

Total Place Reviews and Opportunities

Ferndown and Wimborne Minster

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Executive Summary

Aim of the project

East Dorset District Council (the Council) commissioned Halcrow to develop Total Place Reviews for the town centres of Ferndown and Wimborne Minster. The key aim of this review is to identify opportunities for making the best use of assets within the two town centres to secure better outcomes at lower cost. Given the current pressures on public finances at all levels of government, both Dorset County Council and the Council (along with other public sector partners) are exploring options for reducing their spending commitments, while maintaining services and community benefits as far as possible.

The Council is undertaking a review of all of its assets and has the ambition to maximise their benefits. Halcrow has been commissioned to review 30 of these assets within the town centres of Ferndown and Wimborne Minster (please see Appendix E for a list of these asset), and to identify opportunities for reducing costs and benefiting communities within the two town centres. A holistic approach to the management and review of assets in the town centres of Ferndown and Wimborne Minster was required, leading to the following key objectives of the project:

- To review the Council's and other statutory agencies key land holdings in the town centres;
- To create a civic heart within each town centre;
- To recommend how the Council might maximise its capital assets in both towns; and
- To review the public realm, key linkages, pedestrian routes and attractiveness of the towns.

Our approach

Our approach to this review has been designed to identify all possible opportunities for improving the use of public assets in Ferndown and Wimborne Minster, while providing robust evidence to support all recommended courses of action. To achieve this, our approach has considered specific features of every individual asset, while at the same time considering each asset within the context of each town.

The evidence gathered and presented within this review has been derived from a number of sources, including:

- Direct consultation with key partners, stakeholders and service providers;
- Reviews of policies and strategies published by the Council and its partners;
- Analysis of primary data previously collected by the Council and its partners;
- Scrutiny of Annual Reports and financial accounts of public organisations within East Dorset, including those of the Council, local charities and trusts; and
- Detailed site work to assess the nature and performance of assets.

Asset performance

To help assess the performance of assets within the two town centres, we have grouped assets that perform similar roles into six groups:

1. Community centres and service hubs;
2. Culture and tourism;
3. Public spaces;
4. Car parks;

5. Statutory services; and
6. Private sites.

A summary of the asset performance for each of these six groups is provided below:

Community centres and service hubs

- The Council's spending on community centres is high compared to other districts in Dorset;
- Links between the Council and the associations running the community facilities are not well defined;
- There is considerable overlap between the community centres in Wimborne Minster; and
- Community centres do not engage young people effectively.

In particular, there are three assets that sit within the 'community centres and service hubs' asset group which demonstrate significant potential for securing better outcomes. These three assets are the Allendale Community Centre, Allendale House and the Barrington Centre.

Culture and tourism

- Cultural facilities in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown enjoy significant support from volunteers;
- Wimborne Minster has a strong and varied offer for visitors, supported by an effective tourism information service;
- The Tivoli Theatre provides an excellent model for a self-sufficient venue; and
- The Tourist Information Centre, the Priest's House Museum and Walford Mill have shown the ability to widen the type of services that they provide.

Public spaces

- There are several parts of the public realm in Wimborne Minster that could be improved;
- The Cornmarket is under-utilised as a space within the town centre at present;
- The most critical public space problem within Wimborne Minster is at Crown Mead, which presents an unattractive environment out of keeping with the rest of the town; and
- Although clean and safe, the environment in Penny's Walk does not lend itself to civic activities, partly due to its quality and surroundings, and partly because it is somewhat isolated from other parts of the town centre.

Car parks

- Wimborne Minster has attractive public car parks, while Penny's Lodge car park in Ferndown is also attractive;
- The Council's car parks generate a small revenue stream, relative to other councils in Dorset;
- Wimborne Minster and Ferndown have excellent car parking provision, supporting retail in the two towns;
- Much of Ferndown's car parking is free, and provided by private companies;
- There are considerable variations in gross revenues, revenues per space and levels of utilisation between different car parks in Wimborne Minster;
- Allenvie West, Allenvie North and Old Road car parks generate relatively low levels of utilisation and revenue per space; and

- Penny’s Lodge car park is the only Council-owned car park in Ferndown. Its financial performance is reasonably strong, although it compares unfavourably to Wimborne Minster’s short stay car parks and has to compete with Tesco’s car park which is free

Statutory services

- There are four buildings in close proximity in Wimborne Minster that are used as bases for specific services in the town (police, ambulance and fire stations and the Magistrates’ court). Each of these buildings may not be ideally suited to the needs of the organisations that use them now;
- In Ferndown, the Day Care Centre occupies an important position close to the town centre, which may be better suited to a more community-oriented use; and
- Victoria House is under-utilised as an office space.

Private sites

- The recent opening of Waitrose at the Rowland’s Hill site has created a significant retail draw to the east of the town centre, as well as a large new car park and public parkland;
- Crown Mead, which is privately owned by an offshore investment company, occupies a key area within Wimborne Minster, acting as a link between the historic core and Waitrose, as well as the East Street shops;
- Crown Mead’s poor environment makes this area less attractive for visitors and shoppers, which reduces the scope for pedestrian movements to the east of the town, as well as limiting north-south access along the Allen;
- The most salient issue relating to Crown Mead has been about the potential of developing a footbridge between Waitrose and Crown Mead;
- Wimborne Minster market is a profitable venture for its owner, Ensors, but it provides limited benefits to the town centre because of its perceived distance from the town centre; and
- Tesco in Ferndown has a major impact on the town centre, as a major retail anchor. There is little scope for altering Tesco’s presence or role within the town centre.

Opportunity areas

Various options might be pursued in order to improve the use of public assets in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown. We have identified the following four key opportunity areas, which have been identified in this review as high priorities for the Council and its partners:

- Community centres and service hubs;
- Car parks;
- The Allendale site; and
- Wimborne Minster market.

In relation to these four key opportunity areas, we have developed a series of options (including a preferred option). Each preferred option includes a series of recommendations, implications and justifications.

Recommended actions

Community centres and service hubs

Recommendations

- The Council should seek to improve the services offered by its community centres in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown, while reducing its spending and liabilities on community assets;

- There is a future role for all of the community centres, although we recommend that two of these facilities (Allendale House and Allendale Centre) need to initiate a major change in the way that they operate;
- Good practice organisations should be incentivised and given the opportunity to expand the services they provide;
- The Council should work with its community centres and cultural facilities with the aim of making them financially self-sufficient after any public funds received for the delivery of specific and defined services;
- The Council should aim to find accommodation that is more suitable for the East Dorset Heritage Trust;
- Allendale House should either be rented out at a market rate (as long as this is appropriate to the nature of the building), or used for an alternative activity as identified by the Council;
- The Council's relationship with East Dorset Heritage Trust should be reviewed in accordance with the Trust's aims and objectives, and their contribution to the Council's aims and objectives; and
- The Council should support a down-sizing of the Allendale Community Centre, making it more appropriate for the needs of the wider community, and allowing better use to be made of the Allendale site.

Justification

The Council needs to move towards a model of funding where the money it spends can be closely matched to the value this spending provides. The Council provides a significant subsidy to all of its community centres through the provision of buildings at nominal rent. Where that facility itself provides a service to the community (i.e. through being available for hire, and acting as a community hub), it seems appropriate that the building is provided by the Council, but that all other costs should be covered by the user (through room hire charges). Under this model, the only case where revenue support could be justified is where that money is used directly to provide a service that contributes to the Council's aims and objectives.

Allendale House and East Dorset Heritage Trust

As Allendale House is a valuable asset to the Council, it is imperative that the Council can demonstrate a reasonable rate of return on its use, either financially, or through the provision of a valuable service to the community. East Dorset Heritage Trust is a charity which benefits from a grant of £25,000 per annum and a lease with 35 years still remaining. If East Dorset Heritage Trust is to continue receiving financial support from the Council, it should demonstrate that it provides specific services that contribute to the Council's aims and objectives. Otherwise, East Dorset Heritage Trust should generate funding through its own sources, either through donations or revenues from its activities. The potential relocation of the Trust should be considered elsewhere in the town, to release the building to enable it to be rented out at a market rate or used for alternative activities which meet corporate objectives.

Allendale Community Centre

The current Allendale Community Centre building is in a poor state of repair, with essential maintenance of £195,000 (payable by the Council) required over the next five years. This is a significant investment requirement. Given the level of competition among community facilities in Wimborne Minster and the increased role of the Tivoli Theatre in live productions and cinema, there is a strong case for a replacement for the current building to be considerably smaller.

Financial implications

Our analysis shows that the Council could make an ongoing saving of around £65,000 per year if these recommendations were to be successfully implemented. This does not take into account the potential saving of £195,000 associated with not repairing the current Allendale Community Centre building.

Car parks

Recommendations

- The Council should seek to improve the financial performance and short stay ticket sales of the car parks it owns, without compromising the contribution that car parks make to accessibility in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown;
- The Council should continue to review the performance of all of its car parks;
- The Council should consider whether there is scope for introducing charges at the other car parks it owns e.g. Verwood;
- Allenview West car park should be released for development or an alternative use. Ideally, the site would be developed as part of the larger Allendale site, although some car parking should remain on the site as part of any new development;
- Old Road car park has the potential to be released to market for residential development. It appears unlikely that a comprehensive development of the area around the Old Road car park could be achieved, making a standalone development on the car park site the most likely outcome;
- Allenview North car park could remain as a car park for the foreseeable future, with its coach park converted into car parking spaces. However, as a car park that is poorly utilised at present, Allenview North car park would require regular reviews to ensure that it continues to be needed as a car park; and
- Dorset County Council's car park in Ferndown is reserved for Council staff on weekdays. However, it is available for free public parking at weekends, reducing the Council's revenue at its Penny's Lodge car park. Closing this car park at weekends, or introducing charges for it, would increase the Council's revenue from the car park.

Justification

Old Road and Allenview West car parks have very low rates of utilisation (19% and 14% respectively). Allenview West is however a popular long stay car park for season ticket holders and for parents dropping off children at Allenbourne School. It is also within the flood plain and will need to be subject to a Level 2 Flood Risk Assessments if development is to take place. Both car parks lie close to other large car parks that have spare capacity – Old Road car park is close to Westfield Close car park, while Allenview West car park is adjacent to Allenview North and South car park.

Financial implications

Releasing Allenview West car park for residential development could yield capital receipts of up to £2.7 million, while Old Road car park would become available for development to meet the Council's housing objectives and could yield receipts of £750,000 to £850,000. If the decision was taken to release Allenview North car park for development, this could attract up to £1.75 million in capital receipts.

The Allendale Site

Recommendations

- The Allendale Site should either be redeveloped into a community hub, which replaces many of the public assets in Wimborne Minster in one building including smaller community facilities, or be used to relocate the Council's offices from Furzehill into the town centre.

As there are two feasible options for the Allendale site at this stage of the analysis, we have highlighted the recommendations, justification and financial implications separately in the sections that follow.

Community hub option

If the Community Hub option was proved to be the ultimate preferred option at the Allendale Site, our key recommendations would be as follows:

- The Council should support the demolition of the Allendale Community Centre, replacing it with a smaller community centre, and release the remaining land holdings along the west bank of the River Allen for development into a public sector hub;
- The Council should facilitate redevelopment of the site into a community hub, which could include facilities for a GP Surgery, Wimborne Library, a replacement for the Allendale Community Centre, and private residential or commercial buildings;
- This development would be funded by contributions from each of the services located onto the site, as well as by any capital from releasing parts of the site for private development.
- The current car parking arrangements will be ended, although part of the site would be retained as a car park for the new community hub.
- Dorset County Council would have the option to release the current library building. The existing library site could be sold or leased for commercial/retail use.
- Premises for a GP Surgery would be offered the option to relocate into the new community hub.

Council offices relocation option

If the relocation of the Council offices from Furzehill to the Allendale Site proved to be the ultimate preferred option, our key recommendations would be as follows:

- The Council should support the demolition of the Allendale Community Centre, replacing it with a smaller community centre, and release the remaining land holdings along the west bank of the River Allen for development into a public sector hub;
- The Council should release its offices at Furzehill, using the capital receipts (estimated to be at least £3.5 million) to fund a development of new offices, along with a new community centre, at the Allendale Site;
- The new offices will be designed to improve interaction between the Council and citizens, allowing different frontline services to be provided more easily within the Council offices.
- The current car parking arrangements will be ended, although part of the site would be retained as a car park for the new council offices.

Justification

Community hub option

The advantage of creating a community hub at the Allendale Site is that it would allow the Council, along with Dorset County Council and its public sector partners, to consolidate many of their buildings into a single site. This should help to reduce costs for these buildings, while improving convenience and service quality for citizens. At the same time, this option would enable the Council to achieve extra capital receipts by allowing part of the site to be developed privately, for residential or commercial uses. It is likely that such a scheme could be designed so that it were cost neutral, with each of the services that locate at the community hub paying a contribution towards the development, and receipts from private development used to offset the costs of demolition and land assembly.

Council offices relocation option

Relocating its offices to the Allendale Site would offer numerous advantages to the Council. A central location would be more appropriate for the Council, as it would enable it to engage closely with the local community. It would also allow the Council to promote sustainable transport, reducing reliance on cars, while providing a significant boost to the town centre retail economy.

The current offices at Furzehill should generate a high sale price, due to the size of the overall site. The Council has estimated that the Furzehill offices will require £218,350 in maintenance over the next five years, a cost that would be reduced by a move to new offices. The relocation would also allow the Council to construct modern purpose built offices that more closely suit its needs, and the needs of the community. In addition, the capital receipts from the sale of the current offices should be sufficient to cover the construction costs for the new offices.

Financial implications

Community hub option

The financial implications from the redevelopment of the Allendale Site into a community hub would depend on the exact development package put together. However, it is likely that the development could be designed such that it is cost neutral, with land released for private development to cover any unmet costs.

Under this option, the Council would save £195,000 in maintenance costs on the Allendale Centre over the next five years.

Council offices relocation option

The financial implications from the relocation of the Council's offices to the Allendale site would depend on the price received for the Furzehill site, and the specification of the new Council offices building. It is likely that the scheme would be cost neutral, or even generate a surplus for the Council.

Under this option, the Council would save £195,000 in maintenance costs on the Allendale Centre over the next five years.

Wimborne Market

Recommendations

- The Council should work with Ensors, the owner of Wimborne Market, towards a mutually acceptable solution that allows Wimborne Market to relocate to a more central position within Wimborne Minster;
- The Council should support in principle the idea of a street market in the centre of Wimborne Minster. This market would operate every day from Monday to Saturday, and would cover the pedestrianised part of the Square
- Potential extensions could be considered into the High Street, Cook Row and Cornmarket. These streets are all County highway land, although the Council owns the paved area in Cook Row beside the public toilets;
- The market would be operated by Ensors, with profits from the operation shared between Ensors, the Council and selected charities and organisations within the town (which could include the Chamber of Trade and Town Council);
- Operating the Market in the town centre for a trial period may also help to tackle any practical problems that emerge;
- If the site of the current Market is released, the Council should support a residential-led development, with a significant affordable housing component; and
- The Council should avoid any attempt to close down the Market in Wimborne Minster without finding a suitable alternative location, due to the support it provides to the local economy.

Justification

Wimborne Market is a successful private business, which has arguably the strongest brand of any retailer in Wimborne Minster. The Market's current site is not suitable for the type of activities carried out, while the peripheral location means that the Market creates limited economic benefits for the town centre economy.

However, finding a suitable alternative site for the Market is a difficult task, as Ensors have a number of requirements to maintain their business interests. Ensors have indicated that they are prepared to downsize the main component of the Market, to make it appropriate for location on the streets of the town centre. However, they also require a larger site to be used for car boot sales. Their proposed site, located outside Wimborne Minster, lies in the green belt, and is currently not eligible for development.

Bringing the Market into the town centre would have a major impact on Wimborne Minster's economy. Locating a large, successful market within the town centre is likely to increase the number of visitors and shoppers to Wimborne Minster, benefiting traders within the town centre. Given that Wimborne Minster is a market town, having a daily market within the town centre would greatly enhance its appeal to visitors and local shoppers alike, as well as making the town more attractive as a destination for businesses. On top of this, a share of the profits from the market's operations would help to support further action to improve the town's economic effectiveness. For example, many of the actions identified in the Wimborne Minster Town Centre Action Plan could be funded through this mechanism.

The development of the current market site could also help to contribute towards the Council's housing aims and objectives, as the site has been identified as a strategic site for developing affordable housing.

Given this balance of benefits and obstacles, the Council should pursue negotiations with Ensors to achieve the best possible outcome.

Financial implications

Under Ensors' proposed model for running the town centre market, the Council would gain a revenue stream from their share of the profit from the market's operations. It is not clear how great this revenue stream would be, as this would depend on the success and scale of the new market operation. In addition, a revenue stream would also be created for charities or organisations in Wimborne Minster town centre, much of which would be used to work towards the Council's objectives.

There is likely to be limited financial implications to the Council from the redevelopment of the current market site, unless the Council undertook any aspects of the development itself.

Other opportunity areas

This review has also identified a series of other opportunity areas. These are:

- Redeveloping the site of the Fire, Police and Ambulance stations and the Magistrates' Court;
- Part-pedestrianising the High Street in Wimborne Minster;
- Redeveloping Crown Mead;
- Creating a more welcoming entrance to Ferndown town centre;
- Improving public space around the Day Care Centre in Ferndown; and
- Relocating the public conveniences on Penny's Walk to the Barrington Centre.

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim of the project

East Dorset District Council (the Council) commissioned Halcrow to develop Total Place Reviews for the town centres of Ferndown and Wimborne Minster. The key aim of this review is to identify opportunities for making the best use of assets within the two town centres to secure better outcomes at lower cost. Given the current pressures on public finances at all levels of government, both Dorset County Council and the Council (along with other public sector partners) are exploring options for reducing their spending commitments, while maintaining services and community benefits as far as possible.

The Council is undertaking a review of all of its assets and has the ambition to maximise their benefits. Halcrow has been commissioned to review 30 of these assets within the town centres of Ferndown and Wimborne Minster (please see Appendix E for a list of these asset), and to identify opportunities for reducing costs and benefiting communities within the two town centres. A holistic approach to the management and review of assets in the town centres of Ferndown and Wimborne Minster was required, leading to the following key objectives of the project:

- To review the Council's and other statutory agencies key land holdings in the town centres;
- To create a civic heart within each town centre;
- To recommend how the Council might maximise its capital assets in both towns; and
- To review the public realm, key linkages, pedestrian routes and attractiveness of the towns.

The project was initially conceived as part of the *Total Place* programme, following on from Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole's involvement as a *Total Place* pilot area. Although *Total Place* has since been rebranded¹, this review remains closely linked to the principles of place-based thinking.

It is important to emphasise that this review has not been developed in isolation; it seeks to complement and align itself with existing studies such as the Wimborne Minster Town Centre Action Plan, 2009 and Joint Retail Assessment, 2008. This review works towards improving the economic effectiveness of Wimborne Minster and Ferndown town centres, whilst achieving a more sustainable future with less financial resources. We also recognise the need to realise Wimborne Minster and Ferndown's potential for increased economic vitality and prosperity, and to help maximise new opportunities for inward investment as they arise.

1.2 Our approach

Our approach to this review has been designed to identify all possible opportunities for improving the use of public assets in Ferndown and Wimborne Minster, while providing robust evidence to support all recommended courses of action. To achieve this, our approach has considered specific features of every individual asset, while at the same time considering each asset within the context of each town.

The evidence gathered and presented within this review has been derived from a number of sources, including:

- Direct consultation with key partners, stakeholders and service providers;
- Reviews of policies and strategies published by the Council and its partners;
- Analysis of primary data previously collected by the Council and its partners;

¹ At the time of writing, *Place-Based Budgeting* is the most widely recognised term for the former *Total Place* programme.

- Scrutiny of Annual Reports and financial accounts of public organisations within East Dorset, including those of the Council, local charities and trusts; and
- Detailed site work to assess the nature and performance of assets.

Halcrow's work on this review has been broken down into six stages, as detailed in Figure 1.1:

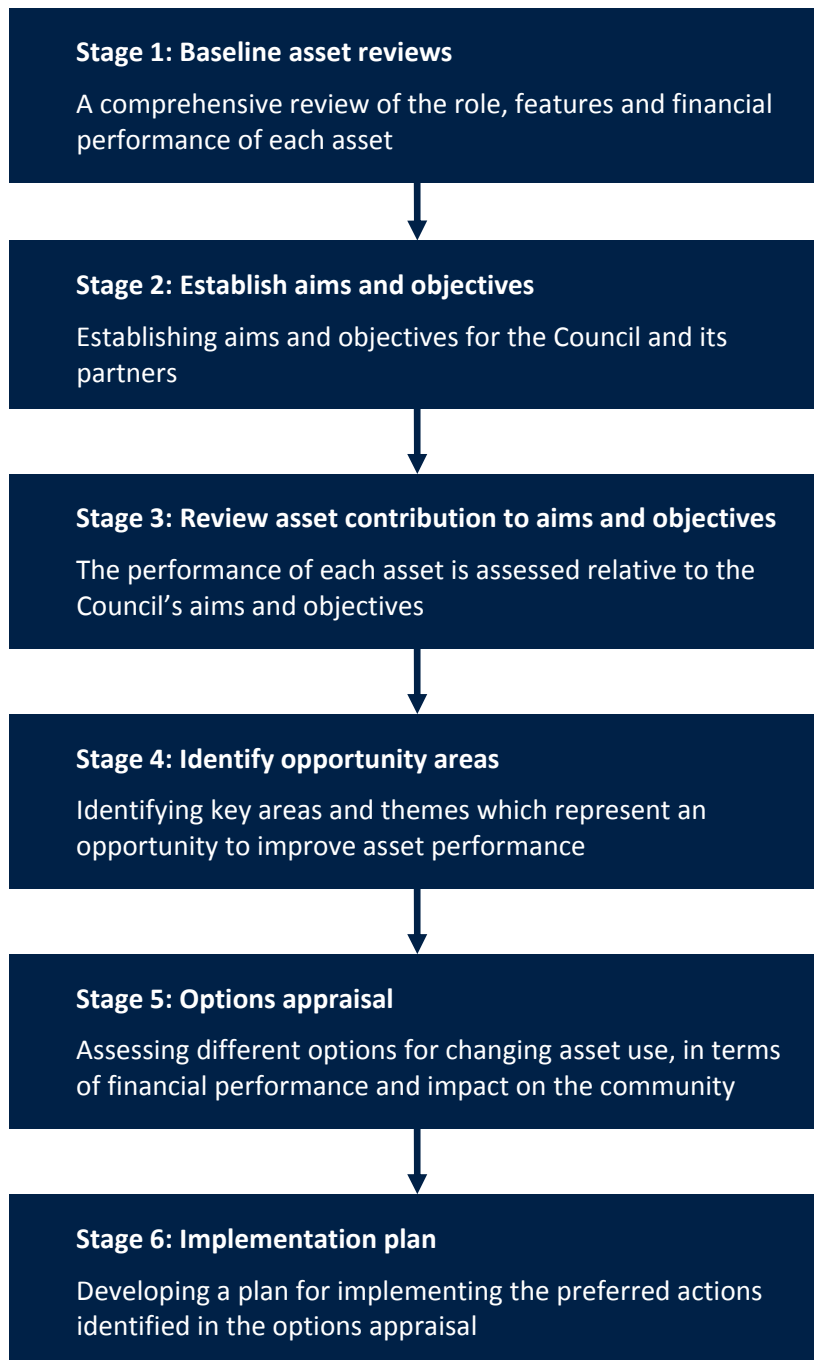


Figure 1.1: Project methodology

2 Context to the review

2.1 East Dorset's Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan² sets out its aims and objectives for 2010 to 2016, under five priority areas:

- **Communities** – To promote thriving communities that are well served, healthy and safe with a strong local identity;
- **Economy** – To promote a successful local economy;
- **Environment** – To manage and safeguard the natural and built environment for the benefit of current and future generations;
- **Housing** – To improve the quality and availability of appropriate housing; and
- **Performance** – To ensure the efficient and cost effective use of resources.

The Corporate Plan is one of the key drivers behind this review. Every asset, every service, and every penny spent by the Council should contribute towards achieving these objectives. We have assessed each asset's contribution to the aims set out in the Corporate Plan, and considered how cost effective each asset is in achieving its aims.

2.2 Dorset Joint Asset Management Programme

Dorset County Council is currently working together with the Council and a range of other public sector partners to develop a Joint Asset Management Programme. This Programme sets out a framework for coordinating the assets held by different public organisations within Dorset, with the aim of reducing spending and releasing value from these assets.

The Joint Asset Management Programme brings together Dorset County Council, District Councils and other key service providers in Dorset³. The Programme's Joint Vision Statement sets out eleven commitments shared between all of the partners, which are designed to ensure that all public assets are used as effectively as possible, with all decisions about assets taken with reference to the Joint Asset Management partners. These commitments include providing for cost effective and innovative asset management, sharing assets and working in partnership where necessary, continuously reviewing the performance of each asset, and conducting local area reviews to develop forward strategies for asset management. The overall aim of the programme is to reduce costs to the public sector, while making assets fit for purpose, and more effective in providing services and benefiting the community.

The Joint Asset Management Programme has developed a series of agreed objectives between its partners, which are grouped into three categories:

- Realising potential and minimising environmental impact;
- Maximising financial return; and
- Optimising service benefit.

As part of the Joint Asset Management Programme, the Council has stated its strategic asset management objectives. These objectives include using the Asset Realisation Programme, allowing assets to be released to avoid the need for borrowing, and reducing maintenance liabilities on Council-owned buildings.

² For more detail, refer to the Corporate Plan at <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=150299&filetype=pdf>

³ The full list of partners is: East Dorset District Council; North Dorset District Council; Dorset County Council; Christchurch Borough Council; Purbeck District Council; Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; Dorset Fire and Rescue Service; and Dorset Police.

2.3 The Council's financial position

Like all public sector organisations, the Council is currently facing severe pressure on its finances. The Government has made the reduction of the UK's fiscal deficit its top policy priority, with the majority of public bodies facing substantial budget cuts. In addition, low income from investment, increased demands on services (such as homelessness and housing benefit), and an expected cap on Council Tax increases, make it likely that the Council will need to reduce its spending over the coming years. As a result, the Council's Budget Book for 2010/11 states that £1 million of revenue savings will be required per year between 2010/11 and 2014/15.

Analysis of current spending⁴

The Council spent £12.615 million delivering services in 2009/10, which is set to fall to £12.462 million in 2010/11⁵. Of this spending, by far the largest area is Environment, which has a forecast budget of £5.074 million for 2010/11. All remaining service areas (Community; Culture; Health and Housing; Performance; and Resources) have a budget of between £1 million and £2 million.

Most of the Council's spending on services goes on employees and management (£11.184 million), while spending on the maintenance of premises for 2010/11 is budgeted at £1.410 million.

⁴ Figures in the following section are based on East Dorset District Council's Budget Book for 2010/11

⁵ These figures are for gross spending, and do not take account of income from investments, asset rental or contributions from reserves.

3 Principles for making the best use of public assets

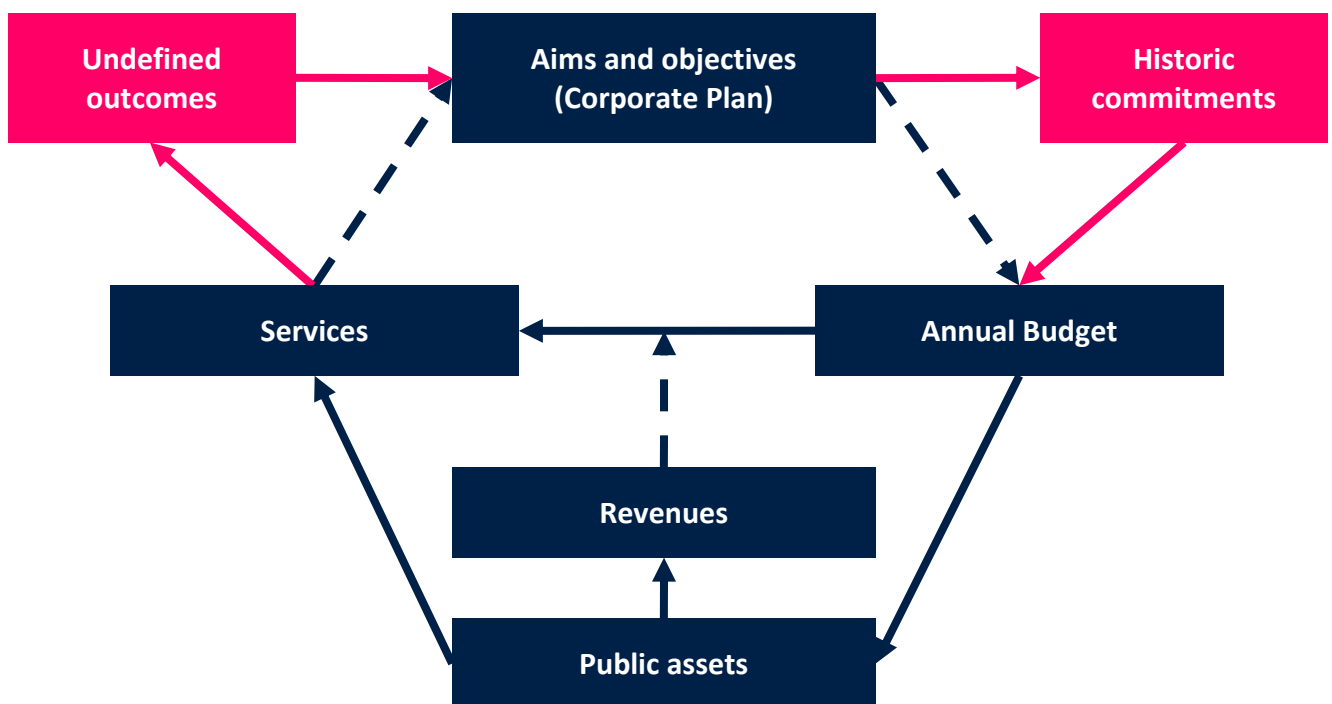
3.1 Overview

There are a number of opportunities for the Council to reduce its costs without resulting in poorer services and fewer benefits to the public. Making better use of its assets is one such opportunity, and there may be other opportunities to make funding go further, including streamlining funding streams, and changing the way services are delivered. This section sets out some of the Total Place principles that have informed this review. These principles are based on the evidence gathered during this review, and are centred around achieving the best possible value from all of the money that the Council spends.

