

Core Strategy

03 Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres Background Paper

Pre-Submission Consultation
2nd April – 25th June 2012



Prepared by Christchurch Borough Council and
East Dorset District Council

April 2012

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1 Introduction

1.1 This background paper is one of a number of papers produced as part of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Development Framework (LDF) to inform the Pre – Submission Core Strategy. This particular paper sets out the refinement of policy options for the Core Strategy Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres chapter following consultation undertaken between October 2010 – Jan 2011 on the Core Strategy ‘Options for Consideration’ document. Specifically, the Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres chapter sets out policy options associated with establishing an approach towards achieving the long term vitality and viability of Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres.

1.2 Preparation of the Pre - Submission Core Strategy Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres chapter has involved consideration of the following:

- National and local policy;
- Core Strategy ‘Options for Consideration’ consultation and ongoing engagement;
- Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment;
- The Local Development Framework evidence base;
- Infrastructure delivery and viability.

1.3 This background paper also identifies, where appropriate, strategic infrastructure requirements to support the policy options within the Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres chapter which feeds into the wider Core Strategy infrastructure delivery plan and preparation of the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.

1.4 This paper should be read in conjunction with the following key issue paper and Area Profiles prepared in refining Core Strategy options from initial issues and options consultation undertaken in March 2008 to the ‘Options for Consideration’ consultation undertaken from October 2010 – January 2011.

- **Key Issue Paper 09:Town, Village and Neighbourhood Centres**
- **Christchurch Town Centre Area Profile (2010)**
- **Highcliffe and Walkford Area Profile (2010)**

2 Formation of Pre Submission Options

2.1 This section provides a critical assessment of the options put forward for consultation in the Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres chapter of the 'Options for Consideration' Core Strategy and provides recommendations for the policy approach to be adopted in the Pre – Submission Core Strategy. The assessment process examines the consultation response received to the 'Options for Consideration' document and key issues arising from this engagement process. The formation of Pre – Submission policy options also considers any recent changes in national policy and updates to the evidence base which supplements the policy and evidence review undertaken within the key issue papers listed in the introduction. The assessment below also takes into account key conclusions of the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken for the 'Options for Consideration' Core Strategy. A summary of all the proposed Pre Submission policy options for the Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres chapter is set out at the end of this paper.

Issue and Options Identified in 'Options for Consideration' Core Strategy:

2.2 What should the vision be for Christchurch Town Centre?

Preferred Option CH 1

Christchurch Town Centre Vision

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

To achieve this vision:

1. Retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre. The strategy will seek to enhance the niche retail offer and improve the presence of national multiples to provide for better choice in comparison shopping. The regeneration of the Saxon Square Shopping Centre will attract national multiples whilst niche retail shops will continue to thrive on the High Street.
2. Residents of the Borough will continue to have access to a variety of community services and cultural facilities; important town centre uses (such as the Regent Centre, the Central Library) will be retained and where possible enhanced. An opportunity exists to expand the health and fitness offer in the town centre.
3. Expansion of evening economy uses such as restaurants/cafés/pubs will be encouraged especially along Church Street. This will enhance the vitality of the centre, making it a more vibrant place in the afternoon and evening hours.
4. The following sites have been identified as strategic sites that will play a pivotal role in delivering the town centre vision and Key Strategy. These sites will be brought forward in accordance with site specific development briefs and further detail will be set out in a Site Specific Development Plan Document:
 - The Magistrates' Court Site
 - Saxon Square
 - The Lanes
 - The former Gasworks Site
 - Stony Lane
5. Druitt Gardens will be enhanced to provide an attractive area of open space within the town centre. This will benefit tourism and contribute to the promotion of healthy lifestyles by providing high quality open space.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Picture 2.1 Christchurch Town Centre Vision

Consultation Response

Option	Support	Object	No Opinion	Total
Preferred Option CH1	12	2	0	14

Table 2.1

2.3 Office Development

2.4 The town centre should only accommodate limited office development to not affect the vitality and viability of Poole and Bournemouth town centres.(Bournemouth Borough Council)

2.5 Point 7 seems negative as implies no competition for office accommodation with Bournemouth or Poole. (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

2.6 Response

2.7 The Christchurch and East Dorset Employment Land Review indicated that there is not a strong market for offices in the town centre. The main market for office development is located in Bournemouth and Poole. However, the town centre might accommodate some small scale office development. The Airport North West Business Park is likely to accommodate a significant element of Christchurch's future office provision and is able to accommodate smaller scale high quality office development. There has been a recent grant of outline permission at Aviation Park at the Airport for an additional 42,000m2 of development which is 10% office and 90% industrial (Ref 8/11/0329 Granted 22.12.11). It is envisaged that limited office development in the town centre should continue. However there is a need to consider the impact on all neighbouring centres, not just those in Bournemouth and Poole. **The vision could be amended to refer to the need for office development in the town centre to complement the overall retail strategy and the vitality and viability of neighbouring centres.**

2.8 Out of Centre Development

2.9 Strategy does not embrace conflict between town centres and out-of-town development. Need coherent policy and strategy for managing situation.(Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

2.10 Response

2.11 National policy in PPS 4 requires a sequential approach to site selection, prioritising town centres as first choices for town centre related uses. This chapter of the Core Strategy also sets out a primary shopping area for the focus of retail development and as a mechanism to apply the sequential test. The Pre Submission Key Strategy chapter will also set out an overarching policy dealing with the sequential approach to development and impact assessment.

2.12 Town centre retail strategy

2.13 Over strategy period nature of town centre needs to be investigated - e.g. if Lanes development goes ahead, should retail be consolidated around High Street and Bargates released for residential development (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

2.14 Supports the identification of Christchurch town centre as the main focus for retail development. (Highways Agency)

2.15 Support vision. Town centre has potential to accommodate additional retail and residential development to enhance its role and function in future years. (Bournemouth and West Hants Water)

2.16 Response

2.17 The vision should be seen in the context of Key Strategy policies, other options in the Town Centres chapter and national policy which together addresses this issue. Key Strategy policy sets out the Christchurch town centre hierarchy. Preferred Option KS 14 recommends that Christchurch be defined as a Town Centre which will act as a focus for retail and other town centre-related commercial / community development.

2.18 If circumstances change, there will be opportunities to revise Core Strategy policy. Evidence will be updated over time too.

