



Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy Examination

MATTER 9: TOWN CENTRE AND RETAIL ISSUES

Statement by Christchurch and East Dorset Councils



Prepared by Christchurch Borough Council and
East Dorset District Council

August 2013

1 Issue 1: Justification of Town Centre Hierarchy

Response to Issue

Issue 1: Is the Town Centre hierarchy (KS6) justified with regard to:

- a. **Barrack Road – extent of centre and designation**
- b. **Roeshot Hill**
- c. **Morrisons/ Peacock Way, Verwood**
- d. **Land North of Leigh Road, Colehill**
- e. **Highcliffe District Centre**

1.1 Barrack Road

1.2 It is proposed to maintain Barrack Road's designation as a Local Centre. The NPPF does not provide a definition of a local centre, and the most up to date definition is contained within Annex B of PPS 4 (now deleted) *'Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy'*.

1.3 It is considered that it is appropriate that Barrack Road is designated a local centre as it differs in its role and function to that of a district centre such as Highcliffe. Barrack Road has a broad mix of small shops but does not include a range of non-retail services as would be expected in a district centre, such as banks, building societies, libraries and other community facilities.

1.4 It is considered that the extent of the centre is appropriate and the boundary should not be expanded to include the Bailey Bridge retail park and QuinetiQ site. The retail park comprises larger comparison retail warehouse units selling a range of goods not typically sold in town centres. Similarly the approved retail supermarket, when built, will fulfil an out of centre convenience shopping role. The boundary of the local shopping area should be maintained to include the shops immediately along Barrack Road.

1.5 Roeshot Hill

1.6 It is maintained that the Roeshot Hill local centre, as identified in Policy CN1 will not function as a District Centre (as suggested by a representee) and should not be identified within the town centre hierarchy in Policy KS6. The urban extension local centre forms the centre of the development but is not being designated as a 'Local Centre' or 'District Centre' for retail purposes. The urban extension 'local centre' will cater for day to day needs and include small scale retail provision. The existing Sainsbury's retail units and Stewarts garden centre will form part of the centre. However the policy clarifies that proposals for additional retail provision within the urban extension must demonstrate no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Christchurch and Highcliffe centres.

1.7 Therefore it is considered that the small scale retail element of the urban extension local centre at Roeshot Hill has no place within the District or Local Centre levels of the town centre hierarchy set out in Policy KS6. However, the council will seek to review the issue of designation as a local centre in the future subject to the size and type of units which develop in the centre.

1.8 Morrisons, Pennine Way, Verwood

1.9 It is maintained that the Morrisons Store in Verwood will not function as a District Centre and should therefore not be identified within the town centre hierarchy in Policy KS6. This is supported by the evidence set out in the Retail Study 2008 (ED40, ED41), and para 4.35 of the Core Strategy which discusses the expectations of a District Centre. Where the NPPF is silent, the most up to date definition of a 'local centre' is set out within Annex B of PPS 4 (now deleted) ***'District centres will usually comprise at least one supermarket or superstore and a range of non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.'*** The Morrisons store does not fulfil the multiple uses and services associated with a District Centre.

1.10 The representation pre-dates a planning application for a new Morrisons store in Pennine Way, Verwood, approved in 2012, which extends the store to include a new petrol station, but removes the other community facilities on the site, such as the sports centre, hairdressers, newsagents and take away.

1.11 For these reasons, the designation of Morrisons, Pennine Way is not considered appropriate as a District Centre.

1.12 Land North of Leigh Road, Colehill

1.13 It is not understood why this site is referred to. A representation has been made by Ken Parke Consulting on behalf of ASN Capital for a new housing development to the north of Leigh Road which would include a new village centre, community facilities and a convenience store at Pre-Submission stage (ID:524088 - various comments submitted). There is very little detail provided with this representation, such as evidence of need and the provision of a SANG to support the housing development.

