Forum, Christchurch Occasional Papers, Dec. 2001.
- ix Taylor, Christine, Christchurch A Pictoral History, 1994
- x M.A. Hodges of Christchurch Local History Society for Christchurch Town Centre Forum, Christchurch Occasional Papers, Dec. 2001.
- xi Taylor, Christine, Christchurch A Pictoral History, 1994
- xii Taylor, Christine, Christchurch A Pictoral History, 1994
- xiii Christchurch Borough Council, Best Value Service Review: Development Control & Planning Enforcement – Section 1.
- xiv Taylor, Christine, Christchurch A Pictoral History, 1994
- xv Christchurch Townscape Heritage Initiative, Application for Funding, May 2000
- xvi Draft Town Centre Action Plan 2002
- xvii Christchurch Townscape Heritage Initiative, Application for Funding, May 2000
- xviii Christchurch Townscape Heritage Initiative, Application for Funding, May 2000