3.2 The Council’s funding challenge

In the simplest sense, the Council has a set of objectives (as set out in its Corporate Plan), and a total budget that it spends to achieve these objectives as fully as possible. The more effectively it spends its money, the better it can achieve its objectives. Figure 3.1 sets out a simplified model of how the Council spends its money, according to our analysis. The Council’s annual budget is primarily allocated towards delivering services, with some money also being spent on maintaining and enhancing assets that support service delivery. In principle, the Council should allocate its budget according to its aims and objectives and the objectives of its key partners, while ensuring that its services and assets make the maximum possible contribution to these objectives. However, much of the Council’s money is typically allocated according to historic commitments (such as ongoing grants to external organisations). At the same time, some of the services funded by the Council are only loosely tied to its aims and objectives, leading to some undefined outcomes. Both of these effects (highlighted in pink in Figure 3.1) act as “leakages” from the system, and reduce the Council’s ability to secure maximum value for money from its spending. Processes have recently been put in place as a result of the recent Scrutiny Review, and these need to be closely linked to the use and management of assets.

Figure 3.1: Model of the Council’s current funding mechanisms



3.3 Linking funding to objectives

The way in which the Council allocates funding between different services has a major impact on whether its money is spent effectively. Like most Local Authorities, the Council allocates funding into many small pools, assigning a budget to each of the activities it undertakes. While this system is effective in dividing up the Council's overall budget, there are a number of ways in which it can lead to money being spent ineffectively:

- Creating many small streams of funding can lead to duplication of effort, services or assets – for example, Wimborne Minster has a large number of community centres that perform overlapping functions, each of which is funded through a separate funding stream and management structure;
- Dividing up funding into too many streams can make it hard to identify how well each funding stream contributes towards the Council's overall aims and objectives; and
- Individual parts of the Council that receive a budget have little incentive to provide services beyond their minimum objectives, or to underspend their budgets.

The ideal solution to ineffective spending is for the Council to link its funding more closely to its objectives. By allocating funding streams based on its aims and objectives, and joining together budgets for services that have similar objectives, the Council could ensure that the money it spends will work more effectively towards achieving its aims.

This principle also applies to funding streams from different public sector organisations operating in East Dorset, such as Dorset County Council, Dorset Primary Care Trust and Dorset Police. For example, all of these organisations have overlapping roles in community and social services, but have separate budgets to fund this work. This can lead to duplication of services, as well as an oversupply of community assets. To overcome this problem, all of the public sector organisations need to work in partnership to align or pool their budgets, ensuring that they are working towards common objectives without duplicating work. Dorset Joint Asset Management Group has been set up to tackle this challenge, and the case study below outlines an example of pooled budgeting.

Case Study: Pooled funding between Swindon Borough Council and Swindon PCT

Swindon Borough Council and Swindon PCT entered into a formal agreement for the commissioning of services with a pooled fund for integrated services for children and young people and services for disabled children. The local authority contributes £20 million per annum and the PCT contributes £8 million per annum. The fund is an aligned budget with the local authority as the fund holder. A second partnership agreement between the Council and PCT resulted in 200 NHS Swindon workers seconded to the Council as part of integrated locality teams and an integrated service for disabled children.

3.4 Securing service level agreements with partner organisations

The Council has a number of partner organisations, including other public sector bodies, and charities and associations that receive funding from the Council. The Council supports many of these organisations financially, to help them benefit the community and contribute to the Council's aims and objectives. However, the Council generally has little control over how these organisations spend their grants, and in some cases the organisation makes only a minor contribution towards the Council's aims.

The Scrutiny Review into the funding of Council-owned buildings identified the need for the Council to secure agreements with all organisations that it provides financial support to. The recommendations of the Review are currently being implemented. Securing such agreements would enable the Council to monitor and influence how its money is spent, and thereby improve the value it gets for its spending. These agreements could be based on quantitative performance indicators, and could set out a shared approach to achieving the Council's aims.

An additional important benefit of service level agreements would be the ability for the Council's delivery organisations to bid for and provide services in partnership with each other.

3.5 Encouraging financial sustainability

Many of the Council's assets have the potential to generate revenues from their activities, to offset the costs of providing services. This is particularly true of the community centres supported by the Council, all of which charge a fee for use of their facilities, and operate trading ventures, such as cafés or restaurants. As far as possible, the Council should seek to make these assets move towards becoming financially self-sufficient, after any public funds received for the delivery of specific and defined services, such that they generate sufficient revenue to cover the majority of their costs.

At present, the Council provides several levels of subsidy to its supported community centres. At the first level, the Council owns the facilities and leases them to the operating community association at a nominal rent. Second, the Council provides all external maintenance for these buildings, and, finally, also provides revenue grants to cover day-to-day running costs. This model of funding is not only costly to the Council, but it also discourages community associations from becoming more efficient. For example, it may encourage associations to neglect their maintenance duties, on the understanding that this is the sole responsibility of the Council. Equally, associations view revenue grants from the Council as part of their regular income stream, discouraging them from reducing spending or increasing their revenue to bridge this gap. Reducing these funding streams should encourage community centres to focus more on their own financial sustainability.

The Council can also take positive steps to help community associations move towards becoming more financially self-sufficient. There are a number of ways in which the Council can provide support to these organisations, including:

- Providing advice to community associations on improving services or managing costs;
- Facilitating cooperation and partnership arrangements between different community associations, which encourage them to work together for mutual benefits; and
- Procuring certain goods and services (such as electricity) on behalf of the associations in order to achieve savings associated with economies of scale, helping them to reduce costs.

By combining positive support with carefully planned reductions in funding, the Council should be able to help the community associations it supports to become more financially self-sustaining and less reliant on ongoing funding from the Council.

3.6 Summary

In the report which follows we deploy the principles set out in this section to each of the 30 assets we reviewed in terms of:

- Linking funding to directives;
- Securing service level agreements with partner organisations; and
- Encouraging financial sustainability

The next section of the report provides a summary of the key characteristics of Wimborne Minster and Ferndown.

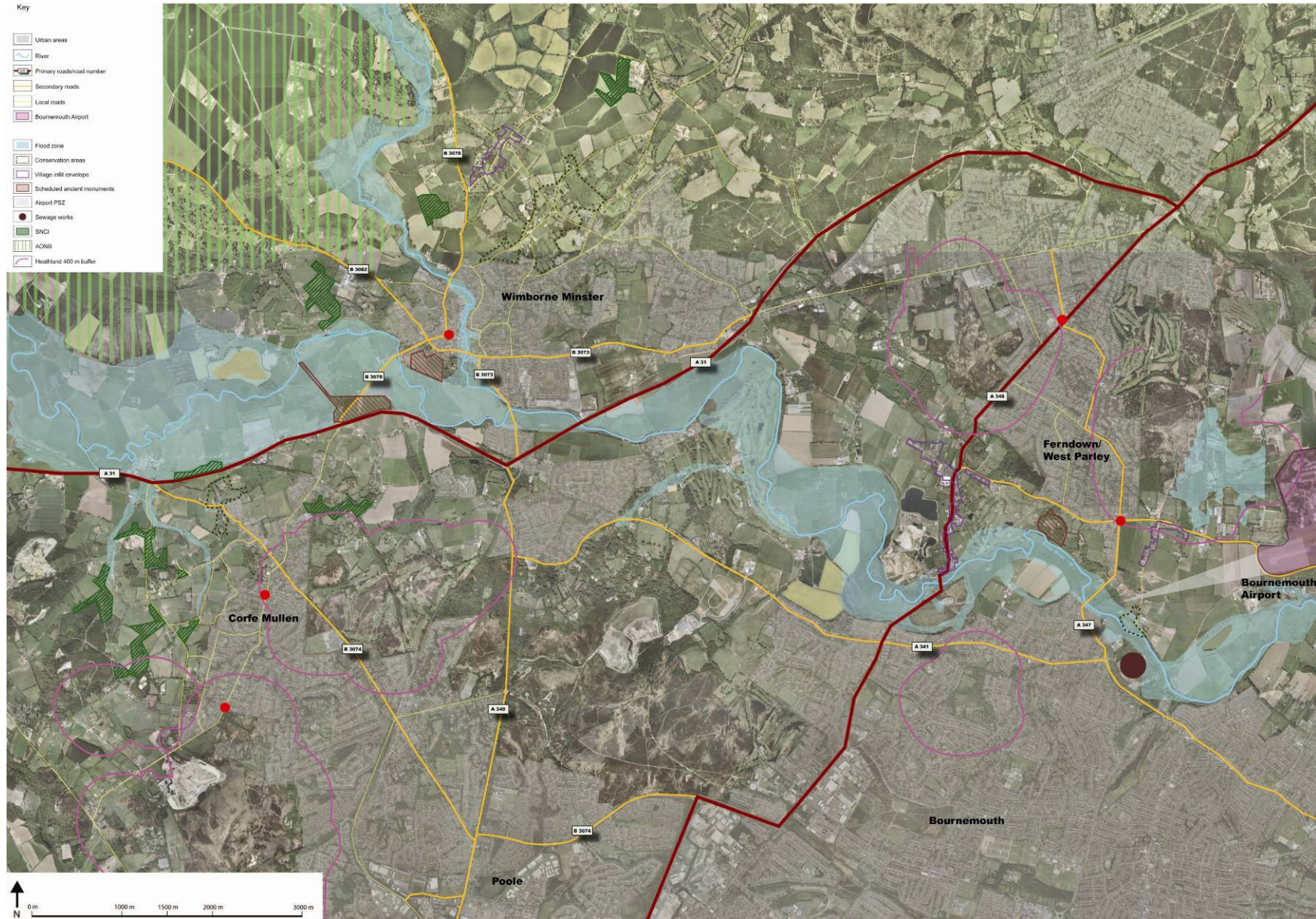
4 Town overviews

4.1 Overview

This section provides a brief summary of the key characteristics of Wimborne Minster and Ferndown. This includes information on the size and role of the towns, as well as an indication of how the demographics of each town are likely to change in the foreseeable future.

Wimborne Minster and Ferndown both lie to the north of the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation, close to the Stour valley. The towns are connected by the A31, and the older Ringwood Road. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the towns and their surrounding area.

Figure 4.1: Overview of Wimborne Minster and Ferndown within East Dorset



4.2 Wimborne Minster

4.2.1. Overview

Wimborne Minster is an historic market town, providing administrative and cultural functions for the area. Wimborne Minster itself has a resident population of around 6,650, and also serves as the main community hub for a number of surrounding areas, including Colehill's 6,710 residents⁶.

While the area to the north of Wimborne Minster is largely rural, the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation lies roughly five miles to the south, making the town a gateway between rural and urban Dorset.

4.2.2. Role

Wimborne Minster has developed over centuries as a traditional market town, providing goods and services to surrounding rural communities. However, Wimborne Minster's role as a market town is complicated by its position at the edge of a large conurbation. The town's proximity to Poole and Bournemouth means that surrounding communities are less reliant on Wimborne Minster as a shopping destination, as a community hub, and as a driver of employment. As a result of this, Wimborne Minster's role is somewhat ambiguous. It performs many of the functions of a market town, and boasts a sizeable retail core, but it also acts to some degree as a residential area for the Poole and Bournemouth labour markets.

Wimborne Minster is the administrative centre of East Dorset, and provides many services for people across East Dorset. The Council's offices are located in Furzehill, at the edge of Wimborne Minster, and many of the Council's services are provided directly from here. In addition, the Council provides community, culture, tourism and environmental services from a range of sites within the town centre. Other organisations also provide services from Wimborne Minster, including Dorset County Council, Wimborne Minster Town Council and Dorset Primary Care Trust.

4.2.3. Functionality

Wimborne Minster has many of the features of an effective market town, but there are a number of areas in which the town fails to make best use of its natural assets. The town's historic core acts as a focal point for visitors and shoppers, but pedestrian flows from the High Street into other retail areas are limited. The town centre also suffers from a lack of open public space, with the Square and High Street dominated by traffic. However, plans are in place to develop the Square into a pedestrianised area. The arrival of Waitrose to the east of the town centre should increase the number of people visiting Wimborne Minster, but it will also shift the focal point of the town centre east, away from the historic core. While the arrival of Waitrose has improved access to the shops on East Street, the poor environment and limited access in the Crown Mead area is a significant constraint on the town's performance, as it occupies a key site between Waitrose and the historic core.

Wimborne Minster has an effective network of roads orbiting the town centre, although there is a gap in the network to the north west of the town centre, between Victoria Road and West Borough. The town's car parks are evenly distributed around the town centre, and are relatively easily accessible, although many of the car parks are poorly signed.

Wimborne Minster is bisected by the River Allen, which is an attractive environmental feature. However, the town centre has mostly developed away from the riverside, making very little use of the opportunities provided by the river. This is especially true in Crown Mead and the Allendale site to the north of the town centre. Although there is a walkway along the river to the north of the town, access in the town centre is limited, and there are few signs highlighting the walk. The nature of the River Allen presents an opportunity for development of a green corridor running through the town centre, with improvements in green space, and access for walking and recreational opportunities. Figure 4.2 provides a visual overview of the different public assets and networks in Wimborne Minster town centre.

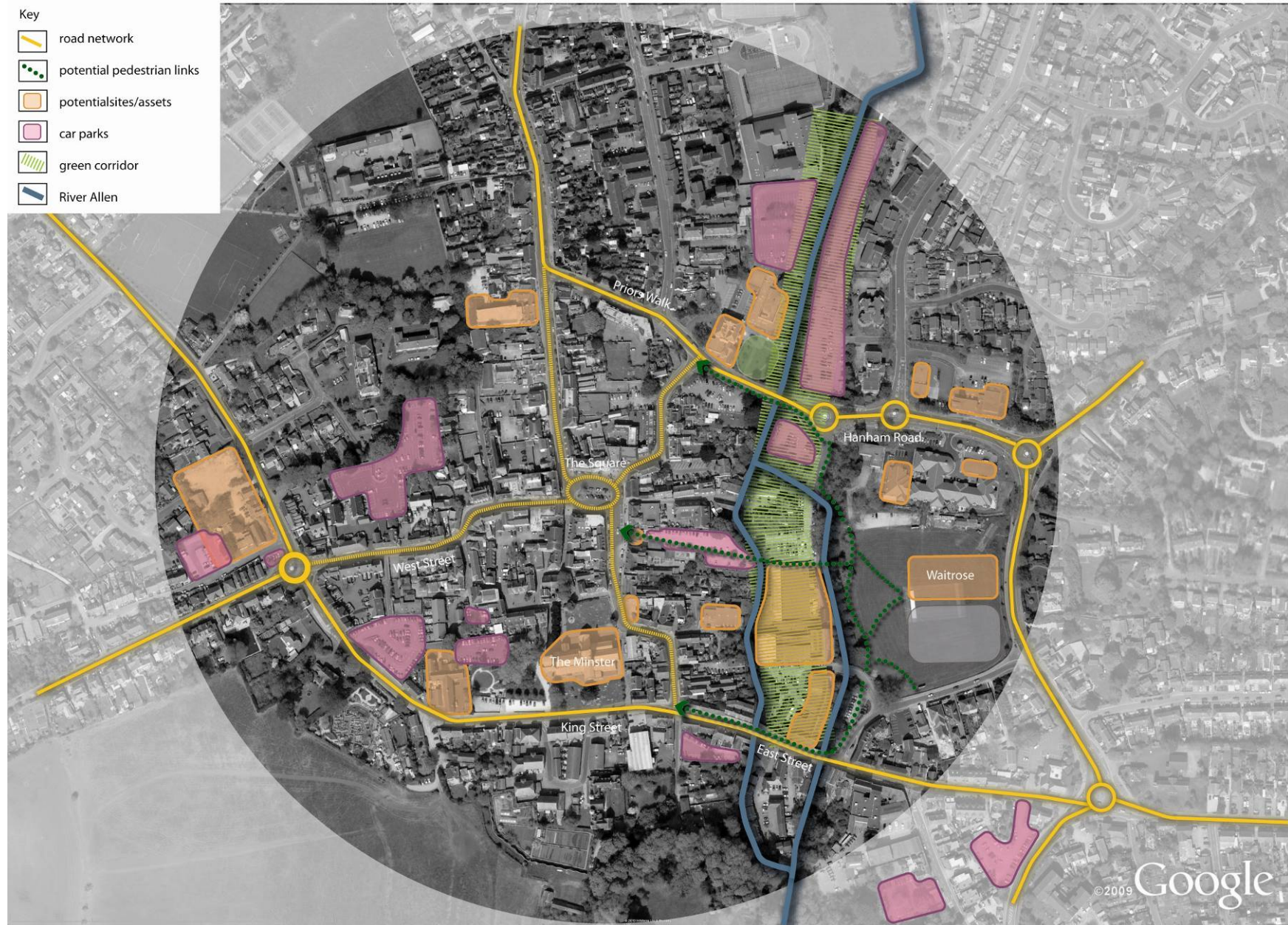
⁶ These are 2006 estimates from Dorset County Council's Dorset Data Book.

4.2.4. Issues for Wimborne Minster

Some of the key issues for Wimborne Minster that relate to this review are:

- The financial performance and age of the Allendale Centre;
- The opening of the Waitrose in the summer of 2010 to the east of the town centre with a new car park of 220 spaces, which could negate the need for other public car parks in the town centre;
- The number of modern public service buildings pepper-potted around the town centre;
- The fourteen car parks located in the town centre, some of which are severely under-used;
- The Allendale site and Crown Mead currently failing to make use of its river frontage;
- The 1960's Crown Mead development, which is reported to detract from the general attractiveness of the town centre; and
- The fact that most visitors to the market are not attracted to Wimborne Minster town centre due to the perceived distance.

Figure 4.2: Overview of networks in Wimborne Minster



4.3 Ferndown

4.3.1. Overview

Ferndown is a relatively modern town, which has grown since the 1960s to become the largest town in East Dorset. Between 1961 and 2006, the population of Ferndown Parish has grown from 6,530 to 17,200⁷. Ferndown does not have an historic centre, consisting of mainly modern buildings.

4.3.2. Role

Ferndown is primarily a residential town, providing access to employment opportunities in Bournemouth and Poole, as well as on the Ferndown Industrial Estate. Although the town has developed a retail offer to meet residents' needs, Ferndown lacks a civic heart to act as a focal point for retailers and community activities. In the 1980s, the Council and Dorset County Council were involved in the creation of Penny's Walk, which sought to create a natural centre for Ferndown. This project involved the creation of a pedestrianised area (Penny's Walk) in the town centre, along with the arrival of a supermarket, a multi-storey car park, and the Barrington Community Centre. However, this development has begun to appear dated, and remains somewhat isolated from the rest of the town centre.

4.3.3. Functionality

The centre of Ferndown is located around Ringwood Road and Victoria Road. Both of these are important through roads, and heavy traffic flows along both roads create a natural barrier between Penny's Walk and most of Ferndown's other retail sites. Although Penny's Walk itself provides good pedestrian access from Tesco to Victoria Road, it is surrounded by car parks and service yards, which limit pedestrian flows to other parts of the town centre.

Ferndown is well served by car parks, the majority of which are free. Combined with good access from the road network, this makes Ferndown an extremely convenient place for shoppers to make quick visits to individual shops. However, the downside of this accessibility is that shoppers and visitors rarely make longer visits to the town centre in comparison to Wimborne Minster, reducing opportunities for strong comparative retail, and limiting the town centre's vibrancy.

Despite the addition of Penny's Walk and the Barrington Centre, Ferndown still lacks a true civic heart or focal point for the local community. This is in part due to the long, narrow shape of Penny's Walk, which does not allow for any large events or gatherings. Figure 4.3 provides a visual overview of the different public assets and networks in Ferndown town centre.

4.3.4. Issues for Ferndown

Some of the key issues for Ferndown that relate to this review are:

- The public realm is functional, but dated;
- The town lacks the character of an historic centre;
- Ringwood Road creates an unpleasant pedestrian environment for shoppers; and
- There are dead frontages along Penny's Walk.

⁷ This information is drawn from the Dorset Data Book, and is based on census information and ONS population estimates.

Figure 4.3: Networks and opportunities in Ferndown



5 Public assets

5.1 Overview

The public sector owns a large number of assets in East Dorset, including office buildings, community facilities, car parks and land holdings. Each of these assets have a role in providing a service or supporting the community, with some assets providing greater public benefits than others. Equally, each asset costs money to operate and maintain, and also has a market value that could be secured from releasing it. This section of the report provides an overview of the public assets considered within this review, and assesses how well each asset contributes to the aims and objectives of the Council and its partners.

This section of the review proceeds in three stages:

- Presenting a baseline review for each asset (section 5.2);
- Grouping similar assets into categories (section 5.3); and
- Assessing the performance of each asset and asset group (section 5.4).

5.2 Baseline asset reviews

The Council identified a list of 30 assets for consideration in this review. Of these assets, 22 are located in Wimborne Minster, with eight in Ferndown. The list includes assets owned by the Council, as well as by Dorset County Council, other public organisations, and private land owners. Full baseline reviews of each asset are available in Appendix A, while each review is summarised in this section.

5.2.1. Wimborne Minster

- 1. Allendale Community Centre** – Owned by the Council, the Community Centre is leased to the Wimborne Community Association, which operates the Centre. The Centre offers rooms for hire for community groups and private users, and also features a café. The Council provides an annual revenue grant of around £20,000 to the Centre. In addition to the revenue grant of £20,000, the maintenance liabilities for the centre are estimated at £195,000 over the next five years. The Centre was the subject of a recent Operational Review by a Council officer, which proposed a number of changes to the way the Centre operates.
- 2. Allendale House** – Owned by the Council, Allendale House is operated by East Dorset Heritage Trust. The Trust uses it as a base for some of its activities, while hiring out the rooms for meetings and conferences. The Council provides a revenue grant to the Trust of around £25,000, as well as covering maintenance costs on Allendale House.
- 3. Ambulance Station** – The Ambulance Station is owned by Dorset County Council, and is used as a base for local ambulance services.
- 4. Car Parks** – The Council owns and operates thirteen car parks within Wimborne Minster, four as short stay car parks, eight as long stay, and one as a permit-only car park for traders. The Council makes a net revenue of around £120,000 per year from its car parks, most of which is derived from Wimborne Minster. Hanham Road, Park Lane and King Street car parks have relatively high levels of utilisation and generate the greatest revenue per space, while Allenview West, Allenview North and Old Road have the lowest levels of utilisation and generate the least revenue per space.
- 5. Community Learning and Education Resource Centre** – The Community Learning and Education Resource Centre is owned by Dorset County Council, and operated by Dorset Community Action. The Centre provides educational services for young people, as well as being available for hire as a community space.

6. **The Cornmarket** – The Cornmarket is an open space to the west of the High Street, which currently acts as a route for pedestrians and delivery access.
7. **Crown Mead** – Crown Mead is a privately owned shopping centre to the east of Wimborne Minster town centre. It occupies a key position within the town centre, but is considered by many of our consultees to be one of the town's least attractive environments.
8. **Fire Station** – The Fire Station is owned by Dorset County Council, and provides a base for local fire services.
9. **Hanham Centre** – Owned and operated by Dorset County Council, the Hanham Centre acts as an Independent Living Centre for elderly and vulnerable people, and has rooms available for community hire.
10. **High Street** – The High Street is one of Wimborne Minster's prime retail areas, and a key route for pedestrians and cars in the town centre. Although it is a one-way route, it has a very wide space for cars, and holds several on-street parking spaces.
11. **Wimborne Minster Library** – Wimborne Minster Library is owned and operated by Dorset County Council, as part of the Authority's Library service.
12. **Police Station** – Wimborne Minster Police Station is owned by Dorset Police.
13. **Wimborne Minster Market** – Wimborne Minster Market is owned by Ensors, a private company, and draws a large number of visitors. It is currently isolated from the town centre due to its location.
14. **The Minster Church of St. Cuthberga** – The Minster is one of Wimborne Minster's key tourist attractions, as well as a major community hub.
15. **Magistrates' Court** – The Magistrates' Court is currently under-utilised, and faces closure under proposals from the Ministry of Justice.
16. **Priest's House Museum** – The Priest's House Museum is East Dorset's only accredited museum. It acts as a tourist attraction in the town centre, and also undertakes outreach and education activities.
17. **Something Special Car Park** – The Something Special Car Park is privately owned, apart from a small strip owned by the Council. It is currently operated as a car park by the Council.
18. **The Square** – The Square is one of the key focal points in Wimborne Minster, and also acts as a major traffic route and bus stop. Proposed enhancements to the Square will see it partly pedestrianised, increasing the scope for it to be used for community events.
19. **Tourist Information Centre** – The Tourist Information Centre is operated by the Council, and is leased from the Queen Elizabeth Free School Governors as part of the deal that sees the Council maintain the Priest's House building. The Tourist Information Centre provides information and booking services for tourists, as well as offering some community services.
20. **Tivoli Theatre** – The Tivoli Theatre is an independent theatre, run by a charity, and granted the freehold on its premises by Dorset and East Dorset Councils. The Theatre offers a range of community and entertainment events, and is financially self-sustaining.
21. **Waitrose** – The Waitrose supermarket opened in July 2010 on the site of the old Cricket Ground. It is an important retail draw for the town centre, and provides access to the town centre via East Street, Crown Mead and Hanham Road. It also features a 205-space car park, for which the Council carries out enforcement activities.
22. **Walford Mill** – Owned by the Council, Walford Mill is home to a craft centre run by Walford Mill Education Trust. The Trust is primarily funded by the Arts Council, although the Council provides a small revenue grant, together with premises and maintenance. The Mill is an important tourist attraction, and also runs educational, cultural and community activities.

5.2.2. Ferndown

- 23. The Barrington Centre** – Owned by the Council, the Barrington Centre is run as a theatre and community centre by the Ferndown Community Association. The Centre provides entertainment and community services for Ferndown residents, as well as offering rooms for hire. The Council provides revenue support of around £20,000 per year, as well as maintenance provision (although this is considerably lower than for comparable venues).
- 24. Dorset County Council Day Care Centre** – The Day Care Centre is owned and operated by Dorset County Council.
- 25. Ferndown Library** - Ferndown Library is owned and operated by Dorset County Council, as part of the Authority's Library service.
- 26. Victoria House (Dorset PCT offices)** – Victoria House is a large office block, currently leased and partly occupied by Dorset Primary Care Trust. The Trust has no plans to vacate the offices completely, but has space available for sub-letting.
- 27. Penny's Walk** – Penny's Walk is a pedestrianised walkway in Ferndown town centre, linking Tesco and the Barrington Centre to Victoria Road. The site is owned by Tesco, and maintained by a local estate agent.
- 28. Tesco** – Tesco is Ferndown's largest retailer, and a major anchor for the town centre.
- 29. Tesco Free Car Park** – Tesco's car park is free to all users, regardless of whether they visit Tesco. The site is the largest car park in Ferndown, providing easy access to the town for car users.
- 30. Wilkinson's Free Car Park** – Wilkinson's car park is currently being part-developed for residential use. It remains a free car park for the store.

5.3 Asset groups

To help assess the performance of assets within the town centres, we have grouped assets that perform similar roles into six groups. These groupings are shown in Table 5.1⁸.

⁸ Please note that some assets fall into more than one category.

Table 5.1: Asset groups for Ferndown and Wimborne Minster

Asset group	Wimborne Minster	Ferndown
<p>Community centres and service hubs</p> <p><i>Assets that act as a hub for the community, either by offering space for events, or providing services</i></p>	<p>1. Allendale Community Centre</p> <p>2. Allendale House</p> <p>5. CLERC</p> <p>9. Hanham Centre</p> <p>11. Wimborne Library</p> <p>20. Tivoli Theatre</p>	<p>23. Barrington Centre</p> <p>25. Ferndown Library</p>
<p>Culture and tourism</p> <p><i>Assets whose primary role is to attract tourists, or enhance the District's cultural offering</i></p>	<p>14. Wimborne Minster</p> <p>22. Walford Mill</p> <p>16. Priest's House Museum</p> <p>19. Tourist Information Centre</p> <p>20. Tivoli Theatre</p>	
<p>Public spaces</p> <p><i>Assets that form a key part of the public realm</i></p>	<p>7. Crown Mead</p> <p>18. The Square</p> <p>10. High Street</p> <p>6. The Cornmarket</p>	<p>27. Penny's Walk</p>
<p>Car parks</p> <p><i>Car parking spaces owned and / or operated by the Council</i></p>	<p>4a. Allenvie South</p> <p>4b. Allenvie West</p> <p>4c. Allenvie North</p> <p>4d. Westfield Close</p> <p>4e. Hanham Road</p> <p>4f. Old Road</p> <p>4g. Leigh Road</p> <p>4h. King Street</p> <p>4i. Poole Road</p> <p>4j. Deans Court car park</p> <p>4k. Pye Corner</p> <p>4l. Walford Mill car park</p> <p>4m. Waitrose car park</p>	<p>41. Penny's Lodge car park</p> <p>29. Tesco free car park</p> <p>30. Wilkinson's car park</p>
<p>Statutory services</p> <p><i>Assets that are used to provide non-discretionary services</i></p>	<p>3. Ambulance station</p> <p>12. Police station</p> <p>8. Fire station</p> <p>15. Magistrates' Court</p>	<p>26. Victoria House</p> <p>24. Day Care Centre</p>

Asset group	Wimborne Minster	Ferndown
Private sites <i>Privately owned assets that have an important influence on the town centres</i>	21. Waitrose 13. Wimborne Market 7. Crown Mead	28. Tesco

5.4 Asset performance

5.4.1. Our approach to assessing asset performance

To determine whether assets are currently being used in the most effective way, we have assessed each asset in terms of its contribution to the Council's aims and objectives, and its value. To do this in a consistent and comparable manner, we have developed three tests to determine how well each asset is performing:

- **Counterfactual** – what would happen if the asset was not there?
- **Competition** – are there other assets that perform a similar role?
- **Value** – does the asset represent good value for money in fulfilling its role?