1.14 Housing on this site would fill a 'key Green Belt gap' between Colehill and Wimborne Minster. The edges of these urban areas, are also identified as 'key edges' in the master planning report. In relation to the key edges, the Green Belt Review (OD19, OD23) states that in many places the gaps between settlements are narrow and their ability to perform their function is potentially vulnerable to even minor development. Some gaps, including that between Wimborne Minster and Colehill are under 1km and the prevention of further erosion is considered to be critical.

1.15 This site was rejected as a potential housing site in the original Master Planning sifting exercise by Broadway Malyan in 2010. The site was not pursued as a suitable site for development in the Pre-Submission consultation, and is not supported by the District Council. The issue of town centre hierarchy is therefore not considered necessary.

1.16 Highcliffe District Centre

1.17 It is maintained that Highcliffe is appropriately designated as a District Centre. Although the NPPF does not provide a definition, the most up-to date definition is contained within Annex B of PPS 4 (now deleted) ***'District centres will usually comprise at least one supermarket or superstore and a range of non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities such as a library.'***

1.18 Highcliffe contains these facilities but is a smaller scale shopping centre than Christchurch town centre, with no national multiples other than two small supermarkets. Highcliffe will accommodate a significantly smaller proportion of the Borough's future requirement for retail growth. It is appropriately positioned below the Christchurch town centre but above the Barrack Road local centre in the hierarchy.

2 Issue 2: 1000 Square Metre Evidence

Response to Issue

Issue 2: Is there evidence to support the threshold of 1000 square metres for requiring an impact assessment in the Town Centres (KS7)?

2.1 Issue 2: 1000 square metre threshold

2.2 The Core Strategy has been informed by up to date and professionally produced retail studies, using nationally established methodology for establishing projected growth (ED38, ED40 and ED41). The Retail Study Update was published in 2012. The NPPF supports the provision of a locally set threshold (para 26).

2.3 Paragraphs 5.18 and 5.19 of the Retail Study Update (2012) examines the evidence and reasoning for the proposed local threshold. The threshold of 1,000sqm is based on the hierarchy of centres in Christchurch and East Dorset and in view of the retail floorspace projections contained within the study. This study concludes that developments of over 1,000sqm gross should generally be accommodated in Christchurch, Ferndown and Wimborne town centres and a 500sqm gross threshold for other parts of the authority area.

2.4 The Retail Study concludes that a threshold of 2,500sqm would be inappropriate because this would represent a significant proportion of the overall retail floorspace projections in these areas, and that development of less than 2,500sqm gross could have a significant adverse impact on the smaller town centres.

2.5 The Retail Study Update (2012) has informed the locally set threshold of 1000sqm set out in the Core Strategy as appropriate in respect of the nature of centres within the town centre hierarchy and where future retail development is being directed to in the Core Strategy.

3 Issue 3: Level of Non Retail Uses in Primary Shopping Frontage

Response to Issue

Issue 3: Is the maximum of 30% non retail uses in the ground floor Primary Shopping Frontage justified and realistic (KS7)?

3.1 The NPPF (para 23, bullet point 3) requires policies to be set that make it clear which uses will be permitted in the primary and secondary shopping frontages. The threshold of 20% was established in the Christchurch Local Plan (2001).

3.2 However evidence from the 2009/10 AMR indicated that the proportion of non-retail uses in the primary shopping cores was already at 30% at Highcliffe, 28% at Bargates and 25% in the town centre. Thus a 20% threshold allowed no flexibility within the primary shopping cores.

3.3 An option for a 30% threshold was included in the Core Strategy Options for Consideration October 2010 which was taken forward in the Pre-Submission document April 2012 (Policy KS7)

3.4 The issue was examined in the 2012 Retail Study Update (ED41) which concluded that the proposed 30% threshold for primary shopping frontages provided some flexibility for changes of use and was not considered to be overly restrictive.

4 Issue 4: Scale and Level of Retail Growth Evidence

Response to Issue

Issue 4: Is the proposed scale and location of retail growth, set out in KS8, supported by robust evidence?