2.19 Town centre retail mix

2.20 High Street cannot survive with just niche retail shops. (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

2.21 Too many cafes in Christchurch town centre.

2.22 Response

2.23 The comment about "niche" is relevant when looking at the second sentence of Point 1 of the vision. Enhancement of retail should not be confined just to this sector. Also the term itself could be confusing. **The Vision could be amended to refer to a more general "enhancement of the retail offer" and substitute reference in the last sentence of Point 1 of the vision to "niche retail shops continuing to thrive" with "independent retail shops".**

2.24 Balancing the range of uses in the town centre is an important issue and is addressed in the A1 threshold and shopping frontage boundary options (See Options CH 4 - CH 9 below)

2.25 Shopping Environment

2.26 Possibility of introducing modern style shopping facilities whilst sympathetic to historic environment (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

2.27 Response

2.28 The Joint Retail Assessment identified the need for improvements to the town centre including upgrading of Saxon Square and shopping precinct.

2.29 Transport

2.30 The South East Dorset Multi Modal Transport Study and the A35 Route Management Study will inform delivery of this option. (Dorset County Council Transport Planning Group)

2.31 Item 10 should not be to the detriment of promoting use of public transport. Option needs to specify in more detail what improvements to public transport and transport infrastructure will be made (Bournemouth Transport Ltd)

2.32 Pedestrianisation of the High Street and Bargates with improvements to underpass and links to Bargates.

2.33 Provision for electric motor vehicles needed. (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

2.34 Response

2.35 Improvements to public transport are an important element of the vision and are referred to in the first paragraph of the vision. Also Item 9 refers to the encouragement of sustainable modes of transport.

2.36 Improved links between the High Street and Bargates is an important objective and is included in the vision in Point 8. Measures to produce a more pedestrian friendly environment around the Fountain roundabout will be an important element of the design of a highways improvement scheme to Fountain Roundabout (KS 21). The Key Strategy also identifies the location of Prime Transport corridors which include the A35 where improvements to public transport services will be made. The issue of pedestrianisation has been explored in the past, but has not formed part of policy in the Local Plan (2001) or Town Centre Strategy (2003). However measures to improve pedestrian/vehicular conflict and enhancing environment are identified in these documents and the Parking Access and Signage Strategy (2006) and Joint Retail Assessment (2008).

2.37 Car Parking

2.38 The Key strategy should be the provision of more cost-effective parking (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

2.39 More parking required in town centre / possible additional parking near Quomps or Priory for tourist economy

2.40 Response

2.41 The Parking Access and Signage Strategy 2006 concludes that there is sufficient car parking in the town centre but better use can be made of underused car parks. The Transport background paper discusses parking policy and the Pre Submission Parking policy is in the Key Strategy but the Council is not setting out a policy for public car parking as requirements will change and the Council needs flexibility.

2.42 Flood Risk and Contamination Issues

2.43 Core Strategy needs to identify requirement for key sites taken forward within the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to set out how flood risk will be managed and where a development will contribute toward a flood risk management strategy. (Environment Agency)

2.44 Consideration needs to be given to contamination issues for some former industrial sites e.g. the gasworks site. (Environment Agency)

2.45 Response

2.46 The proposals will need to comply with the PPS25 tests and the Environment Agency will need to be satisfied with conclusion of the site specific Flood Risk Assessments. Further detail on the strategic sites will be set out in a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, which will set out how flood risk will be managed for these sites. **The section of the vision on Strategic Sites could be amended to refer to this.**

2.47 The Councils will be preparing a Supplementary Planning Document on Flood Risk and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems. This will provide further guidance to developers on how to interpret the results of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to determine the degree of risk to a particular site.

2.48 Biodiversity

2.49 Supports plans to enhance Druitt Gardens with biodiversity improvements and suggest enhancements sought to habitats of River Avon (Dorset Wildlife Trust).

2.50 Strategic Sites

2.51 Support Stony Lane as key strategic site. Needs a strategic development site designation. Less constrained by built heritage than other sites and already has robust flood defences. (Beagle Aerospace Ltd)

2.52 Support identification of former Gasworks site as strategic site. Site offers opportunities for mixed use development (National Grid Property Ltd).

2.53 Clarification sought re extent of Magistrates' Court Site. Nos 43 and 47 Barrack Road would prefer to be excluded from any future development brief (Magdalen Trust).

2.54 Response

2.55 Stony Lane and the former Gasworks site could both be included within a revised town centre boundary. However both are "out of centre" sites for retail purposes referring to definitions in PPS 4. Therefore consideration needs to be given to an appropriate form of development of these sites in order that it does not impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre. **The vision could be amended to distinguish these 2 sites from the other strategic sites and to identify particular considerations to be taken into account when considering development.**

2.56 It would also seem appropriate to extend the strategic site at the former Gasworks site to include the adjoining area to the east (currently occupied by a car repair workshop and sales area) so that the revised site boundary is land between Bridge Street, Stony Lane South and the Civic Offices. This is consistent with the Borough of Christchurch Local Plan Policy EO3 boundary and enables the area to be considered for comprehensive redevelopment. **The vision and the diagram can be amended to refer to a revised boundary of this strategic site.**

2.57 The strategic sites will be brought forward in accordance with site specific allocations and further detail will be set out in a Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

2.58 Heritage, History and Archaeology

2.59 Vision needs to mention heritage, history and archaeology.

2.60 Response

2.61 Point 8 of the vision refers to sensitive development and the need to respect and enhance the historic character of centre. The reference to Saxon Square refurbishment refers to the need to relate more appropriately with the historic core of the High Street.

2.62 Responsibility for Implementation

2.63 Vision should state objectives that are within the control of the local authority or detail mechanisms the LA would take to influence the situation to avoid list of 'hopes' (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce).

2.64 Response

2.65 Many of the vision objectives will be delivered by a number of delivery partners (CBC working with property owners and developers). The Monitoring and Implementation Background Paper will bring together issues relating to the delivery of options.

2.66 Regents Centre

2.67 Pleased to see aspiration to retain and enhance the Regent Centre in vision as this venue makes major contribution to evening economy of town centre (The Theatres Trust).

2.68 Bournemouth and West Hants Water

2.69 Text in para 5.15 re higher density residential development supported. Potential for residential / retail development of surplus land/property of Bournemouth & West Hants Water Co Ltd (BWHWC Ltd).