These tests are applied against each of the objectives identified in the Council's Corporate Plan, to create an asset performance matrix. The tests are based on a series of Key Performance Indicators that we have developed based on evidence gathered during the review. The matrices are included in Appendix B. A summary of our findings is included in this section.

5.4.2. Summary of asset performance by asset group

Community centres and service hubs

Communities is one of the Council's five core priorities under its Corporate Plan. The Council has budgeted over £530,000 for spending on Community Centres in 2010/11, up from £466,250 in 2009/10. This works out at approximately £6 per person in East Dorset, which is a far higher amount than any other District Council in Dorset⁹, where no other District Council spends in excess of £1 per head.

Many of the community centres and service hubs in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown are operated by independent charities, most of which receive financial support from a public body. Between 2008 and 2009, the Council conducted a Scrutiny Review on its Community Centres and other funded buildings¹⁰. This review highlighted the need for a clearer link between Council funding and the activities undertaken by the charities that receive it.

A summary of our findings for the 'community centres and service hubs' asset group is as follows:

- The Council's spending on community centres is high compared to other districts in Dorset;
- Links between the Council and the associations running the community facilities are not well defined;
- There is considerable overlap between the community centres in Wimborne Minster; and
- Community centres do not engage young people effectively.

As a result of these findings, we consider that there are a number of opportunities for the 'community centres and service hubs' asset group:

⁹ This result is derived from cost benchmarking work undertaken by Halcrow.

¹⁰ This document is entitled Report into the Management and Funding of Council-Owned Buildings, 2009

- There are opportunities for all of the community centres to play a more proactive role in engaging the community;
- Developing closer links with schools could help to engage young people;
- Cooperation between community centres could lower costs and improve services;
- Some community centres could be used as alternatives to public conveniences; and
- Certain goods and services could be procured together (such as electricity) on behalf of the associations in order to achieve economies of scale.

In particular, there are three assets that sit within the ‘community centres and service hubs’ asset group which demonstrate significant potential for securing better outcomes. These three assets are the Allendale Community Centre, Allendale House and the Barrington Centre. Further details are provided in the section that follows.

The Allendale Community Centre

Wimborne Minster has a large number of community centres relative to its size. In particular, the Allendale Community Centre performs a similar role to other centres in the town centre. Its entertainment function competes with the Tivoli Theatre, while the Hanham Centre, Community Learning and Education Resource Centre and various village halls and private venues offer rooms for hire to community groups. The perception from the consultation process is that given Wimborne Minster’s population of just over 6,000, there appears to be an oversupply of community venues.

Furthermore, there are significant liabilities associated with the condition of the Allendale Community Centre building. The Council has identified maintenance spending of £195,000 over the next five years that will be required to keep the building in an acceptable state.

The Barrington Centre

In Ferndown, the Barrington Centre, which is facing a precarious but improving financial situation, plays a key role in the town centre, as there are few other community hubs that have a similar offering close by. While Ferndown has other community spaces (most notably the Village Hall), there is a relative shortage of community spaces in comparison to Wimborne Minster, given its population of over 17,000.

Allendale House

The link between Allendale House and the East Dorset Heritage Trust’s activities is ambiguous. The hiring out of rooms is not central to the mission of the Trust. The Trust’s heritage events appear to break even, while the UK Online and Computer Course activities appear to make a profit.

Any community benefit from the use of Allendale House as a subsidised meeting venue is extremely limited, and there does not appear to be any case for the Council to support this activity. Given the limited facilities required by the East Dorset Heritage Trust, there is therefore little case for East Dorset Heritage Trust to adopt Allendale House as its offices.

Culture and tourism

East Dorset’s culture and tourism assets are largely concentrated in Wimborne Minster, owing to its historic nature and appeal to visitors. Tourism makes an important contribution to East Dorset’s economy, generating over £100 million in visitor spending, and accounting for 7% of the local economy¹¹. Aside from the economic value of tourism, culture is also an important part of the Council’s role (although not highlighted explicitly in the 2010 – 2016 Corporate Plan).

The Council provides financial support to the Walford Mill Craft Centre and the Priest’s House Museum (including maintenance of buildings). In return, these facilities attract tourists and the charities conduct educational and community outreach programmes. The Minster itself is one of Wimborne Minster’s key visitor attractions (for which the Council provides no financial support) and the Tivoli Theatre also plays an

¹¹ Figures from www.dorsetforyou.com, based on South West Tourism and DCC estimates, 2005

important cultural role in the town. The Council also operates the Tourist Information Centre, which helps to support tourism across East Dorset and the wider area.

A summary of our findings for the ‘culture and tourism’ asset group is as follows:

- Cultural facilities in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown enjoy significant support from volunteers;
- Wimborne Minster has a strong and varied offer for visitors, supported by an effective tourism information service;
- The Tivoli Theatre provides an excellent model for a self-sufficient venue; and
- The Tourist Information Centre, the Priest’s House Museum and Walford Mill have shown the ability to widen the type of services that they provide.

As a result of these findings, we consider that the key opportunities for the ‘culture and tourism’ asset group are:

- To increase delivery of services, such as Community Outreach; and
- Walford Mill has the potential to increase the services that it provides in line with the Council’s aims and objectives.

Public spaces

Wimborne Minster generally has an attractive built environment. However, it has a shortage of green open space in the town centre¹², and there are several parts of the public realm that could be improved. Part of the challenge for Wimborne Minster is to open up more spaces for pedestrian use and public events, while balancing this with the needs of vehicles¹³. Plans for part-pedestrianising the Square have already been approved, while options for extending this to parts of the High Street may also be considered. The Cornmarket is under-utilised as a space within the town centre at present. The most critical public space problem within Wimborne Minster is at Crown Mead, which presents an unattractive environment out of keeping with the rest of the town. Crown Mead occupies a key retail space in the town, between Waitrose and the town centre, and the creation of a more effective and attractive retail area could boost Wimborne Minster’s appeal to shoppers, visitors and residents.

Ferndown’s town centre is generally functional, without being attractive. As the only significant pedestrianised area within the town centre, Penny’s Walk occupies a key location. Although clean and safe, the environment in Penny’s Walk does not lend itself to civic activities, partly due to its quality and surroundings, and partly because it is somewhat isolated from other parts of the town centre.

Car parks

The Council’s car parks perform two roles: to provide access to the town centres, supporting the local economy; and to raise revenue for the Council. The Council owns 13 car parks within Wimborne Minster, and one within Ferndown.

A summary of our findings for the car park’s asset group is as follows:

- Wimborne Minster has attractive public car parks, while Penny’s Lodge car park in Ferndown is also attractive;
- The Council’s car parks generate a small revenue stream, relative to other council’s in Dorset;
- Wimborne Minster and Ferndown have excellent car parking provision, supporting retail in the two towns; and
- Much of Ferndown’s car parking is free, and provided by private companies.

¹² This information has been provided by an East Dorset District Council officer

¹³ For more information on the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles in Wimborne Minster, refer to the Wimborne Minster Town Centre Action Plan

In terms of the performance of individual car parks within this asset group (see section 5.2.1 for further details), there are considerable variations in gross revenues, revenues per space and levels of utilisation between different car parks in Wimborne Minster. The four short stay car parks perform relatively strongly in terms of revenue per space; in particular Hanham Road and King Street. However, Wimborne Minster's eight long stay car parks have a more mixed performance, with Allenview West, Allenview North and Old Road generating relatively low levels of utilisation and revenue per space.

Penny's Lodge car park is the only Council-owned car park in Ferndown. Its financial performance is reasonably strong, although it compares unfavourably to Wimborne Minster's short stay car parks and has to compete with Tesco's car park which is free.

Table 5.2 provides a summary of key financial indicators for each of the Council-owned car parks considered in this review. It must be noted that in addition to the gross revenue shown in Table 5.2, the Council also raises revenue from parking permits, for which the total was £102,738 in 2009/10.

Table 5.2: Car park financial performance, 2009/10

Car park	Number of spaces	Gross revenue (£000s)	Gross revenue per space (£)	Utilisation (%)
Allenview South	92	69.4	754	39%
King Street	102	117.4	1,151	60%
Hanham Road	27	35.7	1,321	69%
Park Lane	13	15.0	1,158	61%
Penny's Lodge	70	52.8	755	40%
Allenview North	91	18.5	203	18%
Allenview West	140	21.2	151	14%
Poole Road	57	28.2	495	44%
Westfield Close	160	53.6	335	30%
Pye Corner	6	4.1	683	62%
Leigh Road	62	27.2	439	39%
Old Road	43	8.7	203	19%
Walford Mill	48	11.7	245	21%

Notes:

All figures are sourced from the Council's ticket machine recording software, and represent the year between April 1st 2009 and March 31st 2010.

Utilisation describes the proportion of time for which each space in the car park is full on average. It is calculated based on a 9 hour day (9am to 6pm), for 365 days a year. 100% utilisation would mean every space being full for nine hours a day, 365 days a year.

The figures presented here do not include returns from enforcement charges or parking permits.

All figures include VAT.

As a result of these findings, we consider that there are a number of opportunities for the 'car parks' asset group:

- A number of Wimborne Minster's car parks would make excellent sites for development;
- The market value of Wimborne Minster's car parks would be much greater with changes in planning permission; and
- Venues such as schools and banks could be used to increase car parking availability at times of peak demands.

Statutory services

There are four buildings in close proximity in Wimborne Minster that are used as bases for specific services in the town (police, ambulance and fire stations and the Magistrates' court). Each of these buildings are located in Wimborne Minster for historic reasons, and may not be ideally suited to the needs of the organisations that use them now. Decisions about the buildings' futures will be taken separately by the organisations responsible for them. The Ministry of Justice is consulting on the closure of the Magistrates' Court at present.

In Ferndown, the Day Care Centre occupies an important position close to the town centre, which may be better suited to a more community-oriented use. Dorset County Council is in the process of reviewing whether the building will be retained under its current use. Meanwhile, Victoria House is under-utilised as an office space, and Dorset Primary Care Trust is in the process of reviewing its arrangements there.

Private sites

There are three privately owned sites in Wimborne Minster and one in Ferndown that have a significant impact on each of the town's retail performance:

- Waitrose at the Rowland's Hill site;
- Crown Mead;
- Wimborne Minster market; and
- Tesco.

Further details about the performance of each of these assets are provided in the section that follows.

Waitrose

The recent opening of Waitrose at the Rowland's Hill site has created a significant retail draw to the east of the town centre, as well as a large new car park and public parkland. At the time of writing, it is too early to gauge the impact that Waitrose will have on the town centre, both in terms of footfall and car parking demand.

Crown Mead

Crown Mead, which is privately owned by an offshore investment company, occupies a key area within Wimborne Minster, acting as a link between the historic core and Waitrose, as well as the East Street shops. It also occupies a naturally advantageous position within the town centre, running along the River Allen. However, the area's poor environment makes this area less attractive for visitors and shoppers, which reduces the scope for pedestrian movements to the east of the town, as well as limiting north-south access along the Allen. The most salient issue relating to Crown Mead has been about the potential of developing a footbridge between Waitrose and Crown Mead.

Wimborne Market

Wimborne Market is located in the south east of Wimborne Minster, away from the town centre. It is a tourist attraction in its own right and is an important draw for shoppers and visitors alike. The Market is a profitable venture for its owner, Ensors, but it provides limited benefits to the town centre because of its perceived distance from the town centre. If an alternative site for the Market, closer to the town centre, could be identified, this would likely be in the interests of Ensors, the Council and most town centre businesses.

Tesco

Tesco in Ferndown has a major impact on the town centre, as a major retail anchor. There is little scope for altering Tesco's presence or role within the town centre.

5.5 Summary

This section of the report has provided a description of each of the 30 assets considered in this review. These 30 assets have then been grouped according to the functions that they perform in order to aid assessment of the performance of each asset.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the assessment of the performance of each asset:

- The Allendale Community Centre performs a similar role to other community centres and service hubs in Wimborne Minster town centre;
- There are significant liabilities associated with the condition of the Allendale Community Centre;
- The Barrington Centre plays a key role in Ferndown town centre;
- The link between Allendale House and the East Dorset Heritage Trust's activities is ambiguous;
- Any community benefit from the use of Allendale House as a subsidised meeting venue is extremely limited;
- The Tourist Information Centre, the Priest's House Museum and Walford Mill have shown the ability to widen the type of services that they provide;
- Wimborne Minster has the challenge of opening up more spaces for pedestrian use and public events;
- The Cornmarket is underutilised as a space within Wimborne Minster town centre;
- Crown Mead within Wimborne Minster is considered an unattractive environment;
- Allenvier West, Allenvier North and Old Road are the worst performing car parks;
- The financial performance of Penny's Lodge car park in Ferndown is reasonably strong;
- The police, ambulance and fire stations and the Magistrates' court building may not be ideally suited to these organisations;
- The Day Care Centre in Ferndown occupies an important position close to the town centre, which may be better suited to a more community-orientated use;

- Victoria House is underutilised as an office space; and
- Wimborne Market provides limited benefit to the town centre due to its location.

The following section of this report sets out the main options for improving the use of public assets in Ferndown and Wimborne Minster town centre.

6 Opportunity areas

6.1 Overview

This section of the report considers the various options that might be pursued in order to improve the use of public assets in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown. We have identified four key opportunity areas, which have been identified in the review as high priorities for the Council and its partners. For each opportunity area, we have conducted a full options appraisal, to determine the best course of action. This section of the report includes a summary of the options considered, while the full options appraisal is detailed in Appendix C. Visualisations indicating the location of proposals are detailed in Appendix F.

This review has identified four key opportunity areas for improving the use of public assets in Ferndown and Wimborne Minster. Two of these areas are specific sites, while the other two concern the way in which particular types of asset are managed. The four key opportunity areas are:

- **Community centres and service hubs** – changing the way Wimborne Minster and Ferndown’s community centres and service hubs are funded and managed;
- **Car parks** – releasing under-used car parks for development, and improving the financial performance of car parks;
- **The Allendale site** – potential redevelopment of land at the site of the Allendale Centre and Allenvier car parks; and
- **Wimborne Market** – potential relocation of the Market to a town centre site, with subsequent redevelopment of the existing site.

6.2 Options considered

The following options for each of the key opportunity areas have been considered:

- Do nothing;
- Preferred option; and
- Alternative options.

The preferred option is considered to be the most ‘balanced’ in terms of making the best use of assets within the two town centres to secure better outcomes at lower cost.

6.3 Community centres and service hubs

The final set of options that have been considered for the community centres and service hubs opportunity are as follows:

- **Do nothing** – no change to the current operation of any asset;
- **Reduce the number of community centres** – ending Council support for the Allendale Community Centre and East Dorset Heritage Trust, while reviewing support for all other community facilities;
- **Broaden the services offered by community facilities** – establish agreements with all community facilities to expand and improve the range of services they provide;
- **Improve community benefits while moving towards financial self-sufficiency (preferred option)** – encouraging community centres to require less Council funding, while working with all partners to provide services more effectively.

6.4 Car parks

The final set of options that have been considered for the car parks opportunity are as follows:

- **Do nothing** – no change to the current operation of any car parks;
- **Alter the management arrangements for current car parks** – improve financial performance of existing car parks;
- **Release under-used car parks (preferred option)** – Old Road and Allenvie West car parks would be released for development, while the future of Allenvie North would be closely monitored.

6.5 The Allendale Site

The final set of options that have been considered for The Allendale Site opportunity are as follows:

- **Do nothing** – no change to the current operation of the site;
- **Rebuild the Allendale Community Centre** – replace the Allendale Community Centre with a smaller building;
- **Residential- or commercial-led development** – release the site for private development;
- **Create a community hub (joint preferred option)** – develop a hub for various public facilities, including a replacement for the current Allendale Centre building;
- **Relocate the Council’s offices (joint preferred option)** – Develop a new base for the Council at the site.

6.6 Wimborne Market

The final set of options that have been considered for the Wimborne Market opportunity are:

- **Do nothing** – no change to the current operation of the Market;
- **Ensors proposal (preferred option)** – work with Ensors to deliver a solution that involves relocating the market to the town centre, while redeveloping the current site.

6.7 Summary

This section of the review has considered the various options that might be pursued in order to improve the use of public assets in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown; including the preferred options. The following section of the review sets out the recommendations, implications and justification associated with each of the preferred options.

7 Recommended actions

7.1 Overview

This section of our review sets out the recommendations, implications and justification associated with the preferred options outlined in Section 6. The recommendations are made based on the evidence presented in this report, and the options appraisal conducted by Halcrow, and detailed in Appendix C.

7.2 Community centres and service hubs

7.2.1. Recommendations

The Council should seek to improve the services offered by its community centres in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown, while reducing its spending and liabilities on community assets. In order to achieve this, our key recommendations are as follows:

- There is a future role for all of the community centres, although we recommend that two of these facilities (Allendale House and Allendale Centre) need to initiate a major change in the way that they operate;
- Good practice organisations should be incentivised and given the opportunity to expand the services they provide;
- The Council should work with its community centres and cultural facilities with the aim of making them financially self-sufficient after any public funds received for the delivery of specific and defined services, subject to the following provisos:
 - Moving towards financial self-sufficiency would mean that each facility received no revenue grant and minimal contribution to repairs and maintenance from the Council. However, buildings would continue to be leased at nominal rents as a concession; and
 - Grants or benefits-in-kind would be retained where the money was used to provide a service that would otherwise be provided by the Council.
- The Council should aim to find accommodation that is more suitable for the East Dorset Heritage Trust;
- Allendale House should either be rented out at a market rate (as long as this is appropriate to the nature of the building), or used for an alternative activity as identified by the Council;
- The Council's relationship with East Dorset Heritage Trust should be reviewed in accordance with the Trust's aims and objectives, and their contribution to the Council's aims and objectives; and
- The Council should support a down-sizing of the Allendale Community Centre, making it more appropriate for the needs of the wider community, and allowing better use to be made of the Allendale site.

7.2.2. Implications for individual assets

- **Allendale Community Centre** – The Wimborne Community Association will need to work with the Council to improve its revenue streams and reduce its costs. This will involve a transformation in the relationship between the Council and the Association. The site of the Allendale Community Centre is also recommended for redevelopment, with a smaller community centre being provided as part of a community hub.
- **Allendale House** – East Dorset Heritage Trust's activities will need to be reviewed in the light of its objectives and role. The Trust should consider its needs for premises, and aim to become financially self-sufficient. We recommend that the Council continues to provide revenue support if the Trust can demonstrate that this money is spent on activities which contribute directly to the Council's aims and

objectives. Allendale House will become available for the Council to use either as a financial asset, or as a facility for delivering services. Any hiring of spaces should be in partnership with other community space hiring on the Allendale site.

- **Barrington Community Centre** – We recommend that the Barrington Community Centre needs to reduce its reliance on revenue grants over the next five years, which will involve continued efforts to increase revenues and decrease costs.

7.2.3. Justification

Financial self-sufficiency after any public funds received for the delivery of specific and defined services

The Council needs to move towards a model of funding where the money it spends can be closely matched to the value this spending provides. The Council provides a significant subsidy to all of its community centres through the provision of buildings at nominal rent. Where that facility itself provides a service to the community (i.e. through being available for hire, and acting as a community hub), it seems appropriate that the building is provided by the Council, but that all other costs should be covered by the user (through room hire charges). Under this model, the only case where revenue support could be justified is where that money is used directly to provide a service that contributes to the Council's aims and objectives.

Allendale House and East Dorset Heritage Trust

As Allendale House is a valuable asset to the Council, it is imperative that the Council can demonstrate a reasonable rate of return on its use, either financially, or through the provision of a valuable service to the community. East Dorset Heritage Trust is a charity which benefits from a grant of £25,000 per annum and a lease with 35 years still remaining. If East Dorset Heritage Trust is to continue receiving financial support from the Council, it should demonstrate that it provides specific services that contribute to the Council's aims and objectives. Otherwise, East Dorset Heritage Trust should generate funding through its own sources, either through donations or revenues from its activities. The potential relocation of the Trust should be considered elsewhere in the town, to release the building to enable it to be rented out at a market rate or used for alternative activities which meet corporate objectives.

Allendale Community Centre

The current Allendale Community Centre building is in a poor state of repair, with essential maintenance of £195,000 (payable by the Council) required over the next five years. This is a significant investment requirement. Given the level of competition among community facilities in Wimborne Minster and the increased role of the Tivoli Theatre in live productions and cinema, there is a strong case for a replacement for the current building to be considerably smaller.

7.2.4. Financial implications

Our analysis shows that the Council could make an ongoing saving of around £65,000 per year if these recommendations were to be successfully implemented. This does not take into account the potential saving of £195,000 associated with not repairing the current Allendale Community Centre building.

7.3 Car parks

7.3.1. Recommendations

The Council should seek to improve the financial performance and utilisation of the car parks it owns, without compromising the contribution that car parks make to accessibility in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown. To achieve this, the Council should consider releasing under-used car parks for sale or other uses.

Our key recommendations for this asset group are as follows:

- The Council should release its underutilised and poor financial performing car parks to the market;
- The Council should continue to review the performance of all of its car parks, with Allenvue North facing the closest scrutiny in the immediate future. The six coach parking spaces at Allenvue North should be reviewed; and

- The Council should consider whether there is scope for introducing charges at the other car parks it owns e.g. Verwood.

7.3.2. Implications for individual assets

- **Allenview West car park** –Allenview West car park should be released for development or an alternative use. Ideally, the site would be developed as part of the larger Allendale site, although some car parking should remain on the site as part of any new development.
- **Old Road car park** – Old Road car park has the potential to be released to market for residential development. It appears unlikely that a comprehensive development of the area around the Old Road car park could be achieved, making a standalone development on the car park site the most likely outcome.
- **Allenview North car park** – Allenview North car park could remain as a car park for the foreseeable future, with its coach park converted into car parking spaces. However, as a car park that is poorly utilised at present, Allenview North car park would require regular reviews to ensure that it continues to be needed as a car park.
- **Dorset County Council car park by Penny’s Lodge** – Dorset County Council’s car park in Ferndown is reserved for Council staff on weekdays. However, it is available for free public parking at weekends, reducing the Council’s revenue at its Penny’s Lodge car park. Closing this car park at weekends, or introducing charges for it, would increase the Council’s revenue from the car park.

7.3.3. Justification

Old Road and Allenview West car parks have very low rates of utilisation (19% and 14% respectively). Allenview West is however a popular long stay car park for season ticket holders and for parents dropping off children at Allenbourne School. It is also within the flood plain and will need to be subject to a Level 2 Flood Risk Assessments if development is to take place. Both car parks lie close to other large car parks that have spare capacity – Old Road car park is close to Westfield Close car park, while Allenview West car park is adjacent to Allenview North and South car park.

7.3.4. Financial implications

Releasing Allenview West car park for residential development could yield capital receipts of up to £2.7 million, while Old Road car park would become available for development to meet the Council’s housing objectives and could yield receipts of £750,000 to £850,000. If the decision was taken to release Allenview North car park for development, this could attract up to £1.75 million in capital receipts.

7.4 The Allendale Site

7.4.1. Recommendations

At present, the Allendale site is occupied by the Allendale Community Centre building, which is in a poor state of repair and is coming towards the end of its usable life, and Allenview West car park, Wimborne Minster’s least well-used car park. Based on the District Valuer’s estimates, the site could be worth up to £3.75 million if it were released for residential development (although the risk of flooding at the site could seriously constrain its use for residential purposes). Nevertheless, the site would be an ideal location for a series of public buildings, providing joint services to the town.

As a result, this report recommends that the Allendale Site should either be redeveloped into a community hub, which replaces many of the public assets in Wimborne Minster in one building including smaller community facilities, or be used to relocate the Council’s offices from Furzehill into the town centre.

As there are two feasible options for the Allendale site at this stage of the analysis, we have highlighted the recommendations, justification and financial implications separately in the sections that follow.

Community hub option

If the Community Hub option was proved to be the ultimate preferred option at the Allendale Site, our key recommendations would be as follows:

- The Council should support the demolition of the Allendale Community Centre, replacing it with a smaller community centre, and release the remaining land holdings along the west bank of the River Allen for development into a public sector hub;
- The Council should facilitate redevelopment of the site into a community hub, which could include facilities for the a GP Surgery, Wimborne Library, a replacement for the Allendale Community Centre, and private residential or commercial buildings; and
- This development would be funded by contributions from each of the services located onto the site, as well as by any capital from releasing parts of the site for private development.

Council offices relocation option

If the relocation of the Council offices from Furzehill to the Allendale Site proved to be the ultimate preferred option, our key recommendations would be as follows:

- The Council should support the demolition of the Allendale Community Centre, replacing it with a smaller community centre, and release the remaining land holdings along the west bank of the River Allen for development into a public sector hub;
- The Council should release its offices at Furzehill, using the capital receipts to fund a development of new offices, along with a new community centre, at the Allendale Site; and
- The new offices will be designed to improve interaction between the Council and citizens, allowing different frontline services to be provided more easily within the Council offices.

7.4.2. Implications for individual assets

Community hub option

- **Allendale Community Centre** – the current community centre building will be demolished, but will be replaced by a downsized centre as part of the community hub development.
- **Allenview West car park** – the current car parking arrangements will be ended, although part of the site would be retained as a car park for the new community hub.
- **Wimborne Library** – Dorset County Council would have the option to release the current library building, and locate Wimborne Minster’s library services within the new community hub. The existing library site could be sold or leased for commercial/retail use.
- **GP surgery** – a GP surgery would be offered the option to relocate into the new community hub.

Council offices relocation option

- **Allendale Community Centre** – the current community centre building will be demolished, but will be replaced by a downsized centre as part of the new council offices.
- **Allenview West car park** – the current car parking arrangements will be ended, although part of the site would be retained as a car park for the new council offices.
- **The Council offices, Furzehill** – the Council’s offices at Furzehill would be released for sale, generating estimated capital receipts of at least £3.5 million¹⁴.

¹⁴ The District Valuer calculated the Council offices’ Existing Use Value at £3,637,500 in April 2009

7.4.3. Justification

Community hub option

The advantage of creating a community hub at the Allendale Site is that it would allow the Council, along with Dorset County Council and its public sector partners, to consolidate many of their buildings into a single site. This should help to reduce costs for these buildings, while improving convenience and service quality for citizens. At the same time, this option would enable the Council to achieve extra capital receipts by allowing part of the site to be developed privately, for residential or commercial uses. It is likely that such a scheme could be designed so that it were cost neutral, with each of the services that locate at the community hub paying a contribution towards the development, and receipts from private development used to offset the costs of demolition and land assembly.

Council offices relocation option

Relocating its offices to the Allendale Site would offer numerous advantages to the Council. A central location would be more appropriate for the Council, as it would enable it to engage closely with the local community. It would also allow the Council to promote sustainable transport, reducing reliance on cars, while providing a significant boost to the town centre retail economy.

The current offices at Furzehill should generate a high sale price, due to the size of the overall site. The Council has estimated that the Furzehill offices will require £218,350 in maintenance over the next five years, a cost that would be reduced by a move to new offices. The relocation would also allow the Council to construct modern purpose built offices that more closely suit its needs, and the needs of the community. In addition, the capital receipts from the sale of the current offices should be sufficient to cover the construction costs for the new offices.

7.4.4. Financial implications

Community hub option

The financial implications from the redevelopment of the Allendale Site into a community hub would depend on the exact development package put together. However, it is likely that the development could be designed such that it is cost neutral, with land released for private development to cover any unmet costs.

Under this option, the Council would save £195,000 in maintenance costs on the Allendale Centre over the next five years.

Council offices relocation option

The financial implications from the relocation of the Council's offices to the Allendale site would depend on the price received for the Furzehill site, and the specification of the new Council offices building. It is likely that the scheme would be cost neutral, or even generate a surplus for the Council.

Under this option, the Council would save £195,000 in maintenance costs on the Allendale Centre over the next five years.

7.5 Wimborne Market

7.5.1. Recommendations

The Council should work with Ensors, the owner of Wimborne Market, towards a mutually acceptable solution that allows Wimborne Market to relocate to a more central position within Wimborne Minster. There are many potential benefits from relocating the Market, but a number of major obstacles also remain. At the moment, there is no proposal that is likely to be implemented, but sustained negotiation between the Council and Ensors could lead to a solution with significant benefits for both parties.