4.1 The Core Strategy has been informed by up to date and professionally produced retail studies, using nationally established methodology for projected growth (ED38, ED39, ED40). A further Retail Study Update was published in 2012 (ED41), which provided convenience and comparison floorspace projections for the period 2011 - 2031. Floorspace projections were identified in the study for Christchurch and East Dorset and for each retail centre including Christchurch town centre, Highcliffe centre, Christchurch retail parks, Ferndown, West Moors, Verwood and Wimborne Minster. Floorspace requirements have been established commensurate with the position of centres within the Core Strategy town centre hierarchy which was informed by the 2008 Retail Study.

4.2 The retail study has taken into account the effects of the recession and changes in population projections. The 2012 study should be read alongside the 2008 Retail Study which examined the commercial network of centres, centre health checks and centre boundaries.

4.3 The 2012 Retail Study advises that projections up to 2018 are based on up to date forecasts, which take into account the effects of the recession and projections beyond 2018 should be used as a broad guide. In this respect, future requirements will be kept under review. At this time, the projections are up to date and the best available evidence to inform the Core Strategy policy.

5 Issue 5: Christchurch Town Centre Vision

Response to Issue

Issue 5: Christchurch Town Centre Vision (CH1): are figures for new comparison and convenience floorspace based on robust evidence?

5.1 Policy CH1 identifies that the Christchurch town centre will accommodate in the region of 7,500 sq m of new comparison retail floorspace and 2,300 sq m net convenience floorspace to meet future requirements to 2028.

5.2 The figures for new comparison and convenience floorspace have been informed by the 2012 Retail Study Update. This is a professionally produced retail study that has applied nationally established methodology that has used up to date data for establishing projected growth. It takes account recently completed supermarkets, projected population growth, national and local economic trends and changes in shopping habits.

5.3 It is recognised that the economic downturn has had a significant impact on the retail sector. The 2012 Retail Study Update, in projecting expenditure levels takes into account the economic downturn, particularly in the short term. Trends in population growth, home shopping / internet sales and growth in turnover efficiency have been carefully considered. The study takes a long term view for the Local Plan period, recognising the cyclical nature of expenditure growth.

6 Issue 6: Christchurch Town Centre Boundary

Response to Issue

Issue 6: Christchurch Town Centre Boundary (CH2): is there evidence to justify the boundary shown on Map 5.2?

- **Should the Town Centre area include residential areas to the north and south west?**
- **Should the area to the east of the river Avon be excluded?**

6.1 Evidence from the Town Centre Strategy 2003, which defined a study area for the town centre, has informed the identification of a town centre boundary within the Core Strategy. The Joint Retail Assessment 2008 (ED39) highlighted the need to identify a town centre boundary where town centre related development can take place but did not suggest a boundary. Two options for a town centre boundary were included in the Core Strategy Options for Consideration October 2010. Non Preferred Option CH3 was based on the boundary of the study area in the Town Centre Strategy 2003, and the Preferred Option CH2 was a variation of this boundary. The boundary set out in Option CH2 avoided an area of substantial floodrisk to the west of the High Street that is included in CH3, it also provided the most potential for new commercial and retail development through the inclusion of Stony Lane and Avon Trading Park.

6.2 After taking into consideration the results of consultation, the preferred option was amended further to exclude Avon Trading Park. Firstly, this is because the railway line forms a clear boundary to the town centre and Avon Trading Park is an employment site where town centre uses are not considered appropriate. This resulted in the town centre boundary Policy CH2 as identified in Map 5.2 of the consolidated version of the Core Strategy.

6.3 Annex 2 of the NPPF states that the town centre is ***'an area defined on the local authority's proposals map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area'***.

6.4 Residential areas to the north and south west

6.5 It is considered appropriate to include the residential area to the north around Bargates and the Railway Station. These side streets flow from Bargates which has its own historic character and is a distinct area of retail activity, with its natural northern boundary being the railway.