2.70 Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres Focus Group 6 December 2010 Comments relevant to Policy CH1

- We need to identify what is unique about the town centre and build on that.
- The mix of shopping uses within the town centre needs improving, enhancing Christchurch's niche retail offer.
- There is difficulty in attracting national multiples to the town centre. This could be due to the size of unit as there are few larger units.
- Concern about possible retail development on former Gas Works site as could be detrimental to town centre.
- There is a very strong focus on retail development and perhaps there should be more emphasis on tourism / leisure uses.
- Retail development at the Lanes site, r/o High Street, may not be appropriate. Suggest housing on site instead.
- Car parking should be elevated to a more significant issue. Parking difficulties are well known.

- Retail floorspace requirements should not be too prescriptive.
- The need for more retail floorspace was questioned - whether it was still valid in this economic downturn.

2.71 Response

2.72 The majority of consultees support the proposed vision as set out in CH 1. Several of the comments are from local landowners or site owners in support of the strategic sites identified for redevelopment.

2.73 The focus group's concern about possible retail development on the former Gas Works site is relevant to the town centre boundary issue. Similar concerns were expressed about other sites and these will be examined when considering Options CH 3 and 4 (alternative town centre boundaries) below.

2.74 The focus group questioned the need for more retail floorspace and considered that the requirements should not be too prescriptive. However, projected population growth and expenditure over the plan period requires the provision of additional A1 comparison floorspace as set out in the 2008 Joint Retail Study. The vision refers to the need to expand and enhance retail uses, but does not specify the amount of floorspace required. This information is contained in the Key Strategy - Policy KS8, which sets out the scale and location of retail growth in the Council areas. However it would be useful if the floorspace requirements for the town centre were specified in the Vision too. **The Vision can be amended to refer to the floorspace requirements as set out in the Retail Study.**

2.75 Evidence from the Joint Retail study identified a requirement for around 9,000 - 11,000 sq m of additional non food retail floorspace in Christchurch Borough over the next 15 - 20 years. Of this it considered that Christchurch town centre will accommodate between 7,000 and 8,000 sq m of additional non food retail floorspace to meet future requirements up to 2028. However, the ability to meet the projected requirements in the town centre is compromised as some opportunities identified in the Retail study for delivering more A1 retail floorspace have been lost.

2.76 Although there has been an economic recession, the Core Strategy is looking at long term policy. The Core Strategy will have flexibility to react to changes in circumstances in the future by revisions to policy if required. Also evidence studies will be updated over time. Therefore, floorspace requirements are still valid due to projected population growth, the level of housing planned in the Core Strategy and the associated available expenditure.

2.77 Amendments required to vision due to updating / change of circumstances

2.78 Point 6 of the vision refers to Druitt Gardens being replaced by a new community centre to be delivered through the support of developer contributions. Although the Council support its concept, in view of the uncertainty of a specific proposal in this location, **it is proposed to delete this sentence from the revised Vision, although retaining reference to the need to provide community facilities in the town centre.**

2.79 The second paragraph under Point 10 of the vision refers to "In the long term, town centre car parks will be relocated as close as possible to the A35". As this is no longer Council policy **it is proposed to delete these words.**

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

2.80 Planning Policy Statement 4: The policy approach in CH 1 remains consistent with PPS4 in respect of promoting the vitality and viability of town centres, supporting their growth and enhancement and acknowledging the variety of functions. Flexible policies should be set which are able to respond to changing economic circumstances and encourage, where appropriate, high density development accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

2.81 Draft National Planning Framework (2011): This retains the principles set out in PPS 4. Planning policies should promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. Town centres are recognised as the heart of their communities and policies should support their viability and vitality. It also recognises the important role that residential development can play in ensuring the vitality of centres. A range of sites should be identified to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, community services and residential development needed in town centres. The policy approach in CH 1 is consistent with emerging draft national planning policy.

2.82 The policy approach of CH 1 remains consistent with the Local Development Framework evidence base including the following:-

- Joint Retail Assessment (2008)
- Christchurch Parking, Access and Signing Strategy (2006)
- Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand: Christchurch (2008)
- PPG17 Open Space Study (2007)
- Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study (2012)

'Options for Consideration' Sustainability Appraisal

Relevant Sustainability Appraisal Objectives	Preferred Option CH 1
2: Make sustainable use of resources	Strong Positive Impact
3: Minimise pollution	Positive Impact
4: Climate Change	Positive Impact
5: Reduce the need to travel	Strong Positive Impact
6: Safe and secure environment	Strong Positive Impact
7: Healthy lifestyles	Strong Positive Impact
8: Suitable and affordable housing	Strong Positive Impact

Relevant Sustainability Appraisal Objectives	Preferred Option CH 1
9: Support social cohesion and access to services	Strong Positive Impact
10: Historic buildings, archaeological features and other culturally important features.	Strong Positive Impact
11: Local distinctiveness	Strong Positive Impact
12: Sustainable economic growth	Strong Positive Impact

Table 2.2

2.83 The vision has a positive impact on many of the SA objectives. It also supports the provision of high density residential units in the town centre, which will have a positive effect on meeting housing needs. However, growth may contribute to some traffic congestion in the medium and long term. The increased use of public transport represents a key factor in reducing levels of emissions and congestion that contributes to climate change. Implementation of the vision will have a significant positive impact on the vitality and viability of the centre and sustainable economic growth through townscape improvements, enhancements to the retail offer and through bringing forward key strategic sites for development.

‘Options for Consideration’ Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.84 The HRA assessment for this option concluded that it is not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of any European site in Christchurch or East Dorset (+15km). This option does not result in development in itself. The potential effects of commercial, retail and housing development is assessed under other Christchurch housing (UE) and employment (PC) policies.

‘Options for Consideration’ Health Impact Assessment

2.85 The HIA identifies no clear adverse impact but identifies positive impacts for housing, built environment, food (access to good quality affordable food), travel, employment and community facilities objectives.

‘Options for Consideration’ Equalities Impact Assessment

2.86 This option, which seeks to expand the retail, housing, employment, community facilities and accessibility, is likely to have a positive impact on particular groups on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, and also on areas of deprivation. However those without transport living in the rural area would have no benefit.

Infrastructure Requirements

2.87 This option sets out a vision for Christchurch town centre. It identifies strategic sites for redevelopment which will play an important role in delivering the vision. The infrastructure requirements for these sites are not known at this stage. Transport improvements are dealt with in the Key Strategy and will be addressed as part of the Site Specific allocations Development Plan Document.