Our key recommendations for Wimborne Market are as follows:

- The Council should support in principle the idea of a street market in the centre of Wimborne Minster. This market would operate every day from Monday to Saturday, and would cover the pedestrianised part of the Square. The market would be operated by Ensors, with profits from the operation shared between

Ensors, the Council and selected charities and organisations within the town (which could include the Chamber of Trade and Town Council);

- Potential extensions could be considered into the High Street, Cook Row and Cornmarket. These streets are all County highway land, although the Council owns the paved area in Cook Row beside the public toilets;
- The Council should enter into negotiations with Ensors over a comprehensive proposal for relocating the Market into the town centre. The Council should be prepared to make some compromises with Ensors, provided that any proposal benefits the town centre and the community of Wimborne Minster. Operating the Market in the town centre for a trial period may also help to tackle any practical problems that emerge;
- If the site of the current Market is released, the Council should support a residential-led development, with a significant affordable housing component; and
- The Council should avoid any attempt to close down the Market in Wimborne Minster without finding a suitable alternative location, due to the support it provides to the local economy.

7.5.2. Implications for individual assets

- **Wimborne Market** – The Market’s current site could be released for residential development, the most appropriate use for a site in this location.
- **The Square** – Following the Square Enhancement Scheme, the Square could be used most days of the week for the Market.
- **High Street** – Any move to bring the Market into the town centre would strengthen the case for part-pedestrianising the High Street, to create a network of open space between the Square and the Cornmarket.
- **Cornmarket** – The Cornmarket could be used as a venue for the market, increasing footfall in the area, and helping to boost retail trade in the west of Wimborne Minster.

7.5.3. Justification

Wimborne Market is a successful private business, which has arguably the strongest brand of any retailer in Wimborne Minster. The Market’s current site is not suitable for the type of activities carried out, while the peripheral location means that the Market creates limited economic benefits for the town centre economy.

However, finding a suitable alternative site for the Market is a difficult task, as Ensors have a number of requirements to maintain their business interests. Ensors have indicated that they are prepared to downsize the main component of the Market, to make it appropriate for location on the streets of the town centre. However, they also require a larger site to be used for car boot sales. Their proposed site, located outside Wimborne Minster, lies in the green belt, and is currently not eligible for development.

Bringing the Market into the town centre would have a major impact on Wimborne Minster’s economy. Locating a large, successful market within the town centre is likely to increase the number of visitors and shoppers to Wimborne Minster, benefiting traders within the town centre. Given that Wimborne Minster is a market town, having a daily market within the town centre would greatly enhance its appeal to visitors and local shoppers alike, as well as making the town more attractive as a destination for businesses. On top of this, a share of the profits from the market’s operations would help to support further action to improve the town’s economic effectiveness. For example, many of the actions identified in the Wimborne Minster Town Centre Action Plan could be funded through this mechanism.

The development of the current market site could also help to contribute towards the Council’s housing aims and objectives, as the site has been identified as a strategic site for developing affordable housing.

Given this balance of benefits and obstacles, the Council should pursue negotiations with Ensors to achieve the best possible outcome.

7.5.4. Financial implications

Under Ensors' proposed model for running the town centre market, the Council would gain a revenue stream from their share of the profit from the market's operations. It is not clear how great this revenue stream would be, as this would depend on the success and scale of the new market operation. In addition, a revenue stream would also be created for charities or organisations in Wimborne Minster town centre, much of which would be used to work towards the Council's objectives.

There is likely to be limited financial implications to the Council from the redevelopment of the current market site, unless the Council undertook any aspects of the development itself.

7.6 Other opportunity areas

7.6.1. Dorset County Council Site

Four of the assets covered by this review are located in a cluster to the north east of Wimborne Minster: the Fire Station; Ambulance Station; Police Station; and Magistrates' Court. Each of these assets, which act as bases for specific local services, have become less appropriate in recent years, due to the way these services are now delivered. Proposals for closing the Magistrates' Court have already been put forward by the Ministry of Justice, while Dorset Primary Care Trust has indicated that the Ambulance Station would be better located at an alternative site. The futures of the Police and Fire Stations are not clear, but it is possible that both could be relocated in the future.

7.6.2. Priest's House Museum

It is unlikely that the Priest's House Museum would experience any significant change in its operations, as the financial support it receives from the Council relates to seconded employees that provide a direct service. The Museum would need to continue to demonstrate that these staff contributed to the Council's aims and objectives on an ongoing basis. Opportunities for increased delivery of services, such as community outreach, should be considered and supported by the Council for the Museum Trust to bid to provide these services.

7.6.3. Walford Mill Craft Centre

The Walford Mill Education Trust may see an increase in its revenue support from the Council, although it would need to set aside more money towards the maintenance of the building and grounds. Walford Mill is currently funded largely by the Arts Council, but this support is under threat, with severe implications for the Mill's continued operations. The Council could provide revenue support to the Trust in return for services that contribute to the Council's aims and objectives. Under these circumstances, it is likely that Walford Mill will need to increase the services that it provides in line with the Council's aims and objectives.

7.6.4. Part-pedestrianising the High Street

At present, Wimborne High Street operates as a one-way street for vehicles, with on-street parking on both sides. In its northern section, the road is wide enough for four to five cars (including parking spaces). The High Street is one of Wimborne's prime retail locations, and is also an important part of the public realm. Part-pedestrianising the section of the High Street between the Square and Cook Row could improve access for pedestrians without significantly affecting traffic flows, whilst improving the public realm within the town centre.

The pedestrianised area created under this option could be used to host events, and could also be occupied by the market should it relocate to the town centre. Together with the Square enhancement scheme, a part-pedestrianisation of the High Street would create a network of spaces at the heart of Wimborne Minster, comprising the Square, Church Road, Cornmarket, Cook Row, Minster Green and the High Street. Creating this connected network could enhance Wimborne Minster's appeal to shoppers and visitors, while providing an improved civic heart for the town.

7.6.5. Redeveloping Crown Mead

While any redevelopment of Crown Mead is unlikely in the short term, the Council should seriously consider pursuing it as a long term goal. Reassigning the site for a more attractive development, combining retail and residential units, would enhance the character and value of the area. Meanwhile, such a development could also provide the opportunity to enhance pedestrian access through the area, as well as opening up a corridor of green space around the river.

7.6.6. Creating a more welcoming entrance to Ferndown Town Centre

Our consultation and analysis of Ferndown Town Centre suggests that the people 'centre' of Ferndown is the interchange between the Penny's Walk entrance and Victoria Road. However, this opens to a fast through-road which impedes connectivity between the main shopping areas. There is potential to create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre through the creation of high quality public space, traffic calming, and flexible use of space for parking or regular farmers markets.

7.6.7. Better public space around the Day Care Centre, Ferndown

Although Penny's Walk provides a large pedestrianised space, its shape means that it is not ideally suited to holding civic events. The creation of better public space around the Day Care Centre could enhance the feel of the pedestrianised area as a central space for the town. The Day Care Centre protrudes into Penny's Walk, and does not complement the surrounding retail and community activities. Dorset County Council is currently reviewing the future of the Day Care Centre. However, this option would require capital investment from the Council, which may not be possible in the current fiscal climate.

7.6.8. Public conveniences on Penny's Walk

At present, the Council spends in excess of £20,000 per year on operating and maintaining the public conveniences on Penny's Walk. Despite this spending, the facilities are not of the highest quality, owing to the difficulty of caring for them continuously. Less than 100 metres from this site, the Barrington Centre's toilets are often used by members of the public for free, while Tesco also has toilets available to its customers. Given this proximity, it may be beneficial for the Council to close down its public conveniences, and ask the Barrington Centre to act as the public toilet within Penny's Walk. The Centre could be given the money currently spent on the public conveniences, improving its ability to benefit the community. In addition, opening up the Barrington Centre in this way could encourage more members of the community to use its other facilities.

7.7 Summary

This section of our review has set out the recommendations, implications and justification associated with the preferred options outlined in Section 6. The next and final section of our report describes how the recommendations forwarded in Section 7 can be implemented successfully; including critical paths and key milestones.

8 Implementation Plan

8.1 Overview

This section of our review sets out the plan for implementing the preferred options for the four key opportunity areas. Included within the plan for implementation is the required action, the timescale for undertaking this action, and the critical success factors.

Action	Timescale	Critical success factors
Community centres and service hubs		
Improve community benefits while moving towards financial self-sufficiency	This should be treated as a high priority; a plan of action should be agreed within four months. The timescale for implementing these actions should be around one year	<p>Holding formal talks with each relevant Association and Trust, to agree common aims and objectives for the future, and set out a strategy for achieving financial self-sufficiency</p> <p>Establishing formal service agreements between the Council and each Trust it supports, as outlined in the Council's Scrutiny Review</p> <p>Providing ongoing professional support to each community centre to help cut costs and increase revenue streams</p> <p>Where possible, providing support to help organisations reduce their costs (for example, using the Council's size to procure goods at lower cost)</p>
Downsizing of Allendale Community Centre	This should be treated as a high priority to avoid any of the £195k essential maintenance spend. Planning should begin immediately	<p>Close working with the Wimborne Community Association</p> <p>A detailed assessment of size, service provision and financial support requirements of the proposed Allendale Community Centre</p> <p>Exploring the full implications of lease arrangements for Allendale Community Centre prior to implementing recommendations</p> <p>All of the critical success factors detailed above for improving community benefits while moving towards financial self-sufficiency</p>
Allendale House – rented out at market rate or used as an	This should be treated as a reasonably high priority; a plan of	Exploring the full implications of lease arrangements for Allendale

alternative activity as identified by the Council	action should be agreed within six months. The timescale for implementing these actions should be around two years	House prior to implementing recommendations The Council should continue to provide revenue support if the Trust can demonstrate that this money is spent on activities which contribute directly to the Council's aims and objectives The Council finding accommodation that is more suitable for the East Dorset Heritage Trust
Car parks		
The Council should release its under utilised and poor financial performing car parks to the market	This should be treated as a reasonably high priority; a plan of action should be agreed within six months. The timescale for implementing these actions should be around two to three years	The Council should continue to review the performance of all of its car parks Dependent on planning successfully for the Allendale Site
Closing or introducing charges for Penny's Lodge car park at weekends	This should be treated as a high priority; a plan of action should be agreed within four months. The timescale for implementing these actions should be around one year	Development of a cost-benefit analysis that proves the worthwhile or otherwise of introducing charges for Penny's Lodge car park at weekends
The Allendale Site		
The Allendale Site should either be redeveloped into a community hub, which replaces many of the public assets in Wimborne Minster in one building including smaller community facilities, or be used to relocate the Council's offices from Furzehill into the town centre	This should be treated as a high priority; a detailed feasibility study should be undertaken within one year. The timescale for implantation should be around three to five years	A robust and transparent feasibility study and business case Support and buy-in from all stakeholders for the change of use of the Allendale Site Successful design of the Allendale Site
Wimborne Market		
The Council should support the idea of a street market in the centre of Wimborne Minster	This should be treated as a high priority; a plan of action should be agreed within six months. The timescale for implementing these actions should be around two to three years	Successful negotiations between the Council and Ensors to ensure a win-win situation Support for a residential-led development with a significant affordable housing component Support from local businesses within the town centre; and local residents

Appendix A – Baseline Asset Reviews

A1 Allendale Centre

A1.1 Location

Located to the north of the town centre, the Allendale Centre sits within a large plot of the Council land. It is separated from the town centre by Hanham Road, and sits on the west bank of the river Allen.

A1.2 Role

The Allendale Centre's primary purpose is to act as a space and a centre for the local community. The Centre makes available a number of rooms for hire, which can be used in a variety of different ways. The Centre also includes a café operation. The main service it provides is:

- **Community involvement** – providing opportunities for community groups to operate.

A1.3 Ownership and lease information

The Allendale Centre sits on a large plot of land owned by the Council, which includes Allendale House and the three Allenview car parks.

The building is leased to the Wimborne and District Community Association, which runs the Centre, on a long-term lease that is due to expire in 2020. The Association pays a nominal rent for the building. The Council is responsible for repairs and maintenance to the building.

A1.4 Accessibility

Generally the Allendale Centre is reasonably well-connected to the rest of the town centre, within easy walking distance and close to car parks and bus services. It is, however, separated from the rest of the town centre by the busy Hanham Road / Priors Walk. This can be crossed at the pelican crossing outside Allendale House and the subway on the eastern side of the River Allen. A footbridge adjacent to the centre connects the site to the east bank of the River Allen.

- Distance to The Square: 150m from The Square via East Borough;
- Bus services: In The Square; and
- Car parking: immediately adjacent to the site (Allenview long and short stay car parks)

A1.5 Relationship to other services

As East Dorset's main community centre in Wimborne Minster, the Allendale Centre is available for a wide variety of uses. As the Allendale Centre has some of the largest function rooms in the town centre, it has potential to interact with other tourist attractions, groups and community facilities within the town. However, our research suggests that this interaction is limited at present.

In particular, there is concern that, despite their proximity, the Allendale Centre and Allendale House do not interact in any significant capacity. Given the overlap in their uses, this is a cause for concern for the District Council.

A1.6 Type and frequency of use

The Allendale Centre's annual report provides no information on usage at the centre. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Centre is fairly well used. Usage is mainly restricted to the older population.

A1.7 Financial performance

The Allendale Centre's financial performance has fluctuated considerably in recent years, with the Community Association returning a healthy surplus in 2008/09, but an equivalently serious loss in 2007/08.

The Community Association receives a revenue grant of around £19-20k from the District Council. In addition, the District Council will face significant liabilities for maintaining the Centre, amounting to an estimated £195k over the next five years. This is due to the current buildings ageing state, and poor maintenance of the Centre by staff.

A1.8 Potential and committed future plans for the site

The Allendale Centre was the subject of an operational review by a Council officer, which made 12 recommendations for improving the Centre. However, many of these recommendations, especially those relating to closer links with Allendale House, have been rejected by the Community Association.

The Allendale Centre represents a major opportunity for redevelopment within the town centre. The current building is in a poor state of repair, and represents the Council's second biggest maintenance liability for the next five years (after the District Council's Furzehill offices). In addition, the site is likely to be extremely valuable, as it is close to the town centre and provides frontage to the River Allen.

However, there are no plans to redevelop the Allendale Centre at this point.

A1.9 Policy context and planning history

The Allendale Centre is situated adjacent to Allendale House, a Grade II* Listed Building. The special architectural and historic features of Allendale House and its setting should be preserved and substantial harm to it should be wholly exceptional; however it could be argued that the architecture of the current centre detracts from the setting of the listed building.

The Centre and its grounds are on the edge of but form part of the following planning designations:

- Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted;
- Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

A2 Allendale House

A2.1 Location

Allendale House is situated on the north side of Hanham road, adjacent to the Allendale Centre.

A2.2 Ownership and lease information

Allendale House is owned and maintained by the Council, and leased until 2036 to the East Dorset Heritage Trust. The Trust pays a nominal rent for the building.

A2.3 Role

Allendale House' role in Wimborne is somewhat unclear. The asset makes a contribution to a number of areas, but it is unclear what its primary focus is. Areas of service include:

- **Heritage** – promoting access to Wimborne Minster's history; and
- **Community involvement** – providing a facility for community use.

Allendale House also provides a venue for the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Bournemouth and Poole College.

A2.4 Accessibility

Allendale House is reasonably well-connected to the rest of the town centre, within easy walking distance and close to car parks and bus services. It is however separated from the rest of the town centre by the busy Hanham Road / Priors Walk. This can be crossed at the pelican crossing outside Allendale House and the subway on the eastern side of the River Allen. A footbridge adjacent to the centre connects the site to the east bank of the River Allen.

- Distance to The Square: 150m from The Square via East Borough
- Bus services: From The Square.
- Car parking: immediately adjacent to the site (Allenvue long and short stay car parks)

A2.5 Relationship to other services

In theory, the East Dorset Heritage Trust and Allendale House should have strong links with other historic sites in Wimborne, especially the Minster, Priest's House Museum and Walford Mill. However, there is limited evidence that such links are established.

We would also expect Allendale House to interact closely with the Allendale Centre, given their physical proximity and overlap in functions. However, there is limited evidence of interaction between the two facilities.

A2.6 Type and frequency of use

Allendale House has two main areas of use: a platform for promoting Wimborne's heritage; and as a venue for meetings and events. Allendale House plays host to one or two heritage events per month, with the majority of East Dorset Heritage Trust's events taking place outside the building. In terms of event hire, Allendale House's utilisation is estimated at around 55%¹⁵, although this only includes day time periods. It is also unclear whether this applies to all rooms in Allendale House, or whether this figure relates to any room in the venue being used.

¹⁵ This is based on an estimate by East Dorset Heritage Trust staff.

A2.7 Financial performance

East Dorset Heritage Trust recorded a loss of over £13,500 for the year ending September 2009, although it recorded a similar surplus in 2008. Since these results, the Council has reduced the Trust's revenue grant from around £60,000 to £25,000, leading to a reduction in staff numbers. Following this reduction, the Trust's financial position has become more precarious, with a large one-off donation required to secure their financial position for 2010.

On top of the £25,000 revenue grant paid to the Trust, the Council also faces significant maintenance liabilities on Allendale House. A recent refurbishment of the building cost in excess of £1.2 million, which is almost twice the market value of the building. In addition, the Council could expect to receive around £40,000 in annual rental income from Allendale House on the open market. Allendale House was valued at £675,000 by the District Valuer.

A2.8 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There are no future plans for the Allendale House site.

A2.9 Policy context and planning history

Allendale House is a Grade II* Listed Building listed building, and an important part of East Dorset's heritage. Therefore, there is no case for altering the main building (although there may be opportunities to reconsider the modern extensions to the building).

However, the way in which Allendale House is used may be influenced by any potential redevelopment on the site of the Allendale Centre, or the Allenview car parks.

The Centre and its grounds are on the edge of but form part of the following planning designations:

- Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted.

Most of the centre and its grounds fall within:

- Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

A3 Ambulance Station

A3.1 Location

The Ambulance Station is located on the South side of Hanham Road, opposite the police station and Magistrates' Court. It is located within a cluster of Dorset County Council buildings.

A3.2 Role

The Ambulance Station's sole function is as a base for local ambulance services.

A3.3 Ownership and lease information

The Ambulance Station is owned by Dorset County Council.

A3.4 Accessibility

The Ambulance Station is on the east side of the River Allen and eastern end of Hanham Road and, as such, is relatively distant from many of the other town centre facilities. It is however close to car parks, bus stops for local bus services and the new Waitrose store.

- Distance to The Square: approximately 350m from The Square via Mill Lane;
- Bus services: Stops on Hanham Road, in front of Streets Meadow retirement home and police station;
- Car parking: Allenview car parks, 100m to the west of the site, and at Waitrose, 100m to the south.

A3.5 Relationship to other services

The ambulance station does not interact with any services with Wimborne Minster town centre. However, it has close links to the Victoria Hospital, to the north west of the town centre.

A3.6 Potential and committed future plans for the site

Dorset Primary Care Trust has indicated that the Ambulance Station would be more appropriately located at the Wimborne Community Hospital, so that staff could perform other tasks in between emergency calls. However, we are not aware of any firm plans for relocating the Ambulance Station.

A3.7 Policy context and planning history

The Ambulance Station forms part of the following local plan designations:

- Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted.

The east side of Rowland's Hill, opposite the station is part of:

- St John's Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

A4 Car parks

A4.1 Allenview South

Short stay – 92 spaces

Location

Allenview South is located on the north side of Hanham Road, across the river from the Allendale Centre. An underpass provides access to the Crown Mead area.

Planning Policy

The site is within the Town Centre Policy Area. The Wimborne Minster Conservation Area borders the site to the west and south and the car park falls within Flood Risk Zone 2. The site was considered for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, but rejected on the basis of a shortage of parking spaces in the town centre.

Development options

Allenview South could feasibly be used for development, either on its own, or as part of a larger development of the Council's Allendale land holding. Allenview South is a potentially valuable site, close to the town centre and adjacent to the river Allen. However, development at the site may be constrained by fluvial flood risks.

A4.2 Allenview West

Long stay – 140 spaces

Location

Allenview West is located north of the Allendale Centre. Access is via a bridge over the river from Allenview South car park.

Planning Policy

The site is outside the Town Centre Policy Area and Wimborne Minster Conservation Area but borders them both to the south. It falls within Flood Risk Zone 2. The site was considered for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, but rejected on the basis of a shortage of parking spaces in the town centre.

Development options

Allenview West could feasibly be used for development, either on its own, or as part of a larger development of the Council's Allendale land holding. Allenview South is a potentially valuable site, close to the town centre and adjacent to the river Allen. It could also be used as part of an extension to the Allendale Centre site. However, development at the site may be constrained by fluvial flood risks; initial assessments suggest that Allenview West is the most severely affected of the three Allenview car parks.

A4.3 Allenview North

Long stay – 91 spaces, plus 6 coach spaces

Location

Allenview North is located to the north of Allenview South, on the opposite side of the River Allen from Allenview West and the Allenview Centre. Access is through Allenview South car park.

Planning Policy

The site is outside the Town Centre Policy Area and Wimborne Minster Conservation Area but borders them both to the south. It falls within Flood Risk Zone 2. The site was considered for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, but rejected on the basis of a shortage of parking spaces in the town centre.

Development options

Allenvue North has some potential for development; however, it is the least suitable of the three Allenvue car park sites, as it is a narrow site, and shares a risk of flooding with the other three sites.

A4.4 Westfield Close

Long stay – 160 spaces

Location

Westfield Close car park is located to the west of Wimborne town centre, just north of West Street. The main point of access is from Victoria Road.

Planning Policy

The south-western half of the site is within the Town Centre Policy Area and Wimborne Minster Conservation Area and is close to Listed Buildings on West Street and Redcotts Lane. The site was considered for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, but rejected on the basis of a shortage of parking spaces in the town centre.

Development options

Westfield Close car park could be a valuable site for redevelopment. The area would be suitable for residential accommodation. Additionally, the car park is naturally split into different parcels of land, meaning smaller parts of the car park could be opened up for development, while maintaining the main car park.

A4.5 Hanham Road

Short stay – 27 spaces

Location

Hanham Road is located just south of Hanham Road, on the other side from Allenvue South car park. It is close to the Somerfield car park.

Planning Policy

The site is within the Town Centre Policy Area and Wimborne Minster Conservation Area and much of the car park is within Flood Risk Zone 2, with the remainder being Flood Risk Zone 3.

Development options

Hanham Road could offer a small parcel of land for development. However, it is at significant risk of flooding from the Allen. This could be overcome by investigating the potential of a development on stilts.

A4.6 Old Road

Long stay – 43 spaces

Location

Old Road car park lies to the west of Wimborne town centre, within a residential area.

Planning Policy

The site is outside the Town Centre Policy Area but within Wimborne Minster Conservation Area. The car park was included in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment as part of a deliverable site within the first 5-year period, suitable for 10 dwellings.

Development options

Old Road is seen as a priority site for development by the Council. Adjoining parcels of land, including a former bus depot, may enable the site to form part of a larger development.

A4.7 Leigh Road

Long stay – 62 spaces

Location

Leigh Road car park is to the south east of the town centre, on the corner between Leigh Road and Poole Road.

Planning Policy

The site is within the Town Centre Policy Area and Wimborne Minster Conservation Area and there are Listed Buildings adjacent to the north. The whole site falls within Flood Risk Zone 3. The site was considered for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, but rejected on the basis of a shortage of parking spaces in the town centre.

Development options

Leigh Road car park is unlikely to be an appropriate site for development, as it is well used, and there are few alternatives for car parking nearby.

A4.8 King Street

Short stay – 102 spaces

Location

King Street car park is in a central location, behind the Minster and easily accessible from King Street, one the main routes through Wimborne. It provides access to the Model Town, the Minster and the main shopping area, as well as to West Street.

Planning Policy

The site is within the Town Centre Policy Area and Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, and the Minster is close to the more recent eastern extension (but shielded from it by mature trees). The site was considered for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, but rejected on the basis of a shortage of parking spaces in the town centre.

Development options

The King Street car park is unlikely to be suitable for development, as it is vital to the town's visitor appeal, and is in close proximity to the Minster.

A4.9 Park Lane

Short stay – 13 spaces

Location

Park Lane is located in the east of Wimborne Minster, close to the new Waitrose development. It provides access to shops on East Street and Leigh Road.

Planning Policy

The site is within the Town Centre Policy Area and Wimborne Minster Conservation Area and there are Listed Buildings opposite the site on the south side of Park Lane. The whole site falls within Flood Risk Zone 3.

Development options

Park Lane car park could be used to add to the network of green space along the River Allen created as part of the Waitrose development, helping to connect Waitrose with the town centre.

A4.10 Dean's Court Lane

Traders' car park – 33 spaces

This is used by permit holders only. It would not be suitable for development unless an alternative equivalent site could be found.

Planning Policy

The site is within the Town Centre Policy Area and Wimborne Minster Conservation Area and there are Listed Buildings immediately adjacent on East Street to the north and Dean's Court Lane to the west. The easternmost end of the site falls within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3. The car park was included in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment as part of a larger site as being able to deliver 12 dwellings within 6 to 15 years.

A4.11 Pye Corner

Short stay – 6 spaces

Location

Pye Corner is located to the west of the town centre, on the busy Pye Corner junction.

Planning Policy

The site is within the Wimborne Minster Conservation Area and is opposite the Listed Pudding & Pye pub. It falls just outside the Town Centre Policy Area.

Development options

Pye Corner could be used as part of a larger development site, but it is likely to be too small to constitute a viable development site in itself.

A4.12 Penny's Lodge

Short stay – 70 spaces

Location

Penny's Lodge car park is located in the centre of Ferndown, behind Penny's Walk and the Barrington Centre. Access is from Library Road.

Planning Policy

The site is within the Ferndown Commercial Centre policy area.

A5 Community Learning and Education Resource Centre

A5.1 Location

The Community Learning and Education Resource Centre (CLERC) lies to the west of the Minster, in the middle of King Street car park.

A5.2 Ownership and lease information

The site is owned by Dorset County Council, and leased to Dorset Community Action, which runs the centre.

A5.3 Accessibility

CLERC is relatively central and close to other facilities in the town centre, which can be accessed on foot via the minister churchyard. It is surrounded by public car parks. The nearest bus stops are in The Square; even though the number 3 service to Poole via Corfe Mullen passes along King Street on its outbound journeys there is no bus stop close by.

- Distance to The Square: 100m from The Square via minster churchyard and Church Street;
- Nearest bus stops: The Square;
- Nearest car parks: King Street car park and some on-site.

A5.4 Relationship to other services

The Community Learning and Education Resource Centre performs similar functions to other community centres in Wimborne Minster, such as the Allendale Community Centre, Allendale House and the Planet Youth Club.

A5.5 Financial performance

According to Dorset Community Action's accounts for the financial year 2008/09, the Community Learning and Resource Centre incurred an operating loss of £17k.

A5.6 Policy context and planning history

CLERC forms part of the following local plan designations:

- Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted.
- The site was included in the 2009 Strategic Housing Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as a potential site for 8 dwellings which could be deliverable within 5 years.

A6 Cornmarket

A6.1 Location

Cornmarket is a small square to the west of the Minster.

A6.2 Role

Cornmarket provides access for delivery vehicles to businesses on Cornmarket and Cook Row. It also acts as a quiet open space close to the town centre; however, it is not heavily used as a public space for events or by businesses.

A6.3 Accessibility

Cornmarket has a relatively central location in the town centre, approximately 100m from The Square and 60m from the High Street. Routes lead in all directions, making it well-connected to the rest of the centre.

Prior to 1980 the square was used as a car park, but now traffic movements are limited to access.

- Distance to The Square: 100m via Church Street;
- Bus services: In The Square; and
- Car parks: High Street (140m) and King Street (80m, via the Minster grounds).

A6.4 Relationship to other services

Cornmarket does not provide any specific services. However, as a public space it provides a useful connection between Cook Row, Church Road and the West Street shops. It also has the potential to be used as an open space in conjunction with the Minster Green and High Street.

A6.5 Type and frequency of use

There are no footfall counts available for Cornmarket. It is generally a quiet space, with little passing trade, despite its position close to the town centre. Although some businesses remain on the square, they are mainly professional or service businesses, and do not rely as heavily on passing trade as other traders in the town centre.

Cornmarket is occasionally used for organised events, including the Wimborne Food Festival, but is not currently considered to be one of the town's prime locations for events.

A6.6 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There are no fixed plans for altering or improving Cornmarket. It is unlikely to be an appropriate site for development, as it provides important access for businesses and deliveries, and is an important part of the public realm.

A6.7 Policy context and planning history

Cornmarket forms the nucleus of the medieval town and is in the heart of Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced. The square is surrounded by 5 Grade II Listed Buildings, the special architectural and historic features of which and their setting should be preserved and substantial harm to it should not(?) be exceptional.

The square is also part of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted.

A7 Crown Mead

A7.1 Location

Crown Mead covers a large area to the east of Wimborne town centre, between the two branches of the River Allen. It provides a link between High Street and East Street, and has the potential to be the main link between Waitrose and the town centre, in the event that a proposed foot bridge is realised.

A7.2 Role

Crown Mead is primarily a shopping centre, accommodating a large proportion of Wimborne's retail units, including some of the largest units in the town centre (important for national chains). It is also an important part of the town's public realm, due to its location and natural assets.