6.6 The residential properties to the south west are included as they are within the heart of the historic town centre area, being located between the Quomps at the extreme south west point and the Christchurch Priory. The residential areas form an important link between the commercial town centre area and the Quay which is a prime amenity open space and focal point of the town centre.

6.7 It is therefore considered appropriate to include the residential properties to the north and south west as they are well related to the town centre area. Residential uses can play an important part in sustaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of a town centre.

6.8 Area to the east of the River Avon

6.9 The town centre boundary extends eastwards beyond the River Avon to Stony Lane. This includes two strategic sites identified in Policy CH1 at Stony Lane and the former Gasworks site. Including these sites within the boundary will provide more opportunity for town centre uses to expand in the future. This will provide more scope to to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre through more clearly defined development opportunities. Respondents have been concerned about the impact of retail uses on these sites. Wording in Policy CH1 clarifies the point that the Stony Lane and Bridge Street sites are located 'out of centre' for retail purposes and that any town centre use proposed on these sites should not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the town centre and should comply with flood risk policy.

6.10 It is concluded that the area to the east of the River Avon should be included within the town centre boundary as incorporating strategic sites as identified in Policy CH1 could assist in the wider regeneration of the town centre.

7 Issue 7: Christchurch Primary Shopping Area

Response to Issue

Issue 7: Christchurch Primary Shopping Area and Retail Frontages (CH3): Are the defined shopping frontages supported by evidence?
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7.1 NPPF defines a Primary Shopping Area as a "defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage)"

7.2 The Joint Retail Assessment 2008 Report included recommended boundaries for a Primary Shopping Area in Christchurch town centre. The boundary is drawn tightly around the shopping frontages. Map 5.3 identifies a Primary Shopping Area which is nearly identical to that recommended by the study. The only amendment has been to bring the whole of the Magistrates Court Site within the boundary. This is because the Magistrates Court has the potential to deliver a significant proportion of town centre retail requirements identified in the 2012 Retail Study. The Council is working closely with landowners on developing options for this site. In view of this, it is considered appropriate that the whole of the Magistrates Court site is brought within the Primary shopping area.

7.3 The 2008 Joint Retail Assessment also included recommended boundaries for primary and secondary retail frontages. The analysis recommended that Church Street and Wick Lane be re-designated as secondary shopping frontages and Town Bridge (along with Castle Street) be deleted as a Secondary Shopping Frontage.

7.4 Map 5.3 identifies boundaries of the Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages in Christchurch town centre which incorporate these suggested amendments.

7.5 The Joint Retail Study Update 2012 concluded that it is not considered necessary to update the findings of previous studies in relation to centre boundaries, because these remain relatively up to date and the conclusions remain robust.

7.6 In conclusion the Christchurch Primary Shopping Area and Retail Frontages as identified in the Map 5.3 which support Policy CH3, are supported by evidence in the Joint Retail Assessment 2008 Report and the 2012 Retail Study Update.

8 Issue 8: Highcliffe District Centre Vision

Response to Issue

Issue 8: Highcliffe District Centre Vision (CH4):
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8.1 Background Papers

- Christchurch and East Dorset Retail Study Update 2012
- Core Strategy Consultation Response Analysis TOWN CENTRES - May 2013

8.2 Reference is made to Paragraph 5.22 and in the absence of a question it is assumed that the issue relates to the first 2 bullet points of the Strategic Requirements section of Key Facts. This states that Highcliffe district centre can accommodate in the region of 500 sq m additional non floor retail floorspace to 2031 and that there is no need for further supermarket floorspace in Highcliffe to 2013 (Christchurch and East Dorset Retail Update 2012)

8.3 The 2012 Retail Update includes an assessment of potential capacity for new retail floorspace in Highcliffe which indicates that there is potential for 521 sq m comparison floorspace up to 2031, but no requirement for more convenience floorspace during this period. Therefore the statements in the first 2 bullet points of paragraph 5.22 are supported by evidence and should be retained unamended.