Conclusions

2.88 Option CH 1 is supported by the consultation, local development framework evidence base and consistent with existing and emerging national policy. The SA, HRA, HIA and EIA assessments do not identify any significant adverse impacts.

2.89 The wording of the vision could be amended to reflect comments raised in the consultation and also required due to updating or changing circumstances. The following amendments are suggested:-

2.90 Point 1.

2.91 Amend the wording to set out the level of retail floorspace required to come forward in the town centre, as identified in the Retail Study (2008). The following sentence to be inserted "The town centre will accommodate in the region of 8,000sqm of new comparison retail floorspace to meet future requirements to 2028".

2.92 To avoid confusion over the use of the term "niche shopping" and to refer to the importance of a more general "enhancement of the retail offer", delete the word "niche" from the second sentence. Delete the word "niche" from third sentence and replace with "independent".

2.93 Point 4

2.94 For consistency with previous Local Plan EO 3 policy, change reference to 'The former Gasworks Site' to 'Land between Bridge Street, Stony Lane South and the Civic Offices'. Change the diagram below the policy wording to extend the site boundary to cover this area.

2.95 Insert new paragraph below bullet point list of sites to distinguish the 2 strategic sites which are further away from the town centre shopping area and to identify particular issues to be taken into account in the consideration of appropriate uses of these sites.

2.96 'Land between Bridge Street, Stony Lane South and the Civic Offices is located 'out of centre' and within an area of high flood risk. Town centre uses including employment, retail, leisure and entertainment, offices, arts and culture and tourism may be appropriate in these locations subject to compliance with other policy. In particular, development in these locations should not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the town centre and should comply with flood risk policy'.

2.97 Insert reference to the need to set out how flood risk will be managed for all of the strategic sites. Suggest the following paragraph to be inserted:-
"The strategic sites set out above will be brought forward in accordance with site specific allocations and further detail will be set out in a Site Specific Development Plan Document. The Site Allocations Development Plan Document will also set out how flood risk will be managed for these strategic site."

2.98 Point 5

2.99 For updating purposes, delete 3rd sentence which refers to the replacement of Druitt Hall in view of the uncertainty of its delivery and replace with reference to the need for community facilities in the town centre.

2.100 Point 7

2.101 Amend to refer to need for new office development to complement overall retail strategy and vitality and viability of neighbouring centres rather than Bournemouth and Poole town centres. Suggest delete sentence and replace with:-'The town centre will seek to accommodate new office development which complements the overall retail strategy and vitality and viability of neighbouring centres.'

2.102 Point 10

2.103 For updating purposes, delete reference to 'in the long term, town centre car parks will be relocated as close of possible to the A35' from second paragraph in view of the Council no longer pursuing this objective.

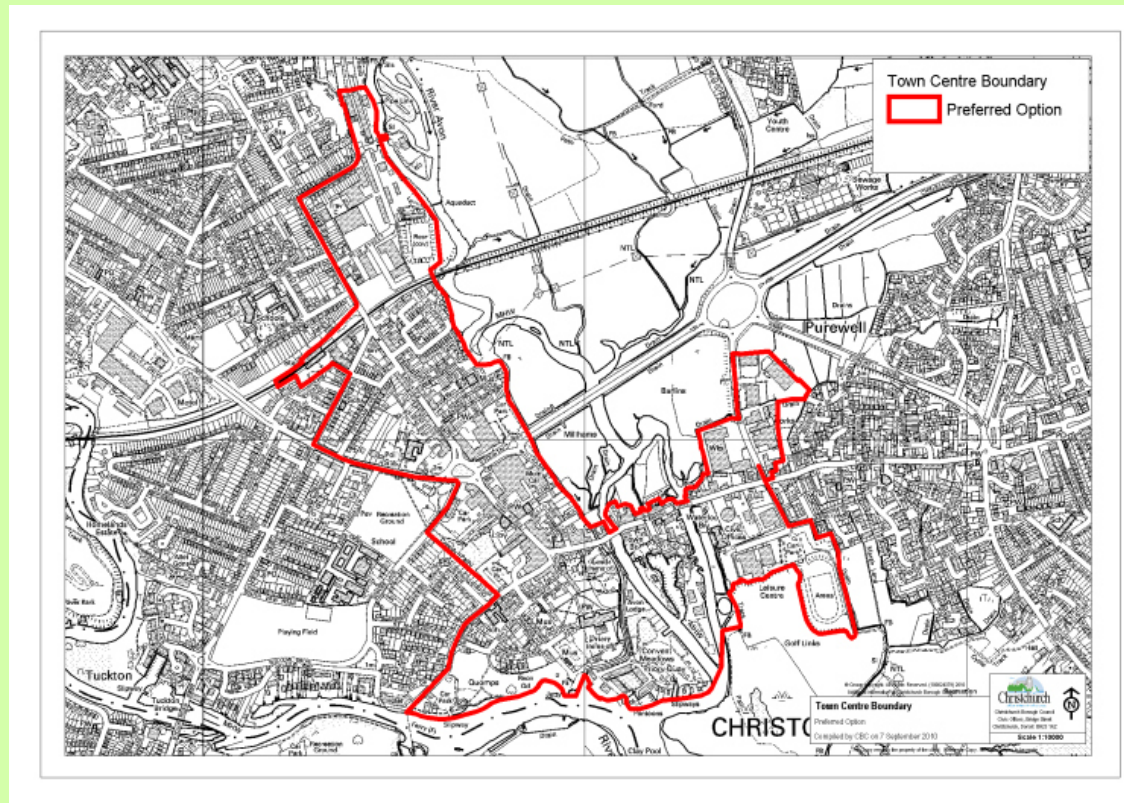
2.104 In conclusion this option as amended is considered an appropriate approach for a vision to achieve the long term vitality and viability of Christchurch town centre.