A7.3 Ownership and lease information

Crown Mead is owned and operated by Mayan Investments, an offshore company with which the Council has limited contact. Individual units are leased by retailers, while Mayan Investments retains ownership and responsibility for the site overall.

A7.4 Accessibility

Crown Mead is reasonably well-connected and close to the rest of the town centre, with pedestrian routes leading in most directions. There are 2 routes to the High Street with bridges across the millstream, and north-south routes between the retail units and River Allen. However, some of these routes are unattractive or convoluted, such as that across the gravel car park to reach the High Street from Somerfield, or across the Crown Mead car park and through the underpass beneath Hanham Road.

- Distance to The Square: 150 from Somerfield entrance via the library and High Street;
- Bus services: In The Square;
- Car parking: Crown Mead car park, immediately to the north of Somerfield, and High Street (gravel car park accessed via bridge over millstream).

As indicated above, the one linkage which continues to be poor is to the east, in the direction of Waitrose. The River Allen can be crossed on the service yard bridge but a more direct route from town across a new bridge rests with Crown Mead's owners.

A7.5 Relationship to other services

Crown Mead interacts with the town centre in terms of its retail offer, and the routes it provides. However, due to the nature of Crown Mead's ownership, there is little scope for coordinating services or the public realm in Crown Mead with the rest of the town.

Crown Mead is adjacent to Wimborne Library, which was provided as part of the deal to allow the Crown Mead development to take place. However, there are few links between Crown Mead and the Library, other than shared access and physical proximity.

A7.6 Type and frequency of use

Crown Mead has one of the highest levels of footfall in Wimborne town centre, in part due to its concentration of larger national retailers, and connectivity with High Street.

The public realm at Crown Mead is not widely used for formal events, and is generally of a lower standard than most other parts of Wimborne Minster.

A7.7 Financial performance

The financial performance of Crown Mead does not affect any public organisations, as it is owned by Mayan Investments.

A7.8 Potential and committed future plans for the site

As part of the agreement that has seen Waitrose occupy the Rowland's Hill site, a footbridge from the Waitrose site onto Crown Mead has been proposed. However, the owners of Crown Mead have resisted this move, and the bridge cannot be built without their permission. If Waitrose does not complete the footbridge within five years, it will be liable to pay the Council £150,000.

Crown Mead is an unattractive and outdated development occupying a key part of the town centre. The redevelopment of Crown Mead would present a welcome opportunity to re-invigorate the east of the town centre. However, as the site is privately owned, there is little scope for redevelopment in the short term. It is very unlikely that extreme measures, such as a compulsory purchase order, would be pursued.

A7.9 Policy context and planning history

Whilst Crown Mead forms part of the Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced, the development itself contributes little to, and in many ways detracts from, the special character and appearance of central Wimborne. The Conservation Area Appraisal (2006) notes that whilst the style and form of the development were of its time (1978) and materials of good quality, age has not improved its character. It adds that the bland elevation treatment and block form has led to a visually dull part of the town.

There are nearby Grade II Listed Buildings close to the southern end of the shopping centre on East Street (including the bridge and Rising Sun pub), the special architectural and historic features of which and their setting should be preserved and substantial harm to which should be exceptional.

Crown Mead also forms part of Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted. None of the shopping centre forms part of the designated Primary Shopping Frontages (WIMCO6), which only covers The Square and High Street.

All of Crown Mead between the rivers is designated as Flood Risk Zone 2.

A8 Fire Station

A8.1 Location

The Fire Station in Wimborne is located on the north side of Hanham Road, at the corner with Allenview Road. Emergency access to and from the station is from Allenview Road.

A8.2 Role

The Fire Station's sole function is to provide fire services.

A8.3 Ownership and lease information

The Fire Station is owned by Dorset County Council.

A8.4 Accessibility

The Fire Station is on the east side of the River Allen and north side of Hanham Road and, as such, is relatively distant from many of the other town centre facilities. It is however close to car parks, bus stops for local bus services and the new Waitrose store.

- Distance to The Square: approximately 300m from The Square via Mill Lane;
- Bus services: Stops on Hanham Road, in front of Streets Meadow retirement home and police station;
- Car parking: Operational car-parking on-site, as well as Allenview car parks, 60m to the west of the site, and at Waitrose, 170m to the south.

A8.5 Relationship to other services

The Fire Station does not interact closely with any other services in Wimborne town centre.

A8.6 Potential and committed future plans for the site

We are not aware of any fixed plans for the site. However, there is a possibility that the site may be considered as part of Dorset's Joint Asset Management Programme.

A8.7 Policy context and planning history

The Fire Station is on the northernmost edge of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted.

A9 Hanham Centre

A9.1 Location

The Hanham Centre is located to the south of Hanham Road, next to the Streets Meadow care home.

A9.2 Role

The Hanham Centre is an Independent Living Centre, providing guidance and support for disabled or older people living at home.

It also acts as a community venue, with rooms available for hire by local groups.

A9.3 Ownership and lease information

The Hanham Centre is owned and operated by Dorset County Council.

A9.4 Accessibility

Both the River Allen and Hanham Road act as barriers to reaching other facilities in the town centre, and the Centre is relatively distant from many of the other town centre facilities. It is however close to car parks, bus stops for local bus services and the new Waitrose store.

Walk distances to other parts of the town would be shortened considerably if routes were available directly from the southern or western boundaries of the site.

- Distance to The Square: approximately 360m from The Square via Mill Lane;
- Bus services: Hanham Road, in front of Streets Meadow retirement home and police station;
- Car parking: On-site, as well as at Allenview car parks, 200m to the northwest of the site, and at Waitrose, 200m to the southeast.

A9.5 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There are no plans to change the use of the Hanham Centre at present.

A9.6 Policy context and planning history

The Hanham Centre forms is part of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted. It adjoins, but is not part of, Wimborne Minister Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

A10 High Street

A10.1 Location

High Street is one of Wimborne Minster's key routes, running from The Square, through the heart of the town, to East Street. High Street defines the town's prime shopping area.

A10.2 Ownership and lease information

High Street is an adopted highway owned by Dorset County Council, as part of Dorset's highway network.

A10.3 Accessibility

As part of the core of the town, the High Street has good links to most of the rest of the town centre and beyond. Connections are weakest to the east across the River Allen. Although there are 4 main routes (via Mill Lane, the High Street car park, the library and onwards through Crown Mead, and East Street to reach the land encircled by the river, there are limited opportunities to reach the east bank and Waitrose.

High Street is used by the bus services heading west out of the town, as part of a circular route inbound along West Street and outbound along High Street and King Street. Alternative routes for these journeys would be significantly longer and more convoluted.

Despite being a heavily used walking route, many of the footways are very narrow, impeding safe pedestrian use.

- Distance to The Square: Immediately adjacent at the north end, 190m at the southern end;
- Bus services: In The Square; and
- Car parking: on-street, and immediately to the rear of 1 The Square.

A10.4 Relationship to other services

High Street is central to Wimborne's performance as a market town, as it links together many of the town's main visitor attractions and businesses. High Street connects many of the assets in the town centre, including the Square, the Minster, the Priest's House Museum and Wimborne Library.

High Street is an important route for traffic, and offers a number of car parking spaces, many of which are used by shoppers and disabled people. It also provides access to the High Street car park. In addition to its traffic functions, High Street could also be closed off, to link together the Square, Cornmarket and Minster Green as a chain of public spaces in the town centre that can be used for events.

A10.5 Type and frequency of use

High Street has one of the highest levels of footfall of any route in Wimborne town centre. The most heavily used part of the route is on the east side, between the Square and the Tourist Information Centre. The west side is less heavily used, although remains busy. Footfall is lower further south on the High Street, with a proportion of pedestrians leaving the High Street before the junction with East Street.

High Street is occasionally closed off for events, such as the Folk Festival. However, this is a rare occurrence, due to the disruption this causes to traffic flows in the town centre.

A10.6 Potential and committed future plans for the site

The planned enhancements to the Square will affect traffic and pedestrian access on to High Street. Pedestrian access will be improved slightly, while vehicles will only be able to access High Street from East Borough, rather than from West Street.

The High Street has been temporarily affected by damage from the fire of summer 2009. This is expected to return to normal once restoration work has been fully completed.

Local Plan Policy WIMCO17 states that pedestrianisation or pedestrian priority and environmental enhancement measures will be implemented in the lower part of the High Street. Similarly, Local Plan Policy WIMCO15 states that paving schemes, including footway widening and measures to reduce traffic speeds will be carried out in High Street. There are currently, however, no plans to reconfigure or redevelop the High Street.

A10.7 Policy context and planning history

High Street forms the majority of the town's designated Primary Shopping Frontages (Policy WIMCO6) where changes from shop uses at ground floor level will not be permitted. It is also the heart of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted.

There are almost 20 Listed Buildings along the High Street, including the Grade II* listed Priest's House Museum. Several nearby listed buildings contribute to the setting of the High Street buildings, not least the Grade I listed Minster. The High Street contributes significantly to the character and appearance of Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the special features of which should be preserved and enhanced.

Although part of the main one-way system in the town, the High Street is not part of the town's strategic highway network and Local Plan Policy WIMCO19 states that through traffic in the commercial centre will generally be discouraged.

A11 Wimborne Library

A11.1 Location

Wimborne Library is located on the pedestrian walkway from High Street to Crown Mead. It lies to the east of Crown Mead, across the river from the shopping centre.

A11.2 Role

Wimborne Library's role is to provide access to reading, learning and information technology materials for the community. This is a statutory service required by the government.

A11.3 Ownership and lease information

Wimborne Library is owned and operated by Dorset County Council.

A11.4 Accessibility

The library is well-connected and close to the rest of the town centre, lying just off High Street.

- Distance to The Square: 150m via High Street;
- Bus services: In The Square;
- Car parking: Crown Mead, 100m to the northeast, and High Street (gravel car park, 120m to the north).

A11.5 Relationship to other services

Wimborne Library does not interact significantly with other services in the town centre.

A11.6 Potential and committed future plans for the site

Dorset County Council are due to review the future provision of library services in the town centre. Depending on the outcome of this review, the future of Wimborne Library may be affected.

A11.7 Policy context and planning history

The library part of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted.

The site sits within Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the special features of which should be preserved and enhanced. It is close to listed buildings situated where High Street meets the Crown Mead pedestrian walkway, the special architectural and historic features of which and their setting should be preserved and substantial harm to them should be exceptional. However, the building itself is described in the Conservation Area appraisal as contributing little, either intrinsically or to the urban scene.

A12 Police Station

A12.1 Location

The Police Station in Wimborne is located on the north side of Hanham Road, close to the Rowland's Hill roundabout.

A12.2 Role

The Police Station acts as a base in Wimborne for Dorset Police.

A12.3 Accessibility

The Police Station is on the east side of the River Allen and north side of Hanham Road and, as such, is relatively distant from many of the other town centre facilities. It is however close to car parks, bus stops for local bus services and the new Waitrose store.

- Distance to The Square: approximately 340m from The Square via Mill Lane;
- Bus services: Stops on Hanham Road, in front of Streets Meadow retirement home and the police station itself;
- Car parking: On-site, as well as at Allenview car parks, 60m to the west of the site, and at Waitrose, 140m to the south.

A12.4 Relationship to other services

The Police Station does not interact closely with any other services in Wimborne town centre.

A12.5 Policy context and planning history

The police station forms the northernmost part of Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted. The east side of Rowland's Hill, opposite the station, is part of St John's Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

A13 Wimborne Market

A13.1 Location

Wimborne Market is sited to the south east of the town centre, in a primarily residential area. It is adjacent to the Riverside Park, and lies almost half a mile from the town centre.

A13.2 Role

Wimborne Market is a private business operation, run by Ensors. The Market brings in a large number of people to Wimborne and provides employment opportunities for a large number of people. However, it does not complement the town centre's retail offer to a great extent, in large part due to the distance between the Market and the town centre.

A13.3 Ownership and lease information

Wimborne Market is owned privately.

A13.4 Accessibility

The market is poorly related to the rest of the town centre facilities. It is a 820m walk from the edge of the town centre (as defined in the local plan), 1,350m from the Square and 400m to frequent bus services (on Poole Road).

Part of the problem is the single access point via New Borough Road and the industrial estate – any future pedestrian access from Grenville Road would reduce distances to the town centre by 300m and improve access to frequent bus services (on Leigh Road).

There is significant car parking available in a multi-storey car park on-site.

- Distance to The Square: 1,350m from The Square via New Borough and Poole Roads;
- Bus services: Mostly on Poole Road; and
- Car parking: Multi-storey car park on-site.

A13.5 Relationship to other services

Wimborne Market has a major impact on retail trade in the town. It brings up to 1 million visitors into the town each year, and employs around 500 people¹⁶.

However, due to the physical disconnection between the Market and the town centre, there is limited interaction between the two areas. This means that the town largely fails to capitalise on the success of the Market.

A13.6 Type and frequency of use

Wimborne Market attracts up to 1 million visits from all over Dorset. Many of the visitors travel from other towns and cities to visit the Market. The Market is open for three days a week, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Each day has a different theme.

A13.7 Financial performance

Details of the Market's financial performance are held by Ensors, and are not available for this study.

¹⁶ Statistics sourced from Ensors.

A13.8 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There are no fixed plans to alter the operation of the Market on its current site. However, both the Council and Ensors have discussed the possibility of relocating the Market away from its current site. It has been suggested that the site may be more appropriate for residential use, while the Market could benefit commercially from a more central location in the town (Ensors enjoys this situation in its Dorchester operation). Potential options for a relocated Market include a site at the apex of the junction between Julian's Road and the A31, the present site of the Allendale Centre and a series of spaces in the town centre.

A13.9 Policy context and planning history

Wimborne Market is covered by a specific policy in the Local Plan, WIMCO7. This states that the Council supports the continued operation of the market at the existing site, in line with the 1993 Agreement on the numbers of days of operation. Extensions or intensification of use which leads to increased traffic generation or other damaging impacts on the surrounding area will not be permitted.

The north-west boundary of the market site abuts the St John's Conservation Area, the special character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

The site was included in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment as being deliverable with 6-15 years for 195 dwellings. The assessment noted that development for housing may have a significant positive impact on the townscape of the area.

A14 Minster Church of St Cuthberga

A14.1 Location

The Minster is the historic and symbolic heart of Wimborne, lying in a key position in the town centre. The Minster Church can be seen from the Square, and lies between High Street, Cook Row and King's Street.

A14.2 Role

The Minster's primary role is as a parish church, supporting an important community within the town. As well as regular church services, the Minster holds weddings, funerals and occasional concerts. At the same time, it is also the town's most important tourist attraction, encapsulating much of the town's historic and aesthetic appeal.

A14.3 Ownership and lease information

The Minster is owned and run by an independent Trust.

A14.4 Accessibility

The Minster is at the heart of the town and has excellent links by foot to rest of the town centre. Routes radiate out in most directions and the Minster towers act as a landmark which helps orient people as to where they are. Many of the routes immediately surrounding the Minster are car-free or have minimal traffic movements.

- Distance to The Square: 120m along High Street or Church Street;
- Nearest bus stops: In The Square; and
- Nearest car parks: King Street (40m) and High Street (150m).

A14.5 Relationship to other services

The Minster plays an important role in the Wimborne's tourism industry, as one of the town's primary visitor attractions. The Minster has some scope for joining up with other tourist attractions (particularly the Priest's House Museum), but this is limited by the Minster's role as a church.

The Minster Green is one of Wimborne's only town centre green spaces, and is an important amenity for locals and visitors within the town centre.

A14.6 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There is no plan to alter the use of the Minster site.

A14.7 Policy context and planning history

The Minster Church of St Cuthberga is a Grade I Listed Building and its special architectural and historic features, as well as its setting should be preserved, and substantial harm to it should be wholly exceptional. The Conservation Area Appraisal describes the Minster with its towers as the principal focal point of the town and the Minster Green, slightly elevated above the surrounding streets, as the most important public space in the town and one which gives an attractive setting to the church.

The Minster contributes significantly to the character and appearance of Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the special features of which should be preserved and enhanced and there are several additional Listed Buildings surrounding Minster Green on Cook Row, High Street and East Street.

It also sits within the heart of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted and adjacent to the High Street, which is designated as part of Wimborne's Primary Shopping Frontage (WIMCO5, SHDEV1).

A15 Magistrates' Court

A15.1 Location

The Magistrates' Court is located to the north of Hanham Road, in between the police station and the fire station.

A15.2 Role

The Magistrates' Court provides a local justice service, dealing with minor offences and passing major offences to a higher court.

A15.3 Accessibility

The Magistrates' Court is on the east side of the River Allen and north side of Hanham Road and, as such, is relatively distant from many of the other town centre facilities. It is however close to car parks, bus stops for local bus services and the new Waitrose store.

- Distance to The Square: approximately 340m from The Square via Mill Lane;
- Bus services: Stops on Hanham Road, in front of Streets Meadow retirement home and the adjacent police station;
- Car parking: On-site, as well as at Allenview car parks, 60m to the west of the site, and at Waitrose, 140m to the south.

A15.4 Relationship to other services

The Magistrates' Court has limited links to other services within the town centre.

A15.5 Type and frequency of use

Wimborne Magistrates' Court no longer holds regular court sessions, and is currently available for special sittings only.

A15.6 Financial performance

The Magistrates' Court is run by Her Majesty's Courts Service, and funded by the Ministry of Justice. The cost of operation for 2009/10 was £129,40417, while an extra £160,000 is needed to clear a backlog of maintenance work.

A15.7 Potential and committed future plans for the site

The Ministry of Justice issued a notice on 23rd June 2010 that consultations will be held on whether to close 103 Magistrates' Courts and 54 County Courts in England and Wales. Wimborne Magistrates' Court was included on this list, and may well be closed within the next year. No specific timescale for a closure has yet been proposed.

A15.8 Policy context and planning history

The magistrates' court forms the northernmost part of Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted. The east side of Rowland's Hill, opposite

¹⁷ Sourced from Ministry of Justice's Proposal on the Provision of Court Services in Dorset, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Wiltshire.

the court, is part of St John's Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

A16 Priest's House Museum

A16.1 Location

The Priest's House Museum is located on east side of the High Street, close to the Minster and the Square. This location provides a central presence, within Wimborne Minster's main visitor area.

A16.2 Role

The Priest's House Museum is a heritage centre and tourist attraction, but it also has an important role in promoting community involvement, learning and a sense of place within East Dorset. The main services and benefits it provides are:

- **Tourism** – bringing visitors into the town centre;
- **Learning** – providing opportunities for learning and skill development;
- **Community involvement** – providing important activities for different sections of the community (including volunteers);
- **Heritage** – preserving and promoting East Dorset's heritage.

A16.3 Accessibility

Situated on High Street, The Priest's House is well-related to the rest of the town centre, 60m north of The Square and on an important pedestrian route to Crown Mead. It is opposite the key public open space of Minster Green. Connections are however weakest to the east across the River Allen.

- Distance to The Square: 140m south along West Borough;
- Bus services: In The Square; and
- Car parking: on-street, and High Street car park.

A16.4 Relationship to other services

The Priest's House is the only accredited museum within East Dorset, and serves as a museum for the whole district.

The Museum is among five key tourist attractions in Wimborne Minster. Its history and location naturally complement the Minster, providing information and depth about Wimborne's history as a Minster town. The Museum also collaborates with Walford Mill, and works closely with the Tourist Information Centre.

There may be opportunities for the Museum to work more closely with some of the community centres within Wimborne, especially the Heritage Trust at Allendale House.

A16.5 Type and frequency of use

Visitors

In 2008, the Museum attracted 13,862 visitors (of which 2,774 were schoolchildren)¹⁸. The Museum has also attracted users for a variety of other services, including its library, and enquiries service.

Volunteers

¹⁸ Priest's House Museum Trust, Annual Report and Accounts 2008/09

The Museum has approximately 160 volunteers, working a combined total of over 11,500 hours per year (an average of 10 full working days per volunteer).

A16.6 Financial performance

The Museum makes a small profit each year, and has sufficient reserves to cover a year's operational costs.

The Museum is subsidised by the Council in two ways:

- The Museum's curators are employed by the Council (at an annual cost of around £64,000) – this is equivalent to a revenue grant; and
- The Council provides structural maintenance for the Priest's House building (include estimate of annual cost).

Possibilities for cost savings

There are a number of areas of expenditure that may present opportunities for cost savings:

- Electricity (annual spend of over £5,500); and
- Advertising (spend of over £10,000).

A16.7 Potential and committed future plans for the site

The Museum has plans for a £630,000 extension, to improve its facilities for learning, disabled access and storage. The Trust has submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £400,000 in funding, and has raised the remainder of the money required for the development.

There is no case for redeveloping the Priest's House Museum.

A16.8 Policy context and planning history

The Priest's House is a Grade II* Listed Building. The special architectural and historic features of the building and its setting should be preserved and substantial harm to it should be wholly exceptional. It also forms part of Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

The Museum sits within the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted and is on the Primary Shopping Frontage (WIMCO6), where changes of use from ground floor shops will not be permitted. Policy WIMCO8 allows for the provision of tourist attractions in the centre of Wimborne.

A17 Something Special Car Park (Budden's Yard)

A17.1 Location

Budden's Yard is a car park lying close to the centre of Wimborne, between the High Street and the Somerfield car park. The parcel of land owned by the Council is on the south side of the car park.

A17.2 Role

The site currently acts as a car park for traders, shoppers and visitors. The purpose of the District Council's land holding is to take advantage of any future development opportunities.

A17.3 Ownership and lease information

The Council currently owns a small parcel of land on the car park; the remainder of the car park is privately owned.

A17.4 Accessibility

The High Street car park is the closest off-street car park to many of the town centre facilities and is well-located between Crown Mead and The Square. Vehicular access is from High Street, and a second pedestrian access leads over the millstream to Crown Mead.

A17.5 Relationship to other services

As a town centre car park, the site currently plays a key role in promoting access to the town centre, and supports the town's economy.

A17.6 Policy context and planning history

Local Plan policy WIMCO23 set out the intention for this car park to be extended and with new vehicular access and bridge from the Crown mead car park to the east.

The car park is also part of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted. All the buildings to the west of the car park (12 The Square, 1, 7 and 9 High Street) are Grade II Listed Buildings, whose special architectural and historical features and setting should be preserved and substantial harm to which should be exceptional.

The car park is part of Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the special features of which should be preserved and enhanced. However, the car park does not contribute to the character and appearance of this area.

The eastern half of the site falls within the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Zone 2.

A18 The Square

A18.1 Location

The Square is in many ways the centre of Wimborne Minster. It is just north of the Minster, and provides access to West Street and West Borough, High Street, Church Street, Mill Lane and East Borough.

A18.2 Role

The Square is an important part of the town's public realm, and in some respects forms part of the town's civic heart. It is also an important hub for roads and public transport; in many respects, the Square acts as a roundabout, bus depot and car park.

The Square enhancement plans aim to increase the Square's role as a public space and natural hub for the community.

A18.3 Ownership and lease information

The Square is adopted highway owned by Dorset County Council, as part of Dorset's highway network.

A18.4 Accessibility

The Square acts as a focus for streets into and out of the town centre and for all bus services coming into the town. Streets radiate out from The Square to the north (East and West Boroughs), West (West Street), south (Church and High Streets) and east (Mill Lane). Connections are however weakest to the east across the River Allen.

The Square provides access for taxis and acts as the de-facto bus station, with bus stops on the north and south sides of The Square, where some of the major bus services terminate. There are limited amounts of on-street car parking in The Square, with alternative car parking is available on-street in West Borough and High Street, and off-street in the nearby High Street car park.

There is one traffic signal pedestrian crossing on West Street at the entrance to the Square. Crossing the High Street close to the Square may be difficult for some pedestrians due to the width of the street at this point.

A18.5 Relationship to other services

The Square acts as a gateway to many of the other amenities and services in Wimborne Minster. It is a prime area for shops and businesses, and opens up access to the High Street, the Minster, and many of Wimborne's key attractions.

The enhancement scheme will see the Square become less accessible to cars and buses, but increase its potential use as a public space. The part-pedestrianised Square will offer an opportunity to create a network of open spaces in the centre of Wimborne, by combining the High Street, Minster Green and Cornmarket.

A18.6 Type and frequency of use

The Square is primarily used as a through passage for cars and pedestrians. The Square has one of the highest levels of footfall within the town centre. However, much of its frontage is taken up by banks, which do not rely on passing trade as much as comparative retail outlets.

A18.7 Financial performance

The revised Square enhancement scheme is expected to cost a total of £410,000, with the bulk of this expenditure occurring in the financial year 2012/13.

A18.8 Potential and committed future plans for the site

The proposed enhancement scheme (included in the Local Plan as policy WIMCO15 for paving schemes) will see the Square pedestrianised on its northern side, with the route between West Street and High Street closed off to traffic. This will help to regulate flows of traffic through the centre of town, and will also provide an open public space, which maybe used for events, or by local businesses.

A18.9 Policy context and planning history

The Square forms part of the town's designated Primary Shopping Frontages (Policy WIMCO6) where changes from shop uses at ground floor level will not be permitted. It is also the heart of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted.

Most of the properties surrounding The Square are Listed Buildings, and their special architectural and historic features, as well as their setting should be preserved, and substantial harm to them should be exceptional (or, in the case of the Grade II* Listed 1 The Square, wholly exceptional). The two 'K6' telephone kiosks on the north side of The Square are also listed. The High Street contributes significantly to the character and appearance of Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the special features of which should be preserved and enhanced.

The Square, as part of the route from West Street to East Borough, is designated in the Local Plan as a Local Distributor Road, with its role being to serve local traffic, including pedestrians and cyclists. In the Conservation Area, however, this function should be balanced against conservation and environmental factors.

Local Plan Policy WIMCO19 states that through traffic in the commercial centre will generally be discouraged.

A19 Tourist Information Centre

A19.1 Location

The East Dorset Tourist Information Centre is located on the High Street, next door to the Priest's House Museum and in close proximity to the Minster.

A19.2 Role

The Tourist Information Centre plays a key role in supporting the tourism industry in Wimborne and across East Dorset. The centre advertises local tourist attractions, provides information and services to visitors, and takes bookings for local tourism businesses. It also provides some services to residents.

A19.3 Ownership and lease information

The Tourist Information Centre is operated by the Council, and is part of the lease of the Priest's House Museum building. The Council has access to the building in return for maintaining the Priest's House building.

A19.4 Accessibility

Situated on High Street, The TIC is well-related to the rest of the town centre, 60m south of The Square and on an important pedestrian route to Crown Mead. It is opposite the key public open space of Minster Green. Connections are however weakest to the east across the River Allen.

- Distance to The Square: Immediately adjacent at the north end, 190m at the southern end;
- Bus services: In The Square; and
- Car parking: on-street, and High Street car park.

A19.5 Relationship to other services

The Tourist Information Centre has strong links to all of the tourist attractions in East Dorset, as well as to a number of tourism businesses. The Centre plays a key role in delivering the Council's tourism services.

However, there may be scope for extra links between the Centre and some of the tourism and heritage organisations within the town centre. In particular, the East Dorset Heritage Trust, and Allendale House, could benefit from closer links with the Tourist Information Centre.

A19.6 Financial performance

The Council spent £241,100 in total on tourism in 2009/10. The budget for 2010/11 is estimated at £225,050. However, this spending relates to Council functions as well as to the Tourist Information Centre. These figures take into account annual revenues of around £45,000 made by the Centre.

A19.7 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There are no plans to change the operation or location of the Tourist Information Centre.

The idea of moving the Priest's House Museum's "front of house" function into the Tourist Information Centre has been suggested. This would increase the space available for exhibits in the Museum, and reduce staffing requirements.

A19.8 Policy context and planning history

The TIC is based within the Priest's House, a Grade II* Listed Building. The special architectural and historic features of the building and its setting should be preserved and substantial harm to it should be wholly exceptional. It also forms part of Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

The TIC sits within the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted and is on the Primary Shopping Frontage (WIMCO6), where changes of use from ground floor shops will not be permitted. Policy WIMCO8 allows for the provision of tourist facilities in the centre of Wimborne.

A20 Tivoli Theatre

A20.1 Location

The Tivoli Theatre is located on West Borough, to the north of Wimborne town centre. It is close to the Town Hall, and lies on the junction between Hanham Road and West Borough.

A20.2 Ownership and lease information

Friends of the Tivoli Limited (a registered charity) holds the freehold to the Tivoli Theatre complex. Previously, Dorset County Council and the Council owned parts of the site, but the freehold was transferred to Friends of the Tivoli Limited in 2003 for free. As part of this deal, both County and District Councils hold a pre-emption, which would allow them to repurchase their respective freeholds for nominal sums if the site were sold, or Friends of the Tivoli ceased to occupy it.

All repair and maintenance responsibilities lie with Friends of the Tivoli Limited.

A20.3 Accessibility

Situated slightly to the north of The Square, the theatre is reasonably well-located to other facilities, car parking and bus services.

- Distance to The Square: Immediately adjacent at the north end, 190m at the southern end;
- Bus services: In The Square; and
- Car parking: on-street on West Borough; off-street in Westfield Close car park (180m via Redcotts Lane) or Alleview West (220m).

A20.4 Relationship to other services

The Tivoli Theatre operates as a theatre and cinema, complementing Wimborne's tourism and entertainment offer.

The Theatre is the premier venue for large shows in the town, and in this respect competes with the Allendale Centre.

A20.5 Type and frequency of use

The Theatre has a capacity of 500, making it by far the largest venue in the town centre. There are regular shows and film screenings, which are, on the whole, well attended.

A20.6 Financial performance

Friends of the Tivoli's latest published accounts (for the year ending December 2008) show that the Theatre was running a healthy surplus or around £37,000. The Theatre receives no ongoing financial support from any public sector organisations (aside from the benefits from the freehold transfer), and therefore appears to have a self-sustaining business model.

A20.7 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There are no plans to relocate, alter or expand the Tivoli Theatre's current site.

A20.8 Policy context and planning history

The theatre, along with almost every other building on West Borough is a Listed Building, the special architectural and historic features of which and its setting should be preserved and substantial harm to which should not (?) be exceptional. According to the mapping, this status does not appear to apply to the modern extensions at the rear of the property.

West Borough is part of the Conservation Area, the special character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced. The street as a whole is described in the Conservation Area Appraisal as the 'showpiece' street of the town, with elegant buildings lining both sides of the wide street. The southern end features a number of interspersed larger-scale buildings of the same period that add to the street's civic importance.

The theatre forms part of the Town Centre Policy Area (WIMCO5, SHDEV1) in which shops, restaurants, services and offices will generally be permitted and Policy WIMCO8 allows for the provision of tourist attractions in the centre of Wimborne.

A21 Waitrose

A21.1 Location

The new Waitrose supermarket is sited to the east of Wimborne town centre, on the old cricket ground at Rowland's Hill. It has Hanham Road to its east, and the River Allen and Crown Mead to its East.

A21.2 Role

Waitrose is a private business, trading in a wide range of goods.

A21.3 Ownership and lease information

The Waitrose site is privately owned.

A21.4 Accessibility

Waitrose is on the east side of the River Allen and approximately 400m from The Square and other nearby facilities. A major justification for allowing Waitrose to come into the town centre was the boost it could provide to retailers in the town centre. For this effect to materialise, it is critical that connectivity between Waitrose and the town centre is made as good as possible.

As part of the planning agreement, a new segregated cycle/footway has been provided from Park Lane to the Crown Mead car park access road running north to south adjacent to the River Allen in the riverside park. Footway routes have been provided from the store to link to the nearest bridges for access to the rest of the town centre (Pippins Bridge in the north-west corner of the riverside park, and delivery yard access at the south-western corner).

Neither of these routes is ideal in terms of legibility or directness and funding has also been secured from Waitrose for a new bridge over the River Allen to connect into the main pedestrian precinct of Crown Mead. However, agreement has yet to be reached with the owners of Crown Mead (Mayan Investments) to allow this. If this footbridge is not completed within 5 years of the store's opening, Waitrose will pay the Council an additional £150,000.

Finally, a new signal controlled pedestrian crossing has been provided outside the store on Rowland's Hill, making it easier for walking trips from the St John's area.

- Distance to The Square: 400-420m via Mill Lane and a northern route across the new riverside park, or a southern route via Crown Mead delivery access bridge;
- Bus services: new bus stops have been provided on Rowland's Hill outside the store, for services in both directions;
- Car parking: a new on-site car park with 213 publicly-available spaces, although with 2hr limited waiting.

A21.5 Relationship to other services

Waitrose will not be directly involved in any public services in the town centre. However, Waitrose has a track record of providing financial support to local charities or community organisations.

The new urban park between Waitrose and the River Allen will form an important recreation amenity for the public. It will also be available for town events up to six times per year.

The new Rowland's Hill car park at Waitrose may have an impact on the other town centre car parks, most of which are owned by the District Council. Early analysis by the Council has suggested that this could, in a worst case scenario, reduce the Council's annual car park revenue by £117k. The new 2 hour Rowland's Hill car park

may also free up other car parks for disposal or redevelopment, as it will increase the town's overall car parking capacity.

A21.6 Type and frequency of use

It is not yet known how well Waitrose is used, or what the supermarket's catchment area will be.

A21.7 Financial performance

Waitrose's financial performance should not affect the Council or the public sector directly, although it will contribute to business rates and other taxation.

A21.8 Potential and committed future plans for the site

The new Waitrose opened in July 2010. The only ongoing issue to be resolved is the provision of a pedestrian bridge to Crown Mead.

A22 Walford Mill Craft Centre

A22.1 Location

Walford Mill lies outside Wimborne Minster town centre, to the north of the town. The Mill sits on the River Allen, while an accompanying car park lies across the river.

A22.2 Role

Walford Mill is a nationally significant craft centre that promotes art and learning. The Mill also acts as an important tourist attraction and community facility for Wimborne and East Dorset.

A22.3 Ownership and lease information

The Mill is run by Walford Mill Education Trust. The site is owned by the Council, and leased to the Trust on a peppercorn rent until 2021. The Council is responsible for repairs and maintenance on the site.

The Walford Mill car park is owned and operated by the District Council, with the same tariff structure as other long stay car parks in Wimborne. However, the Council provides 73% of the revenues from the car park to the Trust, as a form of subsidy.

A22.4 Accessibility

The mill is some 600m north of The Square, along a legible route mostly following West Borough. There is a district council car park on-site. Bus services are poor – no daily buses run across Walford Bridge; the nearest frequent services stop at the lower end of West Borough and on The Square.

In addition to West Borough, there is a riverside path connecting Walford Bridge to Elizabeth Road and onwards to Allenvue Road. The Local Plan policy WIMCO11 aims to widen and surface for pedestrians and cyclists and this will help create a quiet off-road route between the mill and town centre.

A22.5 Relationship to other services

Walford Mill plays an important role in Wimborne's tourism and cultural offer. It works with other organisations, such as the Priest's House Museum, to promote East Dorset's heritage and boost tourism.

The Mill also acts as a venue for occasional events, such as outdoor plays.

A22.6 Type and frequency of use

For the financial year 2008/09, Walford Mill attracted around 34,000 visitors¹⁹. It also played host to numerous events, workshops and learning days. Walford Mill does a good job of appealing to a cross-section of the community, running courses for children and younger people.

A22.7 Financial performance

The Walford Mill Education Trust made small profit of £3k in 2008/09. It receives considerable financial support, including around £59k of funding from the Arts Council England, South West. The Council provided revenue support of £6,600 in 2009, as well as repair and maintenance services for the site (estimated at £11,500 in 2008). Walford Mill Education Trust also records income of £25,000 in its accounts to cover the estimated market rent (the actual rent paid is a peppercorn). Taken together, this would give a total subsidy of £43,100 from the Council.

¹⁹ Walford Mill Education Trust Annual Report, 2008/09

Other funders of the Trust include Dorset County Council (£6,500 in 2008/09) and Wimborne Minster Town Council (£500 in 2008/09).

Walford Mill Education Trust has a trading subsidiary that runs the shop. However, it operated at a loss in 2008/09, and this is something that may need to be addressed.

A22.8 Potential and committed future plans for the site

Walford Mill Education Trust has developed ambitious plans for a £3 million extension to the Mill. This would improve access to the Mill, via a bridge over the river, and would greatly expand the Mill's capacity as a craft venue. This extension would help to give the Mill the critical mass it needs to attract more customers. However, no funder has yet been identified to support this extension.

A22.9 Policy context and planning history

Walford Mill is a Grade II listed building, whose special architectural and historic features and setting should be preserved and to which substantial harm should be exceptional. It also forms part of Wimborne Minster Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which should be preserved and enhanced.

Much of the land to the east and west is within Flood Risk Zones 2 or 3.

A23 Barrington Theatre and Community Centre

A23.1 Location

The Barrington Centre occupies a central location in Ferndown, opposite Tesco on Penny's Walk. It is adjacent to the Penny's Walk car park, as well as the Tesco multi-storey car park.

A23.2 Role

The Barrington Theatre acts as a community hub and entertainment venue. It combines shows and entertainment with room hire and catering for community or commercial users.

A23.3 Ownership and lease information

The Barrington Centre is owned by the Council, and leased to the Ferndown Community Association. The lease runs until 2028, with a peppercorn rent charged. The Council is responsible for external maintenance.

A23.4 Accessibility

The centre is towards the western end of pedestrianised Penny's Walk. It is immediately adjacent the Penny's Lodge car park and close to the Tesco multi-storey car park. Bus services are accessible from the stops 200m away on Victoria Road.

A23.5 Relationship to other services

The Barrington Centre plays a pivotal role in Ferndown's community, and relates indirectly to many of the other services provided in the town centre. Its meeting rooms help to facilitate the activities of many community groups. Meanwhile, the Theatre and restaurant help to support some vulnerable members of the community.

There are other facilities in Ferndown, such as the Village Hall, that provide spaces for the community, but none is as big or central as the Barrington Centre.

A23.6 Type and frequency of use

The Barrington Centre does not publish statistics on usage, but it is generally well used both as a theatre and community venue. The restaurant is also very well used.

The majority of the Barrington's customers are drawn from the elderly population.

A23.7 Financial performance

The Barrington Centre has faced difficult financial situations over recent years, and continues to run at a small loss. The Centre receives a revenue grant of over £20k from the District Council, although the Council's maintenance spending on the venue is considerably lower than comparable venues (estimated at around £6k in the Scrutiny Review). This has been attributed to excellent, professional management of the venue and its maintenance by the Centre's staff.

A23.8 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There are no plans to alter the Barrington Centre's operation.

A23.9 Policy context and planning history

The Barrington Centre is within the Ferndown Commercial Centre, where retail, food and drink, banks, financial services, offices and community uses will generally be permitted. It fronts the Primary Shopping Frontage where only shop uses will be allowed at ground floor level; however, along with other properties along the north side of Penny's Walk this retail function is not currently being performed.

A24 Day Care Centre

A24.1 Location

The Day Care Centre lies in the centre of Ferndown, on the northern side of Penny's Walk. It lies between the Barrington Community Centre and Ferndown Library, and is close to Tesco and the Penny's Walk shops.

A24.2 Role

The Day Care Centre provides healthcare services for vulnerable people in the Ferndown area.

A24.3 Ownership and lease information

The Day Care Centre is owned and operated by Dorset County Council.

A24.4 Accessibility

The centre is in a central location in pedestrianised Penny's Walk. It is immediately adjacent the Penny's Lodge car park and close to the Tesco multi-storey car park. Bus services are accessible from the stops 150m away on Victoria Road.

A24.5 Relationship to other services

There is some overlap between the Day Care Centre and the activities of the Dorset Primary Care Trust in Ferndown. In general, however, the Day Care Centre does not fit in well with its immediate surroundings, especially the retail units on Penny's Walk.

A24.6 Financial performance

The Day Care Centre is run and funded by Dorset County Council.

A24.7 Potential and committed future plans for the site

Dorset County Council is currently reviewing its provision of services through day care centres. If the Council decides to cease day care centre operations, this site could become available for disposal or an alternative use.

A24.8 Policy context and planning history

The centre is within Ferndown's Commercial Centre, where retail, food and drink uses, banks, financial services, offices and community uses will generally be permitted. The southern facade of the centre forms part of the Primary Shopping Frontage where only shop uses will be allowed at ground floor level. However, at the moment, the centre contributes little activity onto Penny's Walk and occupies a key position in what is otherwise designated as the key shopping area.

A25 Ferndown Library

A25.1 Location

Ferndown Library occupies a central location, with a long frontage along the entrance to Penny's Walk. It is also close to Victoria Road.

A25.2 Role

Ferndown Library's role is to provide access to reading, learning and information technology materials for the community. This is a statutory service required by the government.

A25.3 Ownership and lease information

Ferndown Library is owned and operated by Dorset County Council.

A25.4 Accessibility

The library is towards the eastern end of pedestrianised Penny's Walk. It is close to Penny's Lodge car park and close to the Tesco multi-storey car park. Bus services are accessible from the stops 150m away on Victoria Road.

A25.5 Relationship to other services

Ferndown Library houses Adult Social Services staff from the County Council on its upper floor. As a public amenity, the Library does interact with some of the facilities in Ferndown town centre. However, there are limited links between the Library and other public facilities.

A25.6 Financial performance

Ferndown Library is operated and funded by Dorset County Council.

A25.7 Potential and committed future plans for the site

Dorset County Council are due to review the future provision of library services in the town centre. Depending on the outcome of this review, the future of Ferndown Library may be affected.

A25.8 Policy context and planning history

The library is within the Ferndown Commercial Centre, where retail uses, food and drink, banks, financial services, offices and community uses will generally be permitted. It fronts the Primary Shopping Frontage where only shop uses will be allowed at ground floor level.

A26 Victoria House – Primary Care Trust offices

A26.1 Location

Victoria House is located to the east of Ferndown town centre, in an area behind Wilkinson's, and accessible from Victoria Road.

A26.2 Role

Victoria House is currently used by the Primary Care Trust to house back office functions, including administration and IT equipment.

A26.3 Ownership and lease information

Dorset Primary Care Trust has a lease on Victoria House.

A26.4 Relationship to other services

The PCT offices have very little interaction with other services in Ferndown town centre.

A26.5 Type and frequency of use

Victoria House is used solely for back-office functions. The Primary Care Trust estimates that it currently occupies about a quarter of the total floorspace of the building.

A26.6 Financial performance

Victoria House is run and funded by Dorset Primary Care Trust.

A26.7 Potential and committed future plans for the site

Dorset Primary Care Trust is currently engaged in a review of its assets across Dorset. This review may draw conclusions about the future of Victoria House. However, the PCT is likely to keep at least some presence at the site for the foreseeable future.

A27 Penny's Walk

A27.1 Location

Penny's Walk is a pedestrian walkway that runs from the prime retail area of Victoria Road, through to Tesco and the Barrington Centre. It adjoins the Tesco car park and Penny's Walk car park.

A27.2 Role

In many ways, Penny's Walk is the heart of Ferndown town centre. It is the only significant pedestrianised area in the town centre, and is one of the centre's key shopping areas. As well as providing a sheltered walkway through the town centre, it also acts as a recreation area for some local people.

A27.3 Ownership and lease information

Penny's Walk is owned by Tesco, and is maintained under contract by Goadsby, the property agent.

A27.4 Accessibility

Penny's Walk links some of the main trip attractors in the town centre, with 'anchors' of Tesco, its car park, medical centre and Barrington Centre at the west end, leading through to the retail uses on Victoria Road and the east end. Routes lead from Penny's Walk to St Mary's Road and Church Road to the west and to the Penny's Lodge car park next to the Barrington Centre. Ringwood Road can be accessed from Penny's Walk via a walkway alongside Tesco's eastern façade and onto Spinneys Lane. This is rather unattractive, passing the delivery access to Tesco and backland parking for Ringwood Road properties, and it is not an obvious or legible route between the two places.

A27.5 Relationship to other services

Penny's Walk plays an important role in linking together the main shopping areas in Ferndown, and providing access to a range of services. The Barrington Centre in particular benefits from the link it provides to Tesco and Victoria Road, while the Day Care Centre and Library also benefit from this link.

Despite its prominent position, it is not widely used for formal events.

A27.6 Policy context and planning history

All of Penny's Walk falls within Ferndown's commercial centre, where retail uses, food and drink, banks, financial services, offices and community uses will generally be permitted. It is also designated as a significant part of the town's primary shopping frontage (along with a small section of Victoria Road). However, many of the properties on the northern side of Penny's Walk public buildings which do not contribute to the shopping frontage.

A28 Tesco

A28.1 Location

Tesco is located in the centre of Ferndown, and acts as the town's key retail anchor.

A28.2 Accessibility

Tesco is located at the western end of pedestrianised Penny's Walk. It has its own multi-storey car park situated immediately to the west of the store (see Ferndown Site 7). Penny's Lodge car park is located a short distance to the north, beyond the Barrington Centre. Bus services are accessible from the stops 200m to the east on Victoria Road.

Much of the sizeable frontage to Penny's Walk is 'inactive' – that is to say, there is no activity facing onto the precinct, making it a less interesting and pleasant walk route.

A28.3 Potential and committed future plans for the site

There are no plans for altering Tesco's current use.

A28.4 Policy context and planning history

The store is within the Ferndown Commercial Centre, where retail, food and drink, banks, financial services, offices and community uses will generally be permitted. The northern and eastern facades of the store form part of the Primary Shopping Frontage where only shop uses will be allowed at ground floor level.

A29 Tesco Car Park

A29.1 Location

The Tesco car park is located to the south west of Tesco and Penny's Walk, close to the centre of Ferndown.

A29.2 Ownership and lease information

The Tesco car park is owned by Tesco, but can be used for free by the public, regardless of whether they use the store.

A29.3 Accessibility

The Tesco multi-storey car park provides a very significant proportion of Ferndown's car parking and means that much of the town centre parking is free. It is immediately adjacent to Tesco and no more than 480m from the furthest part of Ferndown's commercial centre. It does not form an attractive backdrop for pedestrians walking beside the eastern or southern elevations.

A29.4 Policy context and planning history

The car park is within the Ferndown Commercial Centre, where retail, food and drink, banks, financial services, offices and community uses will generally be permitted. It is just beyond the Primary Shopping Frontage.

A30 Wilkinson's Car Park

A30.1 Location

Wilkinson's car park is located behind Wilkinson's, to the east of Victoria Road.

A30.2 Ownership and lease information

The car park is owned by Wilkinson's.

A30.3 Accessibility

The car park is at the eastern end of Ferndown's commercial centre and approximately 410m from Tesco and 550m from the furthest point of the commercial centre (on Ringwood Road). It is 280m to the bus stops on Victoria Road, south west of the site.

A30.4 Policy context and planning history

The car park is within the Ferndown Commercial Centre, where retail, food and drink, banks, financial services, offices and community uses will generally be permitted. The Local Plan contained Policy FWP20 which seeks to retain the car park for the use of shoppers.

Appendix B – Selected Asset Performance Reviews

B1 Allendale Centre

	Counterfactual <i>What would happen if it wasn't there?</i>	Competition <i>Do other assets perform a similar function?</i>	Cost-effectiveness <i>Does it provide a good value service?</i>
Opportunity for engagement	The Allendale Centre engages a small number of people directly. Without the Centre, a small number of people would lose their community role.	There are numerous facilities in Wimborne that engage the community.	
Involving children and young people	The Allendale Centre is not open to young people, and few children benefit from it.	There are at least two facilities in Wimborne that provide activities for children and young people.	
Providing a hub for the community	The Allendale Centre acts as a venue for a wide range of community activities. Without it, many groups would find it harder to find a venue.	There are at least three other facilities in Wimborne that act in a similar capacity as a community hub.	Despite charging for room hire and the café, the Allendale Centre requires major financial support from the Council
Facilitating learning and skills development	The Allendale Centre has very little direct involvement in learning or skills development.	There is at least one other facility in Wimborne that provides these services.	
Promoting heritage	Allendale Centre does not promote Wimborne's heritage. If it were not there, there might be improved appreciation of Allendale House and the Allen.	There are at least four important facilities for heritage in Wimborne.	
Improving attractiveness	Allendale Centre is an unattractive and outdated building. If it were not there, the natural beauty of the Allen would be more prominent.		The current Allendale Centre building is in a poor state of repair, and will require significant maintenance spending just to keep it intact.
Boosting tourism	The Allendale Centre has a fairly limited impact on tourism		
Supporting retail and trade	The Allendale Centre occasionally holds events that support retail in the town centre. Its café also complements Wimborne's retail offer.		
Contributing to the economy directly	The Allendale Centre's direct economic contribution is likely to be fairly small.		

B2 Allendale House

	Counterfactual <i>What would happen if it wasn't there?</i>	Competition <i>Do other assets perform a similar function?</i>	Cost-effectiveness <i>Does it provide a good value service?</i>
Opportunity for engagement	Allendale House provides some opportunities for the community, through room hire and courses. Some community groups would need a new venue if it were absent.	There are numerous facilities in Wimborne that have the potential to engage the community in a similar capacity to Allendale House.	In some respects, Allendale House operates like a subsidised meeting venue. EDDC has spent a large amount of money on the facility in recent years.
Involving children and young people	Allendale House itself offers few real opportunities for children and young people.	There are at least two facilities in Wimborne that provide activities for children and young people.	
Providing a hub for the community	Allendale House is open to some elements of the community.	There are at least three other facilities in Wimborne that act in a similar capacity as a community hub.	In some respects, Allendale House operates like a subsidised meeting venue. EDDC has spent a large amount of money on the facility in recent years.
Facilitating learning and skills development	Allendale House provides learning and skill development opportunities as a Community Learning Centre. In its absence, learning opportunities, especially the computer courses, would require another venue.	The Community Learning and Education Resource Centre also provides these opportunities.	According to East Dorset Heritage Trust's accounts, Allendale House's learning functions appear to pay for themselves.
Promoting heritage	Allendale House is one of Wimborne's most important historic buildings, and its listed status reflects the fact that the town cannot afford to lose it. The activities of the Heritage Trust ensure that Allendale House is used to promote Wimborne's heritage.	There are other facilities in Wimborne that promote the town's heritage, including the Priest's House Museum and the Minster.	Allendale House offers some value for money in promoting heritage, although it might be able to recoup more money from its commercial activities.
Improving attractiveness	Allendale House has a major positive impact on Wimborne's environment.		
Boosting tourism	Allendale House has some impact on tourism, although few activities held there are directly aimed at tourists.		
Supporting retail and trade	Allendale House acts as a meeting venue for local businesses, although it has little impact on retail trade in the town.		
Contributing to the economy directly	Allendale House's direct contribution to the economy is likely to be moderate for a building of its size and type.		

B3 Priest's House Museum

	Counterfactual <i>What would happen if it wasn't there?</i>	Competition <i>Do other assets perform a similar function?</i>	Cost-effectiveness <i>Does it provide a good value service?</i>
Opportunity for engagement	The Priest's House Museum involves a wide range of people, including 160 volunteers, school groups and students. Without the Museum, there would be limited opportunities for local people to engage in their heritage.	There is no other facility in the District that provides a similar opportunity for people to engage in local history, although the Museum's activities overlap somewhat with the East Dorset Heritage Trust's.	The high level of volunteering at the Museum represents a cost-effective form of engagement with the community, while other engagement activities appear to be carried out at reasonable cost.
Involving children and young people	The Priest's House Museum actively engages children and young people, with school sessions, art projects, student placements and a young persons' council. Without the Museum, it would be hard for young people to access history.	Walford Mill also provides comparable, although different, opportunities for young people as the Museum.	
Providing a hub for the community	Although the Museum houses a large number of volunteers, and is open to the public, the entry fee discourages casual use .	There are many other facilities in Wimborne that act as an effective hub for the community.	
Facilitating learning and skills development	The Priest's House Museum promotes learning and development for all ages, and is a key educational resource for the town.	There are no other facilities in East Dorset that can provide similar resources for learning and development.	The Priest's House Museum appears to offer excellent value for money as an educational amenity.
Promoting heritage	As the District's only accredited Museum, and an active promoter and recorder of the area's heritage, the Museum is indispensable to the District's heritage offer. Without the Museum, a large part of the area's heritage would be lost.	There are other facilities in Wimborne that promote the town's heritage, including the Priest's House Museum and the Minster.	Allendale House offers some value for money in promoting heritage, although it might be able to recoup more money from its commercial activities.
Improving attractiveness	The Priest's House Museum is an attractive and interesting building in the town centre.	The Priest's House is surrounded by attractive, listed buildings, most notably the Minster. It fits in well with these auspicious surroundings.	
Boosting tourism	The Priest's House Museum attracts around 14,000 visitors each year, complementing Wimborne Minster's tourism offer. Without the Museum there would be a gap in the town's tourist appeal.	Although the Priest's House Museum attracts a good number of visitors, it lies somewhat behind Walford Mill (estimated at 34,000 visitors).	The Museum generates modest revenues of around £19k from its entrance fees, but its total annual subsidy is in excess of £100k.
Supporting retail and trade	The Priest's House Museum has a small impact on local trade. Without it, there may be a small dip in trade due to Wimborne's lowered appeal to tourists.		
Contributing to the economy directly	The Priest's House Museum's contribution to the economy is likely to be moderate.		

B4 Tivoli Theatre

	Counterfactual <i>What would happen if it wasn't there?</i>	Competition <i>Do other assets perform a similar function?</i>	Cost-effectiveness <i>Does it provide a good value service?</i>
Opportunity for engagement	The Tivoli Theatre benefits from an extraordinary 21,000 volunteer hours per year, providing an opportunity for community involvement. However, its core activities are not directly aimed at engaging the community.	The Tivoli compares well with other facilities in terms of volunteer contributions, although other facilities play a more active role in engaging the community.	
Involving children and young people	The Tivoli Theatre does not undertake any specific activities for young people.		
Providing a hub for the community	The Tivoli Theatre is a well-used community entertainment venue, putting on a range of shows and events for the public. Without the Theatre, Wimborne would have a vastly diminished entertainment offer.	There are some smaller venues that act as a hub and entertainment venue for the community – most notably Allendale Community Centre – but none offers the same quality as the Tivoli.	The Tivoli receives no ongoing financial support from the public sector, and is a model of financial sustainability.
Facilitating learning and skills development	The Tivoli occasionally offers apprenticeships or placements for young people, to promote practical learning. However, its activities are not focused on learning or skills development.		
Promoting heritage	The Tivoli is an excellent example of a traditional cine-theatre, and has been superbly restored. It plays a major role in preserving and promoting Wimborne's history.	There is no other comparable facility in Wimborne in terms of its style and usage.	Friends of the Tivoli is able to maintain the Theatre without requiring any ongoing financial support.
Improving attractiveness	Allendale House has a major positive impact on Wimborne's environment.		
Boosting tourism	The Tivoli is one of Wimborne's key tourist attractions, formerly among the five treasures of Wimborne. The town's tourism offer would be diminished without it.	There is no other entertainment-oriented tourist attraction in Wimborne.	
Supporting retail and trade	The Tivoli has a positive impact on trade in the town centre, especially at pubs and restaurants. It provides an important anchor for West Borough; without it, the street would be much less effective for trade.		
Contributing to the economy directly	The Tivoli's contribution to the local economy is likely to be fairly high, given its size.		

B5 Walford Mill

	Counterfactual <i>What would happen if it wasn't there?</i>	Competition <i>Do other assets perform a similar function?</i>	Cost-effectiveness <i>Does it provide a good value service?</i>
Opportunity for engagement	Walford Mill actively engages many sections of the community, both through its arts and crafts programme, and more specifically targeted workshops. Without the Mill, opportunities for people to engage with high quality arts activities would be absent in East Dorset.	There are no other facilities in Wimborne that engage the community through an arts-based programme.	From the point of view of the District Council, Walford Mill provides a wide-ranging service for a reasonable cost. However, the Mill's trading subsidiary does not make a profit.
Involving children and young people	Walford Mill actively engages young people, both through its resident artists and dedicated workshops and events.	There are no other facilities in Wimborne that engage young people through an arts-based programme.	The Mill generates income of over £23k from its education activities, making their services to young people good value for public money.
Providing a hub for the community	Due to its location and nature, Walford Mill is not ideally placed to act as a hub for the community. However, it does provide a forum for certain key community activities.	There are many other venues in Wimborne that perform a similar role as a community hub.	
Facilitating learning and skills development	The Walford Mill Education Trust actively develops artistic skills across the District, through its events, workshops and general activities.	There is no other facility in Wimborne that offers a similar level of artistic skill development.	The Mill generates income of over £23k from its education activities, making their services to young people good value for public money.
Promoting heritage	Walford Mill is part of Wimborne and Walford's heritage. It also helps to promote enjoyment of the river and local ecology. Without it, access to the river would be diminished.	Although Wimborne is full of historic sites that promote the town's history, no other site plays such an active role in celebrating the area's ecology.	
Improving attractiveness	Walford Mill has a positive impact on Wimborne's environment.		
Boosting tourism	Walford Mill is one of Wimborne's premier tourist attractions, attracting around 34,000 visitors per year. Without it, a big part of Wimborne's tourism offer would be lost.	Walford Mill's visitor figures compare favourably with other attractions.	
Supporting retail and trade	Walford Mill has a positive impact on trade in the town. It has its own high quality shop, and supports the Bistro on its site.		
Contributing to the economy directly	Walford Mill's contribution to the local economy is likely to be quite high.		

Appendix C – Options appraisal for key opportunity areas

C1 Community centres and cultural facilities

C1.1 Overview

The Council provides financial support to a number of community and cultural facilities, budgeted at a total of over £530,000 for 2010/11. In some cases, the Council provides revenue grants in exchange for uncertain outcomes. Although some community and cultural facilities perform extremely well under these arrangements, the Council has limited scope to influence poorly performing facilities. This situation was highlighted by the Council's Scrutiny Report into Council-Owned Buildings. There is scope for the Council to reduce its costs in relation to community centres and cultural facilities, while at the same time increasing the community benefits these facilities provide.

For the purpose of this review, it is important to separate the performance of the organisations that manage community centres and cultural facilities from the buildings themselves. In many cases, it will be possible to alter a building without changing the role of the organisation that manages it, and vice versa.

C1.2 Considerations

Key considerations for this opportunity area include:

- **Cost management** – The Council provides a number of its community and cultural facilities with different streams of funding, including direct revenue support, repair and maintenance of buildings, and concessions on rent. These different types of subsidy make the full cost to the Council unclear;
- **Management of repairs and maintenance** – The cost of maintaining Council-owned buildings is heavily influenced by the way in which each building is managed by its trustees and staff. In general, having professional staff responsible for overseeing maintenance and management reduces future maintenance costs. For example, assessments by Council staff suggest that maintenance spending on the Barrington Centre is lower than on the Allendale Community Centre;
- **Financial sustainability** – Many of the community and cultural facilities funded by the Council could move towards becoming more financially self-sustaining. However, it is likely that the current system of providing grants and free services discourages the relevant charities from aiming for financial self-sufficiency;
- **Arrangements between trusts and the Council** – The Council's support for the majority of community and cultural facilities is based on historical precedents, rather than a strategic approach to providing community services. Lease and funding arrangements are not linked to the benefits provided by each facility, and there is no agreement to ensure that each facility contributes to the Council's aims. This makes it difficult for the Council to influence how its money is spent, and to ensure that it achieves value for money. Steps towards achieving service level agreements between the Council and the delivery organisations are being taken as a result of recommendations made in the Scrutiny Review.