Issue and Options Identified in 'Options for Consideration' Core Strategy

2.105 What should be the extent of the Christchurch Town Centre boundary

Preferred Option CH 2

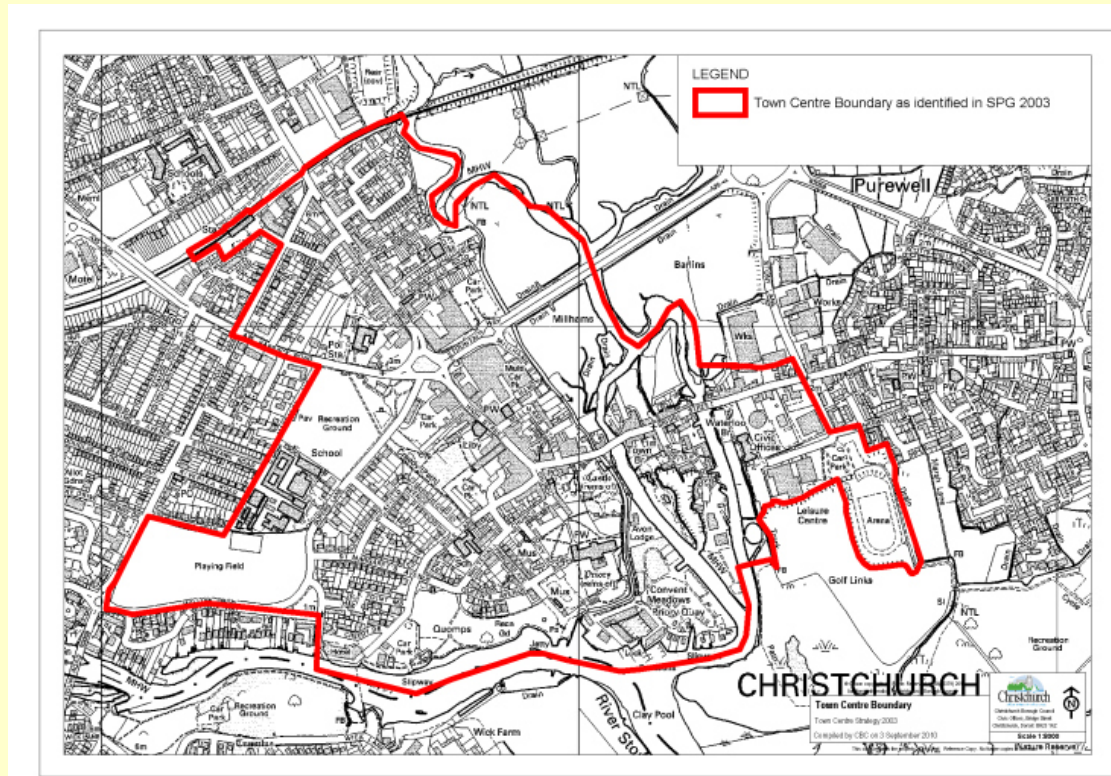
Christchurch Town Centre Boundary - Option 1



Picture 2.2 Town Centre Boundary: Preferred Option

Non Preferred Option CH 3

Christchurch Town Centre Boundary - Option 2



Picture 2.3 Town Centre Boundary identified in the Town Centre Strategy (2003)

Consultation Response

Option	Support	Object	No Opinion	Total
Preferred Option CH 2	27	2	0	29
Non Preferred Option CH 3	17	3	0	20

Table 2.3

2.106 Key Comments on Preferred Option CH 2

2.107 Environment Agency

2.108 Impact to and from historic landfills located at Stanpit Marsh and Christchurch Quay need to be considered.

2.109 Options CH2 and CH3 include Stony Lane and AvonTradingPark. CH2 is preferable over CH3 as it excludes large areas of green field land, which lies within the River Avon flood plain.

2.110 Response

2.111 The issue of impact to and from historic landfills will be taken account of at the detailed planning stage.

2.112 There is a need to exclude large areas of floodplain from boundary as well as low density residential areas where higher density mixed development would not be desirable.

2.113 Management Office, Saxon Square

2.114 Concern that extending the town centre boundary to Stony Lane will allow retail development which will have an adverse impact on the existing centre. Option CH3 could be selected with high flood risk area to the south west taken out.

2.115 Response

2.116 The issue of appropriate uses on the Stony Lane site is an important point. If the Stony Lane and the former Gasworks sites (boundary to be extended - see changes recommended in Vision above) are included within a town centre boundary, there is an assumption that 'town centre uses' may be considered appropriate, subject to other policy considerations. The main town centre uses, as defined in PPS 4 (para 7), are retail, leisure and entertainment, offices, arts, culture and tourism. The issue of retail uses on the Stony Lane site and the former Gasworks site (boundary to be extended)

needs careful consideration. This issue has been already been raised in comments relating to the identification of strategic sites in the Vision above. The concerns have been addressed in the suggested additional words in the Vision in CH 1 which identifies the need to carefully consider future uses on those strategic sites further away from the town centre shopping area (Stony Lane and the former Gasworks site boundary to be extended) and sets out the need to consider the impact of redevelopment of these sites on the vitality and viability of the town centre. If the Stony Lane and former Gasworks sites are included in a town centre boundary, this revised wording is particularly relevant. This should address the concerns raised by the Saxon Square Management Office and other objectors.

2.117 PPS 4 requires the definition of the extent of the town centre and the primary shopping area. Policy Options CH2 and 3 identify alternative town centre boundary options. The primary shopping area also needs to be defined. It would seem appropriate to amend the diagram for Policy CH4 to define the Christchurch primary shopping area as well as the primary and secondary cores. This is addressed in Policy CH4 below and a suggested boundary is included on the diagram. This primary shopping area is drawn tightly around the existing town centre shopping area (High Street, Bargates, Wick Lane, Church Street, Castle Street). It is evident that Stony Lane and the former Gasworks site (proposed to be extended) are 'out of centre' for retail purposes. PPS 4 defines 'edge of centre' sites for retail purposes as 'a location that is well connected to and within easy walking distance (ie up to 300 metres of the primary shopping area'. Both Stony Lane and the former Gasworks site are over 300 metres away from the primary shopping area as defined in the amended diagram for Policy CH 4. Therefore proposals for retail uses on these sites would have to be considered subject to impact on the town centre and other policy considerations.

2.118 West Christchurch Residents Association

2.119 Question whether resources to take on larger town centre. Better to concentrate on existing town centre and then expand out as resources permit.

2.120 Response

2.121 Extending the town centre boundary could help provide greater opportunities for town centre uses to expand in the future. However the extent of the boundary should not be too wide and needs careful consideration. The centre for retail developments is defined by the primary shopping area. However, for all other main town centre uses including office and leisure development, the town centre boundary defines the area where these uses can be located, subject to other policy considerations. Including strategic sites such as Stony Lane and the former Gasworks sites within the town centre boundary could assist in the regeneration of this wider area. However, as referred to above, some locations within the town centre will be 'out of centre' in PPS 4 terms. Proposals for retail development in edge of centre and out of centre locations will be subject to town centre impact and other policy considerations.