C1.3 Options appraisal

Based on the evidence gathered in our review, we have developed the following options for the future of community centres and cultural facilities in East Dorset:

Option 1 – Do nothing

Under this option, there will be no change to the way in which the Council provides support to community and cultural facilities. Key features of this option include:

- Facilities will continue to receive ongoing revenue support, maintenance support and rent concessions from the Council;
- The Council will not seek to influence the present management arrangements at any of the facilities;

- All current community buildings will be retained in their current use; and
- New community or cultural facilities may be provided as and when the Council deems appropriate.

Financial implications

The Council could expect to maintain current levels of spending on each of its community and cultural facilities. Table 1.1 summarises expected ongoing expenditure on each of the Council-sponsored assets considered within this review. The results suggest that the Council will spend an annual average of around £210,000 on the community and cultural facilities considered in this review over the next five years.

Table 1.1: Financial implications for maintaining spending on community centres (Option 1)

Asset	Annual revenue grant (£ 000s)	Maintenance cost for 2011 - 2016 (£ 000s)	Total cost for 2011 – 2016 (£ 000s)
Allendale Community Centre	19	195	290
Allendale House	25	43	168
Barrington Centre	22	61	171
Tivoli Theatre	0	0	0
Walford Mill	7	34	69
Priest's House Museum	64	20	340
Total	137	353	1,038

Notes:

Walford Mill also receives revenues from its car park, valued at around £11,000 per annum.

These costs do not include the cost of foregoing rental income on assets. For all assets except the Tivoli Theatre and Priest's House Museum, the Council provides premises at a discounted rent.

Annual revenue grant figures are estimated from the accounts of individual trusts and associations. Revenue grant figures include direct grants, and any employees paid for by the Council.

Maintenance costs to 2016 are drawn from the Council's assessment of required repairs and maintenance spending.

There are no capital implications for this option, either in terms of receipts or expenditure.

Contribution to aims and objectives

Under this option, the community and cultural facilities supported by the Council will continue to make a similar contribution to the Council's aims and objectives.

Option 2 – Reduce the number of community and cultural facilities

Under this option, the Council will remove all support from any community or cultural facilities that do not represent good value for its money. The primary aim of this option would be to reduce the Council's spending and liabilities by reducing its provision of community and cultural facilities. Key features of this option include:

- All financial support for the Allendale Community Centre would be removed as soon as possible. The current site of the Allendale Centre would be released to the market;

- Financial support for East Dorset Heritage Trust would be reviewed, while the Trust's tenancy at Allendale House would be terminated as soon as possible, and the site leased out; and
- Ongoing support to the Priest's House Museum, Walford Mill, and the Barrington Centre would be reviewed on a regular basis, and dependent upon performance and success in achieving cost savings.

Financial implications

Table 1.2 summarises the expected financial implications from 2011 to 2016 for reducing the number of community and cultural facilities in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown, under the present option. The results suggest that the Council will spend a total of £705,000 on the community and cultural facilities considered in this review over the next five years, a saving of £333,000 compared with option 1.

Table 1.2: Financial implications for reducing the number of community facilities (option 2)

Asset	Annual revenue grant (£ 000s)	Maintenance cost for 2011 - 2016 (£ 000s)	Total cost for 2011 – 2016 (£ 000s)
Allendale Community Centre	0	0	0
East Dorset Heritage Trust	25	0	125
Barrington Centre	22	61	171
Tivoli Theatre	0	0	0
Walford Mill	7	34	69
Priest's House Museum	64	20	340
Total	118	115	705
<p>Notes:</p> <p>All figures are based on the assumption that actions under option 2 can be implemented before April 2011.</p> <p>These costs do not include the cost of foregoing rental income on assets. For all assets except the Tivoli Theatre and Priest's House Museum, the Council provides premises at a discounted rent.</p> <p>Annual revenue grant figures are estimated from the accounts of individual trusts and associations. Revenue grant figures include direct grants, and any employees paid for by the Council.</p> <p>Maintenance costs to 2016 are drawn from the Council's assessment of required repairs and maintenance spending.</p>			

In addition to this saving, the Council could also achieve a capital receipt of at least £1 million²⁰ from releasing the Allendale Centre to the market. This value could be higher if changes in planning permission for the site were considered.

The Council would also be able to secure an annual rental income of around £42,000²¹ from leasing Allendale House.

²⁰ This figure is sourced from the District Valuer's valuation of the land only at the Allendale Community Centre site, dated April 2010.

²¹ This figure is based on a 6% rental yield from the District Valuer's valuation of Allendale House, dated April 2009.

Therefore, option 2 would imply a total annual saving of around £110,000, along with a capital receipt in excess of £1 million.

Contribution to aims and objectives

Under this option, the contribution of these assets to the Council's aims and objectives would fall slightly. The loss of the Allendale Centre would reduce opportunities for community engagement and remove a hub for the community, although other facilities exist to cover these roles. There would be a limited impact from relocating East Dorset Heritage Trust from Allendale House. All other cultural facilities would continue to contribute to the Council's aims and objectives as they do at present.

Option 3 – Broaden the services offered by community and cultural facilities

Under this option, the Council would not reduce funding for community and cultural facilities, but would work to increase the public benefits provided by these facilities. The benefits provided would be focused on the Council's Corporate Plan, and would include service provision as well as provision of an amenity. Key features of this option include:

- The Council will establish a formal agreement with every community organisation it supports, which involves commitments to provide defined services, and support specific outcomes;
- Community and cultural facilities would be required to provide services and benefits that might otherwise be provided by the Council (fulfilling its Corporate Plan), such as community outreach, education and learning, and promoting the local economy.

Financial implications

There are no significant lasting financial implications for this option. The Council's spending is likely to be similar to option 1.

Contribution to aims and objectives

Under this option, community and cultural facilities are likely to make a much greater contribution to the Council's aims and objectives. Improvements in the following areas would be likely:

- **Communities** – Each of the Council-backed facilities would have a clearer and more direct role in engaging with local communities, providing outreach services and a hub for local people. In particular, we would expect this to benefit children and young people, as well as elderly and vulnerable groups;
- **Culture and heritage** – The Council-backed facilities would play a more active role in promoting culture and heritage, through outreach programmes and programmes to promote engagement with cultural activities;
- **Economy** – This option should see an increase in the wider economic benefits provided by community and cultural facilities, due to an improved offer for tourists, and stronger links with businesses and the wider community.

Option 4 – Improve community benefits while moving towards financial self-sufficiency

This option combines measures to improve the benefits provided by community and cultural facilities with steps to help these facilities to move towards becoming financially self-sufficient over the medium term. This option would be underpinned by cooperation between the Council and the providers of community and cultural facilities. Key features of this option include:

- The Council would establish a formal agreement and supporting partnership arrangement with every community organisation it supports, which involves commitments to provide defined services, and to manage costs and maintenance in an effective way;
- The Council would provide advice and support to each community organisation, to help improve performance, and move towards financial self-sufficiency (after any Council funding for specific community services). This support will cover cost management, improved service, and finding new ways to generate or increase revenue streams;

- The Council would facilitate cooperation between community organisations in East Dorset, to enable them to reduce costs and provide a better service. Support might include bulk-buying of goods by the Council, shared functions between facilities, or District-wide marketing campaigns;
- The Council will regularly review the suitability of buildings for community organisations. Where it is advantageous, organisations may be encouraged to share buildings, or locate in a single building.

Financial implications

Under this option, the Council would aim to make lasting savings on the community and cultural assets considered within this review. These savings might be achieved relatively quickly, although some savings could take up to 5 years to realise. Table 1.3 sets out the expected financial costs for each of the community and cultural assets considered within this review. The results suggest that the Council could achieve a saving of £330,000 over five years, an annual average of £66,000, if this option can be implemented successfully.

Table 1.3: Financial implications for moving towards financial self-sufficiency (option 4)

Asset	Annual revenue grant (£ 000s)	Maintenance cost for 2011 - 2016 (£ 000s)	Total cost for 2011 – 2016 (£ 000s)
Allendale Community Centre	0	195	195
East Dorset Heritage Trust	0	43	43
Barrington Centre	0	61	61
Tivoli Theatre	0	0	0
Walford Mill	7	34	69
Priest's House Museum	64	20	340
Total	71	353	708

Notes:

All figures are based on the assumption that all revenue grants can be removed by April 2011.

These costs do not include the cost of foregoing rental income on assets. For all assets except the Tivoli Theatre and Priest's House Museum, the Council provides premises at a discounted rent.

Maintenance costs to 2016 are drawn from the Council's assessment of required repairs and maintenance spending. Maintenance spending beyond 2016 could be reduced to zero depending on the success of moves towards financial self-sufficiency.

There are no capital implications from this option.

Contribution to aims and objectives

Under this option, community and cultural facilities are likely to make a much greater contribution to the Council's aims and objectives, similar to those achieved under option 3. Improvements in the following areas would be likely:

- **Communities** – Each of the Council-backed facilities would have a clearer and more direct role in engaging with local communities, providing outreach services and a hub for local people. In particular, we would expect this to benefit children and young people, as well as elderly and vulnerable groups;

- **Culture and heritage** – The Council-backed facilities would play a more active role in promoting culture and heritage, through outreach programmes and programmes to promote engagement with cultural activities;
- **Economy** – This option should see an increase in the wider economic benefits provided by community and cultural facilities, due to an improved offer for tourists, and stronger links with businesses and the wider community.

C1.4 Summary and preferred option

The options appraisal suggests that there is scope for the Council to save money and improve the service it offers through its community and cultural assets. Based on the preceding analysis, the preferred option is option 4, which combines an improvement in the benefits provided by community and cultural facilities, with an emphasis on becoming financially self-sufficient.

C2 Car parks

C2.1 Overview

The Council owns car parks with a Current Use Value of over £2 million²². This value could be much higher if the land were allocated for other uses, such as residential development. The District's car parking operations generate a net revenue of around £140,000 for the Council each year. The availability of car parking spaces also plays a key role in supporting the local economy, particularly in Wimborne Minster, where there is limited private parking available.

Car parking provides an opportunity for the Council to increase its revenues, and to generate capital receipts from releasing assets. While some of the Council's car parks perform strongly in financial terms, others are under-used, and generate low levels of revenue.

C2.2 Considerations

Key considerations for car parks as an opportunity area include:

- **Overall demand for car parking** – As retail centres, both Wimborne Minster and Ferndown rely on car parking to provide access to the town centres. When considering the future uses of car parks in both towns, it is important to consider the overall demand for car parking, as well as the impact changes in pricing structures could have on retailers in the town centres.
- **Rowland's Hill car park** – The new Waitrose car park at Rowland's Hill has provided over 200 extra parking spaces in Wimborne Minster. These spaces may have an impact on demand for spaces in Council-owned parking facilities, with Hanham Road, Allenvie South and Park Lane likely to be most affected.

C2.3 Options

Based on the evidence gathered in our review, we have developed the following options for the future of car parks in East Dorset:

Option 1 – Do nothing

Under this option, there would be no changes to the provision of car parks by the Council. Key features of this option include:

- The Council would retain the current charging structure for car parks; and
- All current car parking sites would continue to be used in the future.

Financial implications

Under this option, the Council may see a slight decrease in revenue at its short stay car parks due to competition from the new Waitrose car park at Rowland's Hill. The Council initially estimated that the new car park could reduce demand for Council-owned car parks by the equivalent of around 100 spaces, with between £50,000 and £100,000 in lost revenue²³. Such an impact would see the Council's net revenue from car parking fall from a budgeted £146,500 in 2010/11, to less than £100,000. However, early indications show that the Council's car park receipts are up by £1,000 over the two months since Waitrose opened and, therefore, the losses of £50,000 to £100,000 might not be realised after all..

²² This is defined by the District Valuer's valuation, dated March 2008

²³ This estimate has been provided by East Dorset District Council's Head of Technical Services

Contribution to aims and objectives

This option is unlikely to have any impact on the contribution of car parks to the Council's aims and objectives. The Council's car parks will continue to support the town centre economies of Wimborne Minster and Ferndown.

Option 2 – Alter management arrangements for current car parks

Under this option, the Council would aim to improve the financial performance of its existing car parks, while maintaining all existing car parking spaces. Key features of this option include:

- Exploring potential for introducing charges at some free Council-owned car parks; and
- Examining the feasibility of reducing the costs of providing and administering each parking space.

Financial implications

The Council currently provides a total of 344 car parking spaces free of charge, in Verwood, West Moors and Corfe Mullen, compared to 910 spaces in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown that are subject to charges. Introducing charges on some of the Council's free car parks could lead to an increase in revenue for the Council, although it is difficult to anticipate the exact increase in revenues that would result. Our analysis suggests that extra gross revenue from introducing these charges may be between £50,000 and £75,000²⁴. However, there are likely to be one-time capital costs (estimated at around £32,000²⁵) associated with installing charging equipment. There may also be increased in the Council's operational costs for these car parks, although this would depend on resource decisions made by the Council.

It may not be possible to achieve savings on the cost of providing and administering parking spaces. The Council currently spends around £275 per space (including free and charged spaces), while Christchurch spends £207 per space. If East Dorset's level of spending could be reduced to the same level as Christchurch, the annual saving would be around £85,000.

Overall, this option could save the Council up to £255,000 per year (in both cost savings and increased revenues). However, this is an upper bound of possible savings, and much of this may be either infeasible, undesirable, or fail to be achieved in practice.

Contribution to aims and objectives

Increasing prices and charging for previously free car parks could have a minor negative impact on the economies of East Dorset's major towns. East Dorset's residents depend heavily on cars as a means of transport, and increasing the price of car parking may slightly reduce the competitiveness of the District's towns as retail centres and destinations for business. However, this impact is likely to be fairly minor in Wimborne Minster and Ferndown.

Option 3 – Releasing under-used car parks

Under this option, the Council would release the least utilised car parks under its ownership. Key features of this option include:

- Releasing Old Road and Allenvie West car parks, either for development by the Council, or to the market;
- Reviewing the case for retaining Allenvie North car parks on an ongoing basis; and
- Providing appropriate planning permissions to maximise capital receipts from car park disposals.

Financial implications

Table 2.1 shows the expected capital receipts from releasing each car park considered under this option, assuming that the Council releases sites to the market, rather than take on development itself. The Table

²⁴ This analysis involves comparing free car parks with similar car parks that currently operate charges, and using revenue per space figures to estimate revenues. However, no detailed data on current usage of the free car parks has been used, so there is significant uncertainty around these estimates.

²⁵ Estimate based on seven new paystations be required, at a cost of £4,000 per unit.

suggests that the sale of Allenview West and North, combined with granting planning permission for residential development, could lead to capital receipts of almost £4.5 million. Old Road car park may be less suitable for release to the market, due to its smaller size and less valuable location.

Table 2.1: Financial implications for releasing under-used car parks (option 3)

Car park	Expected capital receipt – current use (£ 000s)	Expected capital receipt – residential use (£ 000s)	Lost revenue from car parking charges (£ 000s)
Allenview West	199	2,722	21.2
Old Road	57.5	Not known	8.7
Allenview North	130	1,770	18.5
Total	386.5	4,492	69.6

Contribution to aims and objectives

Reducing the overall amount of car parking space in Wimborne Minster may have a slight negative impact on the town’s economy. Although the town has excess parking capacity for most working days, there may be a shortage of parking spaces for some weekends and popular events (such as the Folk Festival and Food Festival). While this may have an impact on the town’s appeal to shoppers and visitors, options for using on-street parking or other un-used spaces may help to ease problems at peak periods.

Releasing car park sites for development may provide opportunities for affordable housing within the town centre, helping to contribute towards the Council’s housing objectives.

Option 4 – Optimising financial performance of car parks

This option combines the measures outlined in options 2 and 3, to secure the best possible financial performance for East Dorset’s car parks. Key features of this option include:

- Considering small increases in charges at all Council-owned car parks, to mirror the pricing structure used by Christchurch;
- Exploring potential for introducing charges at some free Council-owned car parks;
- Examining the feasibility of reducing the costs of providing and administering each parking space;
- Releasing Old Road and Allenview West car parks, either for development by the Council, or to the market. The Council is currently carrying out a usage survey of Old Road car park and the initial indications are that there is sufficient capacity in the other western Wimborne car parks to accommodate most of the cars displaced from Old Road if it were to be redeveloped;
- Reviewing the case for retaining Allenview North car parks on an ongoing basis; and
- Providing appropriate planning permissions to maximise capital receipts from car park disposals.

Financial implications

This option would lead to both increases in revenue from car parks, and capital receipts from the sale of some car parks.

Revenue from car parking activities could increase by up to £185,000, although this figure represents an upper bound of possible revenue increases. This figure includes losses in revenue from releasing car parks. If measures such as reducing costs and introducing charges at more car parks were not taken forward, this option would become roughly neutral in terms of revenue.

Releasing Allenview West car park for residential development could yield capital receipts of up to £2.7 million, while Old Road would become available for development to meet the Council's housing objectives. If the decision was taken to release Allenview North car park for development, this could attract up to £1.75 million in capital receipts.

Contribution to aims and objectives

Reducing the number of car parking spaces available and slightly increasing the cost of parking in East Dorset may have a slight negative impact on the District's economy. Retailers and businesses in East Dorset rely on car parking, and some consumers may be put off by increased car parking charges. However, this impact is likely to be fairly minor, as the increase in prices would be small, and the reductions in car parking spaces would mainly come from currently under-used car parks.

The release of car parking sites for residential uses may help the District Council to meet its housing objectives.

C3 The Allendale Site

C3.1 Overview

The Council has a large land-holding close to the centre of Wimborne Minster, spanning both sides of the River Allen, and on the north side of Hanham Road. At present, this land contains the Allendale Community Centre, as well as the three Allenview car parks. Due to concerns over the sustainability of the current Allendale Centre building, and the relatively low usage of the Allenview West and North car parks, there may be a case for redeveloping parts of this site.

C3.2 Considerations

Key considerations for the Allendale Site include:

- **Value of the site** – The Allendale Site offers many advantages for development, including its proximity to the town centre, attractive frontage along the River Allen, and excellent access from Hanham Road. These advantages mean the site is likely to be attractive to developers, offering the potential for a large capital receipt;
- **Flood risks** – Most of The Allendale Site lies within Flood Zone 3b, meaning it has a greater than 1% annual probability of flooding. While the east bank of the river (Allenview North and South car parks) is protected by a simple flood defence scheme (providing protection to a 1 in 100 year standard), the west bank, which contains the Allendale Centre and Allenview West car park, does not benefit from flood defences. The Environment Agency has stressed that any development at the Allendale Site would require a detailed Flood Risk Assessment to be completed, and would need permission from the Environment Agency to go ahead;
- **Planning policy** – The Allendale Site includes the listed Allendale House, and also lies on a key view into the centre of Wimborne Minster. Any redevelopment would have to be sensitive to Allendale House's position and environment, and would most likely be limited to a maximum of two stories.

C3.3 Options

Based on the evidence gathered in our review, we have developed the following options for the future of car parks in East Dorset:

Option 1 – Do nothing

Under this option, there would be no development on the Allendale Site, and all amenities would continue to operate as usual. Key features of this option include:

- Current operations would be maintained at Allenview South, North and West car parks; and
- The Allendale Community Centre building would be retained in its current form, and the Council would spend £195,000 over the next five years to provide emergency repairs and maintenance.

Financial implications

Under this option, the Council would need to spend a minimum of £195,000 on essential repairs and maintenance on the Allendale Community Centre over the next five years. The Council would also continue to bear future repair and maintenance liabilities on the Centre, which could be significant due to its ageing condition.

The Council would continue to earn revenue of around £21,000 per year from Allenview West car park.

Contribution to aims and objectives

The Allendale Community Centre currently makes a fairly limited contribution towards the Council's aims and objectives (refer to Appendix B for details). Allenvision West is currently the least utilised of the Council's car parks. Under this option, there would be no change to these contributions.

Option 2 – Rebuild the Allendale Community Centre

Under this option, there would be no changes in land-use at the Allendale Site, but the Allendale Community Centre would be rebuilt. Key features of this option include:

- The current Allendale Centre building would be replaced with a smaller Community Centre building on the same site. This development may be accompanied by small scale commercial or residential development to help offset the capital costs;
- The redevelopment would open up access along the River Allen, as well as providing scope for improving public spaces around the Allendale Centre and Allendale House; and
- All three Allenvision car parks would continue in their current uses.

Financial implications

Under this option, the Council may require capital funding to complete the redevelopment of the Allendale Community Centre, as well as to demolish the existing building. The exact capital cost of this redevelopment would depend on the size and specification of the new community centre, but is likely to exceed £1 million.

To help offset this cost, the Council could release part of the site of the Allendale Community Centre site for development. According to the District Valuer's valuation of the land at the site, releasing half of the site to the market could earn capital receipts of around £500,000, provided that planning permission for residential use were granted.

The Council would save the £195,000 required to maintain the Allendale Centre over the next five years under this option. A newer community centre building would be expected to have lower ongoing repair and maintenance costs into the future.

Contribution to aims and objectives

The redevelopment of the Allendale Community Centre may have a slight positive impact on the Council's aims and objectives. Although the new centre would most likely be smaller than the existing facility, the design of the new building would more accurately reflect the current needs of the community centre and its users.

Option 3 – Residential- or commercial-led development

Under this option, the west bank of the Allendale site would be released for private development, with a residential or commercial land-use. This option could also include provision of Council or community services on the site. Key features of this option include:

- The current Allendale Community Centre building would be demolished, while Allenvision West car park would no longer be available for public parking;
- A private development partner would liaise with the Council and its partners to agree a mutually beneficial plan for the site;
- The developer may contribute to affordable housing, improved flood risk management, or other public schemes as part of the development agreement; and
- The option to retain a rebuilt community centre or other public services (such as a GP practice, library or other facility) as part of the development would remain.

Financial implications

The Council could expect to generate capital receipts of up to £3.75 million²⁶ by releasing the Allendale Community Centre and Allenvier West car park for development, provided that appropriate planning permissions were granted.

In addition, the Council would save the £195,000 required for maintenance of the Allendale Centre over the next five years, as well as ongoing maintenance liabilities. However, the loss of the Allenvier West car park could reduce the Council's revenues by approximately £21,000 per year.

Contribution to aims and objectives

Although the Allendale Community Centre's contribution to the Council's aims and objectives is somewhat limited, the complete closure of the centre would harm the Council's ability to meet its aims and objectives. In particular, the centre's role as a hub for the community, and the opportunity it provides for engaging a small but important group within Wimborne Minster, would be missed. Although other community facilities should be able to replace many of these functions, there would inevitably be some loss to the community if the centre were to be closed.

The loss of Allenvier West car park would have a minor negative impact on Wimborne Minster's economy due to reduced parking availability, although this impact would be limited due to the proximity of other car parks with spare capacity.

Option 4 – Create a community hub

Under this option, the Allendale Site would be redeveloped into a community hub, which would include various public facilities and services. Key features of this option include:

- The Allendale Community Centre and part of the Allenvier West car park would cease to operate in their current form;
- The Council, Dorset County Council or other public sector partners may opt to relocate some of their services to the community hub, including the Library and Social Services;
- Some healthcare organisations, including GP practices within Wimborne Minster, may opt to relocate to premises within the community hub;
- The option to include a replacement for the Allendale Community Centre in the hub would be retained; and
- The community hub could include a residential or commercial development.

Financial implications

The exact financial implications from the redevelopment of the Allendale Site into a community hub would depend on the exact development package put together. However, it is likely that the development could be designed such that it is cost neutral, with land released for private development to cover any unmet costs.

Under this option, the Council would save £195,000 in maintenance costs on the Allendale Centre over the next five years.

Option 5 – Relocate the Council's offices

Under this radical option, the Council would relocate all of its office functions and services provided in Wimborne Minster to a new development on the Allendale Site. This would allow the Council to locate its offices within the town centre, while providing a single point of contact for citizen-focused services. Key features of this option include:

²⁶ This figure is based on the District Valuer's valuations for the land at the site (dated April 2010), which is premised on residential planning permission being granted.

- The Allendale Community Centre and part of the Allenvier West car park would cease to operate in their current forms;
- The Council's current offices at Furzehill would be released to the market, and the capital receipts used to fund the redevelopment;
- The new Council offices would include a hub for citizens, including a community centre and single point of contact for information; and
- Allenvier North car park would be used primarily for the Council staff on working days.

Financial implications

The exact financial implications from the relocation of the Council's offices to the Allendale site would depend on the price received for the Furzehill site, and the specification of the new Council offices building. It is likely that the scheme would be cost neutral, or even generate a surplus for the Council.

Under this option, the Council would save £195,000 in maintenance costs on the Allendale Centre over the next five years.

C4 Wimborne Market

C4.1 Overview

Wimborne Market is a large commercial operation located on the edge of Wimborne Minster, within a primarily residential area. Although the Market continues to run as a successful business operation, its current location is not ideal for Ensors or for the community. If a more appropriate site for the Market could be found, there could be significant benefits for Ensors, for the Council, and for the business community in the town centre.

Any relocation of the Market is likely to depend on the agreement of Ensors, for both legal and economic reasons. The Market is privately owned, and any attempts to force the current occupiers off the site would involve complex legal action. Equally, Wimborne Market has a significant impact on the economy and employment within East Dorset, such that removing the Market from Wimborne altogether would not be a desirable outcome for the Council. Ensors has indicated that it is willing to consider relocation, providing an acceptable alternative site can be found.

C4.2 Considerations

Key considerations for the Market include:

- **Contribution to the local economy** – Wimborne Market draws a large number of visitors into Wimborne Minster each week²⁷, as well as generating a significant number of employment opportunities. However, the potential economic benefits of these visitors to the town are not capitalised upon, because of poor connectivity between the Market and the town centre. Locating the Market closer to the town centre could provide a major boost to Wimborne Minster’s town centre economy;
- **Planning regulations** – Wimborne Market is covered by a specific policy (WIMCO7) in the Local Plan, which places restrictions on opening hours and disturbances from the Market. However, the Council has reported breaches of these planning regulations. These breaches highlight the inappropriateness of the Market’s current location.
- **Affordable Housing** – Wimborne Market’s current site has been identified in the Council’s Strategic Housing Availability Assessment as a potential site for 195 homes, including affordable housing.
- **Criteria for an alternative site** – The current Market site is almost 5 acres in size, and is unlikely to

C4.3 Options

Based on the evidence gathered in our review, we have developed the following options for Wimborne Market:

Option 1 – Do nothing

Under this option, there would be no change to the current operations of Wimborne Market at its current site. Key features of this option include:

- The Council would continue to enforce current planning regulations regarding the Market’s operations.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications to the Council from this option.

²⁷ Ensors estimates that the Market draws 1 million visits per year

Contribution to aims and objectives

Under this option, there would be no impact on the Council's aims and objectives.

Option 2 – Ensors Proposal

Ensors has outlined its preferred option for relocating the Market to Halcrow as part of our consultation work. This option involves releasing the current site, moving the Market into the town centre, and developing an additional site outside Wimborne into a location for the Market's car boot sale. Ensors has proposed a model that would see it share the profits from the Market with the Council and charities or organisations within the town. Key features of this option include:

- Operating a street market in the town centre every day from Monday to Saturday. The market would most likely be located in the Square, and could be extended along the High Street, and onto Cook Row and the Cornmarket if part of the High Street were to be made available;
- Ensors would retain the right to operate the market in the town centre under their current franchise. Instead of paying rent, Ensors would share its profits from the market with organisations involved in the town centre, including the District and County Councils, Chamber of Trade and local charities; and
- As part of the deal, Ensors also require a larger open space for their Saturday morning car boot sales. Their preferred site for this is outside Wimborne, at the interchange between Julian's Road and the A31. However, this site is currently marked as green belt land.

Financial implications

Under Ensors' proposed model for running the town centre market, the Council would gain a revenue stream from their share of the profit from the market's operations. It is not clear how great this revenue stream would be, as this would depend on the success and scale of the new market operation. In addition, a revenue stream would also be created for charities or organisations in Wimborne town centre, much of which would be used to work towards the Council's objectives.

There would be no financial implications to the Council from the redevelopment of the current market site, unless the Council undertook any aspects of the development itself.

Contribution to aims and objectives

This option would have a major impact on Wimborne Minster's economy. Locating a large, successful market within the town centre would increase the number of visitors and shoppers to Wimborne Minster, benefiting traders within the town centre. Given that Wimborne Minster is a market town, having a daily market within the town centre would greatly enhance its appeal to top visitors and local shoppers alike, as well as making the town more attractive as a destination for businesses. On top of this, a share of the profits from the market's operations would help to support further action to improve the town's economic effectiveness. For example, many of the actions identified in the Wimborne Minster Town Centre Action Plan could be funded through this mechanism.

The development of the current market site could also help to contribute towards the Council's housing aims and objectives, as the site has been identified as a strategic site for developing affordable housing.

However, the development of a green belt site outside of Wimborne Minster for use as a car park could prove to be a major obstacle to this proposal. Aside from the issues surrounding the land's designation as green belt, this development may conflict with the Council's aim to protect East Dorset's natural environment.