2.122 Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce

2.123 Object. Do not support inclusion of Stony Lane industrial estate nor land north east of the railway station. This would reduce opportunity for economic well-being of High Street, which has never been occupied to full capacity over the past 20 years.

2.124 Response

2.125 The inclusion of the Stony Lane site and land north east of railway station does not mean that retail uses will be considered appropriate in these locations. Stony Lane is identified as a strategic site in Option CH1 and detail on future uses will be consulted on through the Site Specific Development Plan Document process. The Stony Lane site is over 300 metres away from the primary shopping area as defined in the amended diagram for Policy CH 4. Proposed amendments to the vision will identify this site as an 'out of centre' location for retail purposes. Therefore proposals for retail uses on this site would have to be considered subject to impact on the town centre and other policy considerations. Option CH2 includes land north of the railway, including the Avon Trading Park. This area may be within 300m of the primary shopping area, but it is primarily an employment site and loss of employment uses to leisure or retail would not be encouraged. It is also physically separated from the town centre area by the railway line. Any proposal for retail use in this area would be subject to PPS 4 considerations as to its impact on the town centre as well as other planning policy considerations. It would not seem appropriate to include the area to the north of the railway within the town centre boundary.

2.126 Bournemouth & West Hampshire Water Company

2.127 Support CH 2. Land/property surplus to BWHWC operational needs could be developed for retail / residential uses identified in CH 1.

2.128 Response

2.129 As above. It would not seem appropriate to include land north of the railway within the town centre boundary in view of it being more physically separate from the town centre by the railway line and the value of the Avon Trading Park as an employment site. This area is not identified as a strategic site in CH 1.

2.130 Beagle Aerospace Ltd

2.131 Support CH 2 as accurately defines retail, commercial and cultural centre of town.

2.132 Inclusion of Stony Lane area consistent with CH1 key strategic sites.

2.133 Stony Lane site has greatest potential as least constrained by built heritage designations

2.134 Response

2.135 Stony Lane is identified as a strategic site in Option CH1 and detail on appropriate future uses will be set out in a Site Specific Development Plan Document. The Stony Lane site is over 300 metres away from the primary shopping area as defined in the amended diagram for Policy CH 4 (to be re-numbered Policy CH 2 in Core Strategy Pre-Submission). Proposed amendments to the vision will identify this site as an 'out of centre' location for retail purposes as defined by PPS 4. Therefore proposals for retail uses on this site would have to be considered subject to impact on the town centre and other policy considerations. The vision and town centre boundary policy will make the approach to appropriate uses clear.

2.136 Magdalen Trust

2.137 Support option. Trust owns 43 and 47 Barrack Road which have development potential for retail or high density residential uses. Other commercial uses would also be acceptable.

2.138 Response

2.139 Appropriate uses which would not compromise the retail shopping core in the town centre would need to be considered. A Development Brief for the former Magistrates Court site, police station and adjoining land at Barrack Road and Bargates was adopted in 2003. Development principles for this site will be considered further in the Site Specific Allocations DPD. The Council is also working closely with the landowners on developing options for this site.

2.140 BNP Paribas Real Estate

2.141 Object to inclusion of Avon Trading Park. Has potential to compromise Royal Mail operations at the Christchurch Delivery Office if redevelopment proposals for leisure or retail uses in this area in the future.

2.142 Response

2.143 Avon Trading Park is primarily an employment site and loss of employment uses to leisure or retail would not be encouraged. Boundary amendments have been suggested which exclude this site from the town centre boundary.

2.144 General Comments:

2.145 Should exclude area north of railway line.

2.146 Should exclude Stony Lane industrial estate and area north east of railway line to minimise separation of town centre elements.

2.147 Should extend along Barrack Road to railway.

2.148 Object as will further add to disjointed town centre.

2.149 Support if better pedestrian access to Bargates.

2.150 Response

2.151 These comments repeat much of what is already raised except the suggestion to extend along Barrack Road to the railway. It is considered that including this residential area would not result in significant benefits to the purposes of the town centre boundary.

2.152 Key Comments on Non Preferred Option CH3

2.153 Environment Agency:

2.154 Impact to and from historic landfills located at Stanpit Marsh and Christchurch Quay need to be considered.

2.155 Options CH2 and CH3 include Stony Lane and Avon Trading Park. CH2 is preferable over CH3 as it excludes large areas of green field land, which lies within the River Avon flood plain. Option CH3 includes the large area of flood plain.

2.156 Response

2.157 The impact to and from historic landfills will be taken account of at detailed planning stage.

2.158 The Council also considers CH2 preferable on this basis. However a revised boundary is suggested which excludes Avon Trading Park.

2.159 Management Office, Saxon Square:

2.160 Concern that extending the town centre boundary to Stony Lane will allow retail development which will have an adverse impact on the existing centre. Option CH3 could be selected with high flood risk area to the south west taken out.

2.161 Bournemouth & West Hampshire Water Company

2.162 Object to inclusion of land north and south of the by-pass (east of Millhams) and south west of the town centre including a recreation ground and school playing field. Unsuitable for residential / retail development and prone to flooding. Loss of open space. Impact of development north or south of Bypass on BWHWC premises at Knapp Mill.

2.163 Response

2.164 See related comments from this respondent to CH 2 above. Proposals for retail uses on the Stony Lane site would have to be considered subject to impact on town centre and other policy considerations.

2.165 In response to both comments on flood risk, there is a need to avoid the inclusion of high risk flood areas in the town centre boundary, so Option CH3 is not an appropriate boundary to take forward in this respect. However 2 of the strategic sites - Stony Lane and the former Gasworks site (proposed to be amended) are within areas of high flood risk. This is highlighted in suggested additional wording to the Vision, which also states that any development in these locations should not comply with flood risk policy. The Site Allocations DPD will also set out how flood risk will be managed for the strategic sites.

2.166 Christchurch Chamber of Trade & Commerce

2.167 Object - do not see the need to include the recreation ground and Twynham School in the boundary.

2.168 Response

2.169 A suggested boundary alternative excludes this area.

2.170 General Comments

- Support with amendments to South West boundary along the same lines as CH 2.
- Object to inclusion of flood plain area around Twynham School.
- Support as should not include Avon Park - already serious bottleneck. Agree should not include eastern Stony Lane retail park (B&Q etc) as will necessitate town centre road improvements/bypass.

2.171 Response

2.172 Most of the points have been raised before. It is considered that it is appropriate to include the eastern Stony Lane retail park (B&Q etc) as it forms part of the Stony Lane area which may have potential for revitalisation. There is a need for a strategic approach for the redevelopment of this area. The B&Q site is fairly well linked to the town centre and not significantly different in terms of location than other sites on Stony Lane.

2.173 Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres Focus Group 6 December 2010: Comments relevant to Preferred Option CH 2 and Non Preferred Option CH3

2.174 Concern that the larger the boundary is drawn, the more adverse impact on the town centre.

2.175 Worried about applications for retail uses coming forward on the Avon Trading Park.

2.176 An alternative smaller boundary for the town centre should be included to protect the core.

2.177 Response

2.178 These issues have been raised by previous comments above.

2.179 Taking into consideration all comments, in general there is more support for CH 2 than there is for CH 3. There are several objections to CH 3 because of concern about the inclusion of land prone to flooding.

2.180 However comments received on CH 2 object to the inclusion of Avon Trading Park within the boundary. There is also concern over the inclusion of Stony Lane. These issues have been discussed above and are drawn together in the conclusions section below.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

2.181 Planning Policy Statement 4: The policy approach in CH 2 and CH 3 remains consistent with PPS4 in respect of the requirement for local authorities to define the extent of town centres and establish a boundary to guide the focus for town centre related development. However PPS 4 also requires the definition of the Primary Shopping Area. It is suggested that this is defined on the plan which accompanies Policy CH4 (re-numbered CH3 in the Pre Submission Core Strategy), so that the plan which shows primary and secondary shopping cores also identifies the primary shopping area.

2.182 Draft National Planning Policy Framework (2011) The draft framework retains the requirement for local planning authorities to define the extent of the town centre and the primary shopping area. The policy approach in CH 2 and 3 is consistent with emerging draft National planning policy.

2.183 The Joint Retail Assessment 2008 Report highlighted the need to identify town centre boundaries where commercial development should take place. The sequential approach suggests that town centre sites should be the first choice for retail and commercial leisure development. The ability of the town or district centres as the preferred locations for retail and leisure development needs to be considered, and all development should be appropriate in terms of the scale and nature of the centre in which it is located.

2.184 The policy approach of CH2 remains consistent with the Local Development Framework evidence base which includes the Christchurch Town Centre Strategy 2003, the Joint Retail Assessment 2008 and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study 2012.

2.185 The policy approach of CH3 is partly consistent with the LDF evidence base. It provides less commercial and retail development potential as it excludes Stony Lane and Avon Trading Park. Therefore it provides less flexibility to meet future retail floorspace and employment land requirements identified in the Joint Retail Assessment and Bournemouth Dorset and Poole Workspace Study 2012.

‘Options for Consideration’ Sustainability Appraisal

Relevant Sustainability Appraisal Objectives	Preferred Option CH 2	Non Preferred Option CH 3
3: Minimise pollution	Strong Positive Impact	Positive Impact
4: Climate Change	Strong Positive Impact	Positive Impact
5: Reduce the need to travel	Positive Impact	Positive Impact
6: Safe and secure environment	Uncertain Impact	Negative Impact
9: Support social cohesion and access to services	Strong Positive Impact	Positive Impact
11: Local distinctiveness	Strong Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact

Relevant Sustainability Appraisal Objectives	Preferred Option CH 2	Non Preferred Option CH 3
12: Sustainable economic growth	Strong Positive Impact	Positive Impact

Table 2.4

2.186 The Sustainability Appraisal indicates that both options score well against the sustainability objectives. However Option CH2 performs best in sustainability terms, providing most development opportunities for commercial, cultural, community and leisure facilities. Option CH3 has a negative impact on objective 6 as it includes an area south west of the town centre that is in a high flood risk zone, therefore not suitable for significant new housing development.

‘Options for Consideration’ Habitats Regulations Assessment

2.187 The HRA assessment for this option concluded that it is not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of any European site in Christchurch or East Dorset (+15km). This option does not result in development in itself. The potential effects of commercial, retail and housing development is assessed under other Christchurch policies.

‘Options for Consideration’ Health Impact Assessment

2.188 The HIA does not identify any clear adverse impacts of these options on health criteria.

‘Options for Consideration’ Equalities Impact Assessment

2.189 The EIA did not identify any impacts in relation to Options CH 2 and CH 3.

Infrastructure Requirements

2.190 Options CH2 and CH3 relate to alternative thresholds of shopping core policies and do not themselves involve infrastructure requirements.

Conclusions

2.191 Defining a town centre boundary will provide a means of concentrating appropriate uses in the town centre. New retail / leisure and other town centre uses will be directed to the defined town centre in the first instance.

2.192 Christchurch does not have a formally designated town centre boundary in its adopted Local Plan (2001). It identifies Primary Shopping Cores and Secondary Shopping Cores. A formally designated town centre boundary where commercial, leisure and residential development would be encouraged subject to other policy considerations, would ensure appropriate development of the centre in the future. The plan also needs to identify the primary shopping area. This is examined in Option CH4 below.

2.193 There is more support for CH2 than CH3 when referring to the evidence and consultation. The Sustainability Appraisal indicates that CH2 performs better than CH3. The HRA, HIA and EIA assessments do not identify any significant adverse impacts for either option. The policy approach of defining a town centre boundary remains consistent with current and emerging national planning policy.

2.194 However the results of consultation have identified issues for Option CH2 which need consideration. In particular concern has been expressed over the inclusion of Avon Trading Park and Stony Lane in the boundary.

2.195 Dealing with Stony Lane first: this has been identified as a Strategic Site in the CH1 vision. Respondents have expressed concern that retail development in this location would have an adverse impact on the existing centre. Stony Lane is an 'out of centre' location for retail purposes, as defined in PPS 4. Any proposals for retail development would need to be considered as to its impact on the town centre and other policy considerations. It is proposed to insert text in the vision in CH1 to clarify this point. The wording of the town centre boundary policy (CH2 in Core Strategy Pre Submission) can also be amended to refer to this point. It is considered appropriate to include the Stony Lane site in the town centre boundary as there is a need for a strategic approach to the redevelopment of this area, subject to compliance to flood risk policy, to achieve economic objectives.