Appendix D – Consultees

We spoke to the following people as part of this project:

- **Alan Cosgrove** Property Agent
- **Brian Nippard** Project Engineer, East Dorset District Council
- **Brian Sutton** Manager, Barrington Centre
- **Christine Lawry** Chief Executive, Walford Mill Crafts
- **Clare Aldridge** Planning Liaison Officer, Environment Agency
- **Dan Povey** Financial Services Manager, East Dorset District Council
- **Eddie Mons** Solicitor
- **Emma Ayling** Curator, Priests House museum
- **Geoff Wilson** Architectural Services Officer, East Dorset District Council
- **Ian Jones** Clerk, Ferndown Town Council
- **John Cullen** Councillor, Ferndown Town Council
- **John George** Wimborne Market (Ensors)
- **Jonathan Ross** Property Services Manager, East Dorset District Council
- **Kate Tunks** Transport Planner, Dorset County Council
- **Keith Mallett** Head of Legal Services, East Dorset District Council
- **Lawrence Hewitt** Clerk, Wimborne Minster Town Council
- **Lindsay Cass** Head of Technical Services, East Dorset District Council
- **Malcolm Angel** President, Wimborne Minster Chamber of Trade
- **Malcolm Buddens** Wilson & Son
- **Mark Lockyer** East Dorset District Council
- **Mr. Slocock** Minster Press
- **Neil Farmer** Head of Community Services and Policy Planning, East Dorset District Council
- **Neil Lancaster** Development Control Manager, East Dorset District Council
- **Rachel Limb** Tourism Development Officer, East Dorset District Council
- **Ray Bird** Design and Conservation Leader, East Dorset District Council
- **Richard Dodson** Planning Contributions Manager, Dorset County Council
- **Roger Sewill** Dorset County Council
- **Ron Tomlin** Community Services, East Dorset County Council
- **Shirley Webb** Allendale Community Centre
- **Simon Tong** EDDC Councillor
- **Suzi Jones** Corporate Property, Dorset County Council
- **Terry Wheeler** Mayor, Wimborne Minster Town Council
- **Mike Carter** Trustee, Priest House Museum
- **Sarah Evans** Manager, East Dorset Heritage Trust
- **Derek Burt** Chairman, East Dorset Heritage Trust
- **Andrew Morris** Primary Care Trust

Appendix E – List of Assets

- Allendale Centre
- Allendale House
- Ambulance Station
- Car parks
- Community Learning and Education Resource Centre
- Cornmarket
- Crown Mead
- Fire Station
- Hanham Centre
- High Street
- Wimborne Library
- Police Station
- Wimborne Market
- Minster Church of St Cuthberga
- Magistrates' Court
- Priest's House Museum
- Something Special Car Park (Budden's Yard)
- The Square
- Tourist Information Centre
- Tivoli Theatre
- Waitrose
- Walford Mill Craft Centre
- Barrington Theatre and Community Centre
- Day Care Centre
- Ferndown Library
- Victoria House – Primary Care Trust offices
- Penny's Walk
- Tesco
- Tesco Car Park
- Wilkinson's Car Park

Appendix F – Locations of recommendations



Figure F1: Ferndown Proposals 1: Create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre 2: Better use of public space around the Day Care Centre 3: Closing public conveniences on Penny's walk (to use Barrington Centre as an alternative) 4: Charges or weekend closure of Dorset County Council car park by Penny's Lodge

Figure F2: Ferndown - create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre through the creation of a high quality public space, traffic calming, flexible uses (eg farmers market/parking)



Figure F3: Ferndown - create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre through the creation of a high quality public space, traffic calming, flexible uses (eg farmers market/parking)



Figure F4: Ferndown - create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre through the creation of a high quality public space, traffic calming, flexible uses (eg farmers market/parking)



Figure F5: Ferndown - create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre through the creation of a high quality public space, traffic calming, flexible uses (eg farmers market/parking)



Figure F6: Ferndown - create a more welcoming entrance to the town centre through the creation of a high quality public space, traffic calming, flexible uses (eg farmers market/parking)



Figure F7: Wimborne Minster Proposals - 1: Allendale Community Centre site redevelopment 2: Reuse of Allendale House 3: Release Old Road car park 4: Release Allenvier West 5: Investigate release of Allenvier North in the longer term



Figure F8: Redevelopment of Allendale Community Centre - 1: Community hub option: this option would lead to the relocation of the library, GP surgery, part of the market and a more streamlined police offering. 2: Possible relocation of East Dorset District Council offices resulting in the release of the Furzehill site 3: Continued use of Car Park to support community hub/Council offices



Figure F9: Town Centre Proposals 1: Street Market - The Square, High Street and Cornmarket 2: Part-pedestrianisation of the High Street



Appendix G – Project Brief, April 2010

The following pages outline the Council’s original brief for this project.

**Brief for Ferndown and Wimborne Minster
Total Place Reviews and Opportunities**

April 2010



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INTRODUCTION

Tender submissions are being sought by East Dorset District Council for the production of Total Place Reviews for the town centres of Ferndown and Wimborne Minster. This tender has been commissioned to consider a holistic approach to the management and review of public assets in the town centres of Ferndown and Wimborne Minster.

The Key objectives of the project are:

- To review this Council's and other statutory agencies key land holdings in the centres;
- To create a civic heart within each town centre;
- To recommend how this Council might maximise its capital assets in both towns;
- A review of the public realm, key linkages, pedestrian routes and attractiveness of the towns.

BACKGROUND

Review of public assets

The Council is undertaking a review of all its assets and would like to maximise their benefits. A number of premises and sites are owned by this Council and other public land owners in the town centres. The Council is currently reviewing its Corporate Plan and therefore its services priorities. As part of this review it wishes to maximise its capital assets, whilst at the same time limiting its revenue expenditure. It is therefore considered appropriate to consider the future uses, services and requirements provided in the town centres.

Support of the Town Centres

This review offers an opportunity to consider the future requirements of each town based on new developments, such as Waitrose in Wimborne, and the likely future population growth of the towns suggested by the Secretary of State's changes to the South West Regional Spatial Strategy. Demographically, the area has a higher than average ageing population, reliant on the local services found in town centres. The town centres of Bournemouth and Poole lie within 10 miles from Ferndown and Wimborne Minster, offering a fuller and more extensive retail offer in their shopping areas. Faced with such competition, the local retailers require support to attract more shoppers and visitors to the towns. It should be noted that Verwood is not included in this work as recent civic enhancements have been undertaken to the town centre.

Local Development Framework

The District Council is preparing its Core Strategy and has recently commissioned two evidence studies to consider the vitality and viability of the town centres.

The 'Joint Retail Assessment' by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (2008) considered both towns' vitality and viability up to 2026. A recently published report prepared by Halcrow, 'Wimborne Minster Town Centre Action Plan' (November 2009) has specifically considered Wimborne's marketing and town centre management in consultation with the Chamber of Trade and Town Council. These reports offer an insight into the current and future economic situation, potential requirements for growth and the opportunities which exist to support the town centres.

Characteristics of the Towns

Wimborne Minster is the historic centre of East Dorset with origins stretching back to the Saxon period. The town has a population of 6,650 which is doubled further by the nearby suburban areas of Colehill and Merley (in the Borough of Poole). It has a well developed town centre offers a wide range of facilities and services, attracting thousands of tourists to the town each year with its cultural events. Much of the town is covered by a conservation area and it is known for its high quality vernacular architecture.



View across the Minster Green towards the Priests House Museum and TIC, Wimborne

Ferndown by contrast is a modern suburban settlement developed since the early 20th century as a suburb to nearby Bournemouth and Poole. It has an attractive spacious sense of place, with many detached properties in large plots. It is the largest town in East Dorset with a population of 17,200, over 42% of whom are of retirement age. The town offers a good range of facilities in the modern town centre for residents. On the eastern edge of the urban area is a small out of town retail development with a Sainsburys, Halfords and a Lidl.



The Barrington Theatre and Tesco, Penny's Walk, Ferndown

What are the issues for Wimborne?

Historic core

Wimborne has an outstanding Georgian historic core, with a high number of quality independent shops located along the narrow historic streets. A very high number of visitors are attracted to the town to visit the many cultural attractions including The Priests House Museum, the Wimborne Model Town, the art deco Tivoli Theatre, The Minster and the annual Folk Festival. The three day weekly market is held on a self contained site nearly 1km from The Square, attracting around 1 million shoppers annually, although they remain detached from the main town centre. A quality paving scheme has been planned for The Square to provide a larger pedestrianised square in the centre of the town.

Public Assets

Key District Council public assets include the Allendale Centre which comprises a modern function hall with a stage, smaller rooms to hire and a cafe. It is used for the weekly WI Country Market, horticultural shows, and regular meetings by local groups and is available for public hire. The site also contains the Grade II listed Allendale House, a most attractive Georgian mansion run as a heritage centre, for adult learning courses and the Citizen's Advice Bureau. There are 14 car parks located in the town centre offering both short and long term parking, most of which are owned by this Council.



Allenvue House and the Allendale Centre, Wimborne

To the east of the Allendale Centre are the Police Station, Magistrates Court, Fire Station and offices used by the government agency, Cafcass and Dorset County Council Property Services. Also close by are the Ambulance Station, Streets Meadow, The Hanham Centre and Pippins, an elderly person's care home. These are all public land holdings located immediately to the north of the Waitrose site.

The function and services of other public buildings which should be reviewed in this assessment of Wimborne are:

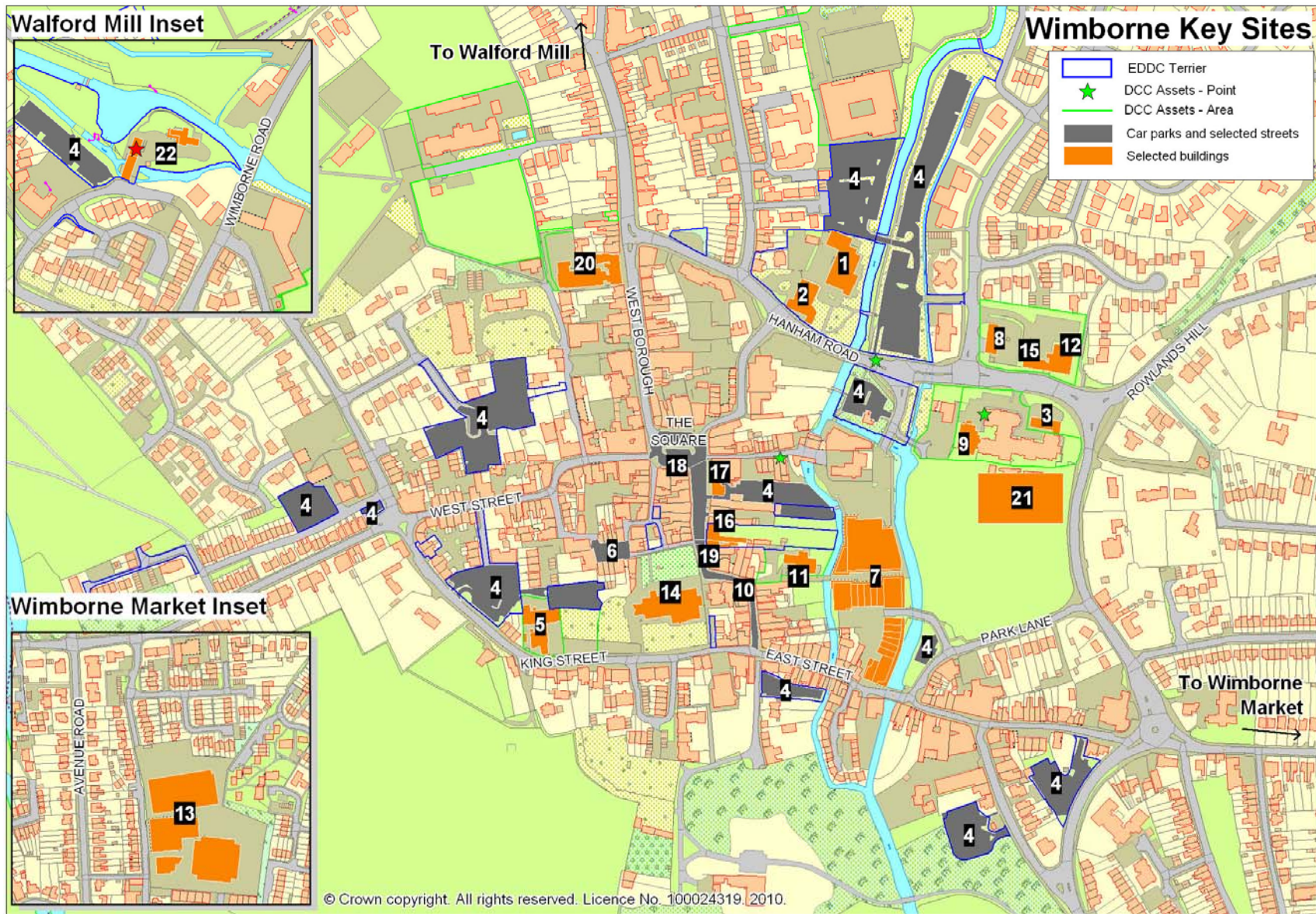
- Priests House Museum
- Walford Mill
- The Tivoli Theatre
- The Community Learning and Resource Centre (CLERC)
- The Library

Crown Mead

Crown Mead is a modern 1960's development of shops with national retailers and the public library situated between the High Street and the new Waitrose to the east and the Allendale Centre to the north. This 1960's development detracts from the general attractiveness of the town centre. This site is privately owned.

The Plan below shows the East Dorset and Dorset County Council assets. The numbers relate to the following sites:

1	Allendale Centre	12	Police Station
2	Allendale House	13	The Market
3	Ambulance Station	14	The Minster
4	Car Parks	15	Magistrates Court
5	CLERC	16	Priests House Museum
6	The Cornmarket	17	Something Special Car Park
7	Crown Mead	18	The Square
8	Fire Station	19	Tourist Information Centre
9	Hanham Centre	20	Tivoli Theatre
10	High Street	21	Waitrose
11	The Library	22	Walford Mill



Factors to consider

The opportunity to review public assets in Wimborne has arisen as a result of a number of factors.

These are:

- The financial performance and age of the Allendale Centre;
- The forthcoming opening of Waitrose in the summer of 2010 to the east of the town centre with a new car park of 220 spaces, which could negate the need for other public car parks in the town centre;
- Waitrose will compete with the high number of quality independent traders in the town, and the need to create attractive critical links into the High Street and East Street is considered essential to retain town trade;
- The desire by the market operators, Ensor, to have greater town centre presence;
- The restructuring of local government services locally - dialogue has already begun on the potential relocation of the Revenues and Benefits Teams to Allendale House.

In reviewing public assets, it is acknowledged that the number of modern public service buildings pepper-potted around the centre could be combined to create an attractive civic heart, potentially located around Allendale House with river frontage to the River Allen. These could offer a single point of public service for visitors and residents, significantly enhance the public realm and offer a seamless setting enhanced by good pedestrian links into the town centre.

Opportunities

- Explore the potential redevelopment of the Allendale Centre area linked with Allendale House to provide a civic heart of consolidated public services – Police & Ambulance Station, Magistrates Court, Cafcass and County Council offices, District Council offices, public hall, public toilets and youth facilities;
- Explore the future requirements of public car parks in the town centre – the potential for disposal of sites.
- A review of the function, use and charges of public buildings and assets, the overlap of services, such as public halls, courses and offices, with a view to co-locating and sharing facilities;

- Consider ways to strengthen the links from the High Street to Allendale House and Waitrose and how these can be enhanced;
- Explore the provision of a space for the relocation of the market into the town centre either using the streets – such as The Cornmarket, The Square, the High Street or an alternative space – such as a car park or site of an existing public asset;
- Explore the potential opportunities offered with Crown Mead and how these should be pursued;
- Explore the potential to provide affordable housing within any redevelopment.

Key Constraints

- Perhaps the most significant constraint is the high risk of flooding in the town centre, particularly along the banks of the River Allen, at Allenvie car park, the Allendale Centre, parts of Crown Mead, East Street and Leigh Road.
- Historic central area – much of the town falls within a conservation area – so development should respect or enhance the historic character.

What are the issues for Ferndown?

Ferndown is a modern centre and supports the largest town in the District. The shops are located in Penny's Walk, and around the busy crossroads of Ringwood and Victoria Roads. The 1980's development of Penny's Walk is pedestrianised and provides a safe accessible environment to a large Tesco supermarket, a number of small shops and public services. The public realm is functional, but dated, and the town lacks the character of an historic centre. Bus services are good into the town and to Bournemouth and Poole, although the busy A348 Ringwood Road creates an unpleasant pedestrian environment for shoppers.

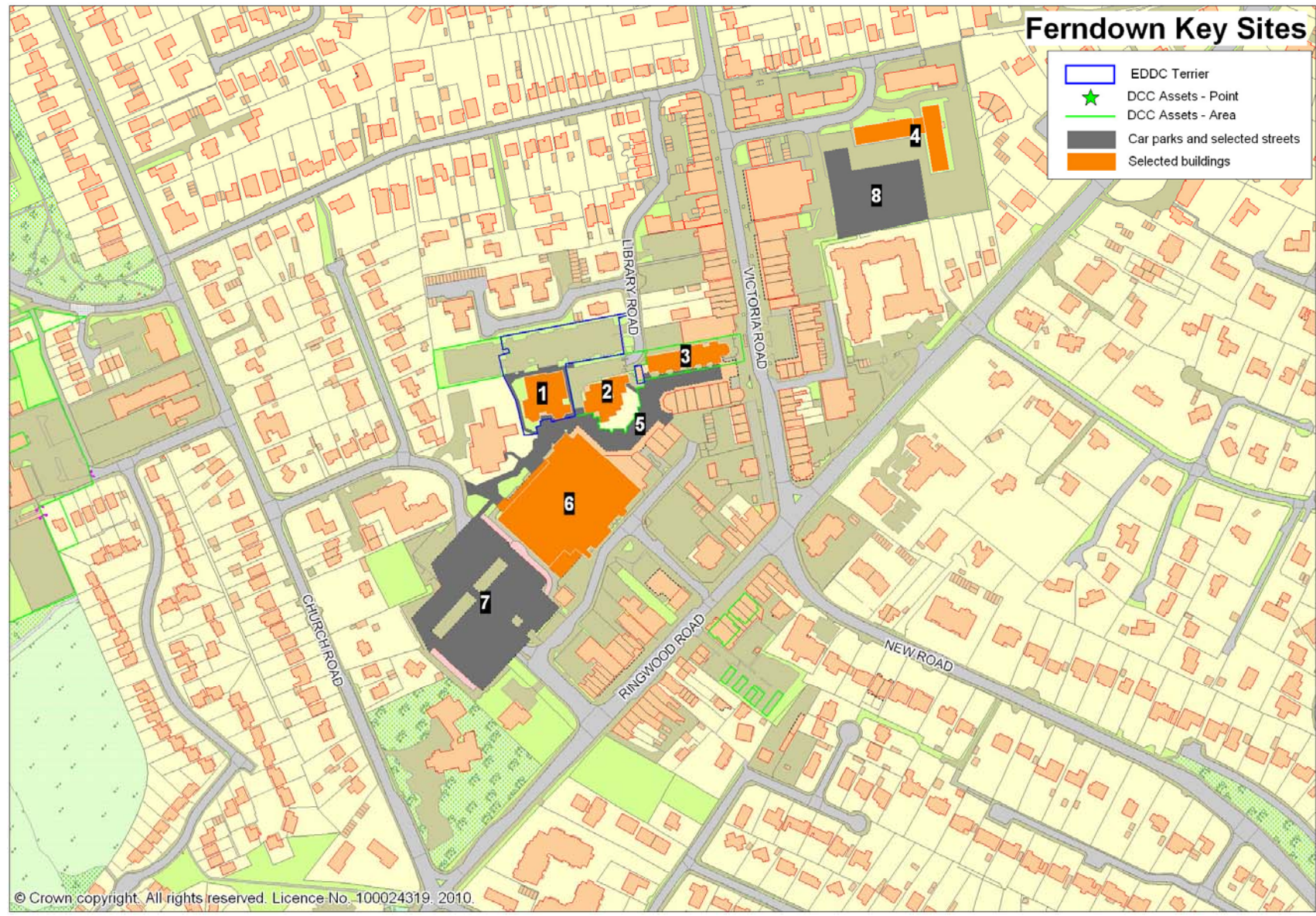
Public Assets

Penny's Walk contains a number of public land holdings – the public library, the Barrington Theatre, a day care centre and council offices. Many of the central area buildings are in public ownership, although the footpaths in Penny's Walk are managed by Goadsby a local estate agent. The primary care trust also has a large office and car park to the west of Victoria Road

Two principal car parks serve the town – a large two storey car park adjacent to Tesco with 800 free spaces and Penny's Lodge short stay car park with 70 spaces, the latter is owned by this Council. There is also a large car park for shoppers of Wilkinsons in Victoria Road.



Looking towards the library, Penny's Walk, Ferndown



The Plan above shows the East Dorset and Dorset County Council assets and car parks. The numbers relate to the following sites:

- 1 Barrington Theatre
- 2 DCC Day Centre, Penny's Walk
- 3 Library
- 4 PCT offices and car park, Princes Road
- 5 Penny's Walk
- 6 Tesco
- 7 Tesco free car park
- 8 Wilkinsons car park

Factors to consider

- Ferndown could greatly benefit from rejuvenation of the existing public buildings to create a new civic heart for the town centre.
- The financial performance of the Barrington Centre.
- A review and possible consolidation of public users, and the removal of dead frontages along Penny's Walk, could offer the opportunity to provide new destinations and shops and a more inviting environment to shoppers.
- Penny's Walk offers the opportunity to provide a civic square for regular events and stalls to add vitality and interest to the centre.
- The restructuring of local government services locally.

Opportunities

- Explore the potential to improve Penny's Walk as a destination with key public services on upper floors - such as the Health Authority or District Council offices, with a mix of uses such as the library, and new shop units on the ground floor and offices and affordable housing above;
- Explore the potential to enhance the vitality of the public realm to attract shoppers with market stalls and events in Penny's Walk;
- Explore the future car parking requirements in the town centre and the potential for disposal of sites;

Process

Project Management

This project has been initiated by East Dorset District Council. A Project Officer will manage the day to day running of this project and monitor stakeholder consultation. Close co-ordination between the Council and the selected contractor is considered essential for the efficient, satisfactory and timely completion of the project. To this end the contractor will nominate a Project Manager capable of representing the selected contractor in all aspects of the project. To ensure continuity, a dedicated project manager must be allocated to the project at all times.

On appointment, the consultant is to prepare a project plan for the work setting out how the work required in the tender document will be delivered. These are to be agreed by the Project Officer and should include a programme of liaison meetings between the consultant and the Council

Key Tasks

1. Engage with key stakeholders, including other public/private landowners and statutory agencies, and utilise the knowledge provided by evidence studies to identify the key opportunities presented in each town centre.
2. Review the value and feasibility of development opportunities of all public land holdings, and recommend accordingly how the Council might maximise its capital assets in both towns.
3. Review and critically analyse the potential of the Allenview Centre, Allendale House and associated car parks as a civic heart to Wimborne Minster.
4. Review and critically analyse the potential improvement of Penny's Walk to provide a civic heart to Ferndown town centre.

Outputs

Feasibility Studies

Produce a reasoned feasibility study of options, recommendations and actions to take forward for each town centre. These feasibility studies should provide the basis for discussion within the Council and the wider community through the LDF process. Each study should contain the following:

- ❖ Aims, objectives and vision
- ❖ Identification of opportunities and constraints

- ❖ The policy context
- ❖ Physical context/ site history – including planning history
- ❖ Land ownerships
- ❖ The consideration of development scenarios and fiscal assessment
- ❖ A detailed explanation of how the scenarios are justified
- ❖ A detailed explanation of how the proposed developments relate to neighbouring uses
- ❖ An accessibility strategy
- ❖ A schedule of the proposed uses
- ❖ An indicative layout showing the location of proposed uses

Implementation Plan

The Feasibility studies should identify a strategy for the phasing of redevelopment setting out the requirements for the delivery of this development.

A physical and social infrastructure schedule should be drawn up. Timing of delivery and details on the cost of physical and social infrastructure should be provided, with a full list of partners and funding.

Selection of Consultants

Skills and Experience

The successful team of consultants will need to have a proven track record in delivering high quality outputs on time, to budget and in accordance with client expectations. They must demonstrate their experience of preparing feasibility studies and urban design briefs at a comparable scale and in a similar context. The make up of the team will be for the consultants to define, but it is envisaged that skills and experience in the following areas will be relevant:

- Urban design
- Pedestrian movement
- Conservation
- Transport and public utility infrastructure
- Land and property valuation

- Working effectively with stakeholders and the general public
- Communication
- Preparation of feasibility studies

Selection Procedure

From the tenders received, the Selection Panel will select a shortlist of consultants' teams to attend interview. The selected consultants will be expected to present their proposals and undertake a question and answer session with the Selection Panel. The preferred consultants will be advised of the interviewing panel's choice shortly after the interview date.

THE TENDERING PROCESS

Timetable for Selection

Date Action

1st April - Issue tender request

23rd April - Closing date for return of tenders (Midday latest)

24th April - Short-listing meeting takes place

29th April - Interviews & presentations by Consultants

4th May - Informed and appointed (within a week)

10th May - Initiation meeting and agreement of terms

The timetable for the preparation and implementation of the project will be reviewed with the successful team following appointment.

Documentation

The main submission should not exceed 12 pages in length. Applicants must provide 6 bound copies, 1 unbound copy and an electronic version.

All proposals should include:

- ❖ Introduction to practice(s)
- ❖ Understanding of issues
- ❖ Proposed approach and detailed work programme
- ❖ Breakdown of days for each stage in the project and breakdown of costs
- ❖ Details of any subcontract proposal
- ❖ Practice skills and team CV's
- ❖ Detailed approach to communication and consultation

- ❖ Evidence of appropriate insurance including professional indemnity
- ❖ Details of experience in similar projects and referees who may be contacted
- ❖ Confirmation of availability of named contact to attend presentation and interview
- ❖ Accounts for two years trading of the lead partner.

Conditions of Contract and Tender

The successful consultant will be required to agree and sign a Contract stipulating the deliverables, programme of work, rates and prices etc prior to commencing any work on the project. An example of the contract and its conditions is contained at Appendix 3.

Address for Return of Tenders and Proposal

Completed quotations and proposals should be forwarded to the following address:

Keith Mallett
Head of Legal Services
East Dorset District Council
Council Offices
Furzehill
Wimborne
Dorset
BH21 4HN

Tenders should be completed and returned by no later than midday on **23rd April 2010**.

Non-Compliant Proposals

Prospective contractors are advised that their proposals must comply with the instructions given within this specification. Should a proposal be found to be non-compliant with the instructions given within this specification, it will not be considered. However, consultants wishing to submit an alternative proposal with full supporting information may do so provided that this alternative proposal is included in their submission

Proposal Costs

An indicative budget for the project will be £25,000 excl VAT (inclusive of all costs). Payment will be phased in an agreed number of stages. All work produced through the contract will remain in the ownership of East Dorset District Council.

All costs quoted should be in £ sterling and should be fixed for the period of the contract.

Value Added Tax (VAT) should be shown separately. No price fluctuations will be allowed unless otherwise agreed.

The Council will not accept any charges for expenses or losses incurred as a result of responding to this quotation invitation.

Value for Money

The Council is not bound or obliged to accept the lowest or any tender and will be looking for a solution, which is "economically advantageous". It should be noted that completed tenders shall include a list of any Sub-Contractors to be used for this project. The right is reserved by the Council to reject any of the proposed Sub-Contractors at any time.

Responsibility to be fully informed

The selected consultant shall be deemed to have informed himself fully as to the Authorities specified requirements. No claims for additional payment will be allowed on the grounds of misinterpretation of any matters relating to the contract, the specified requirements or those conditions on which the selected consultant could have reasonably satisfied himself by reference to the Authority or by such other means as may be appropriate.

Health & Safety

The selected consultant shall make due allowance in their tender for the safety, health and welfare of their own staff and those of their sub-contractors', also members of the Council's organisation and any visitors to site.

The selected consultant shall provide documentary proof that adequate insurance exists to cover third party, employers and public liability, damage to property and consequential loss. The minimum risk acceptable is £5,000,000 per incident and unlimited in total.

Bribery and Corruption

The Council shall be entitled to cancel the contract and to recover from the Contractor the amount of any loss resulting from such cancellation if the consultant shall have offered or given or agreed to give to any person any gift or consideration of any kind as inducement or reward for doing or forbearing to do or for having done or forborne to do any action in relation to the contract.

APPENDICES

1 Contact Details for Further Information

East Dorset District Council Switchboard			01202 886201
Project Management	Richard Henshaw	EDDC	
Development Control Advice	Mike Hirsh	EDDC	
Leisure and Cultural Services	Neil Farmer	EDDC	
Engineering Issues	Trevor Thomas	EDDC	
Legal Issues	Keith Mallet	EDDC	
Specific Property Matters	Keith Mallet	EDDC	
Transport	Kate Tunks	Dorset CC	01305 228534

2 Sources of Additional Information:

- South West Regional Spatial Strategy Proposed Changes July 2008
- The Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Documents March 2008
- Dorset Workspace Strategy 2008
- NLP East Dorset Retail Study 2008
- East Dorset Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1
- Christchurch and Southern East Dorset Transport Study
- East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment March 2008
- Halcrow Wimborne Town Centre Action Plan 2009