2.196 Turning now to Avon Trading Park, the site is primarily an employment area and there would be a resistance to loss of the existing employment uses to alternative uses in order to preserve employment. Avon Trading Park is important for employment uses. Although the site may be within 300m of the primary shopping area, it is poorly related to the town centre, being separated by the railway, and therefore would not be as ideal a location for town centre related uses as other sites within the boundary. It is therefore not suitable for inclusion within a town centre boundary.

2.197 There is a need to avoid the town centre becoming too large and consequently diluted by having town centre uses spread over an area that is too wide. Several respondents have expressed their concerns to this effect. However the town centre boundary should extend to include the strategic sites identified in the Vision in CH1 to enable the regeneration of the area to achieve economic objectives.

2.198 In conclusion, it is considered that Option CH2 is preferable to Option CH3, but that the boundary is amended to delete the area north of the railway line - the Avon Trading Park. This will result in a town centre boundary that extends to include all of the strategic sites referred to in CH1 which will provide more scope to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre through more clearly defined development opportunities. The Site Allocations Development Plan Document will allocate specific sites for an appropriate mix of uses but Core Strategy policy will state that development on the 'out of centre' strategic sites (Stony Lane and former Gasworks site) should not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the town centre (see suggested re-wording of Vision in CH1)

2.199 Within this amended CH2 boundary, it is suggested that a boundary for a primary shopping area is defined, tightly around the primary and secondary shopping frontages. The Joint Retail Assessment (2008) examined this issue and put forward a suggested boundary. This boundary is shown in the map accompanying Policy CH4 below.

2.200 Within the town centre boundary, retail uses would only be appropriate when it can be demonstrated that proposals comply with national and local policy including the sequential approach and impact assessment to ensure there is no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre. Proposals for retail uses within Stony Lane and former Gasworks sites would need to meet these policy tests as they are 'out of centre' locations as defined in PPS4.

2.201 To conclude it is recommended that

- CH 2 boundary be amended to exclude the Avon Trading Park;
- The policy wording will make it clear that town centre uses will be considered subject to compliance with other national and local policy;
- A Primary Shopping Area is defined as a separate policy within the diagram accompanying Shopping core Policy CH4

Issue and Options Identified in 'Options for Consideration' Core Strategy:

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

Preferred Option CH 4

The determination of A1 thresholds for the Christchurch shopping cores

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

Non Preferred Option CH 5

Non-retail uses in the Core Retail areas

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

Consultation Response

Option	Support	Object	No Opinion	Total
Preferred Option CH 4	1	2	0	3
Non Preferred Option CH 5	1	2	0	3

Table 2.5

2.203

Key Comments on Preferred Option CH 4

Christchurch Chamber of Trade & Commerce

Do not support this option. Setting of any retail threshold problematic issue. Current figure of 20% probably already exceeded or will be if we continue to encourage a 'cafe culture' and improved evening economy.

Response

The 2008 Retail Study specifically appraised the soundness of the Local Plan shopping core policies and concluded that the 20% threshold represented a sound approach consistent with national policy. However monitoring information (Christchurch Annual Monitoring Report 2009/10) has shown that the 20% limit for non-retail uses in the primary shopping cores, adopted as policy in 2001, has been incrementally increased, in the town centre in particular. The proportion of non-retail uses in the town centre primary shopping core has increased from 22% in 2005 to 25% in 2011. The proportion of non-retail uses in the Highcliffe primary shopping core has risen from 28% to 30% in the same period whereas the proportion in Bargates primary shopping core has remained at 28%.

There has been pressure, as evidenced by the submission of planning applications over the past few years, for the change of use of retail units within the town centre primary shopping core to A3 food and drink uses. A number of A1 units within the High Street also offer a cafe experience - e.g. Subway, the Dessert shop and the delicatessen. This has served to increase the food and drink offer in the town centre.

The changing nature of shopping and its impact on the town centres has been the subject of recent national debate. Issues such as the rise of internet shopping, growth of out of town shopping and competition from a wide range of shopping centres has had an impact. The Government commissioned a recent review on our town centres.(The Portas Review: An Independent review into the future of our High Streets. December 2011)

One of the recommendations of the Portas report is to make it easier to change uses of key properties in the High Street. The need to have an appropriate mix of uses within the town centre is also highlighted, 'The mix will include shops but could also include housing, offices, sport, schools or other social, commercial and cultural enterprises and meeting places. They should become places where we go to engage with other people in our communities, where shopping is just one small part of a rich mix of activities.' The report also advises that too many of the same uses in a High Street puts off potential retailers and investors and recommends a diversity of uses.

The 20% threshold has already been exceeded in all the primary shopping cores. If the percentage was increased to 30% this would allow some flexibility within the town centre primary shopping core for changes to non-retail uses. It would not allow any further flexibility in the Highcliffe primary shopping core as the threshold is already at 30% and it would allow a little flexibility in the Bargates primary shopping core, which has 28% non-retail uses.

General Comments

Support as further loss of retail will only increase the demise of the town.

Key Comments on Preferred Option CH 5

Christchurch Chamber of Trade & Commerce

Support this option. Setting of any retail threshold problematic issue. Some figure is needed but that is more likely to be 30% rather than 20%.

Response

Please see response to the CCTC's objection to Policy CH 4 above as the comments are linked.

General Comments

Object as 30% loss of retail space too high.

The proportion of non-retail uses in Highcliffe primary shopping core is already at 30% and the proportion within Bargates primary shopping core is close at 28%. Therefore the impact of raising the threshold from 20% to 30% is not significant. It is estimated that the change would enable the change of use of about 5 A1 units in the town centre to non A2 uses.

Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres Focus Group 6 December 2010: Comments relevant to Preferred Option CH 4 and Non Preferred Option CH 5

- The issue of whether it is better to relax the threshold policy and fill every unit rather than resist non-A1 uses was discussed. However once an A1 use is lost, it is unlikely to change back. We have to look long term at the range of uses that we need in the town centre.

- If we don't have a strict threshold policy, it works against delivering new retail floorspace.
- An issue of whether the threshold policy takes into account the change in shoppers habits was raised. Again, it was acknowledged that we have to look long term and make difficult decisions in balancing the range of uses in the town centre.

Response

The principle of a threshold policy has general agreement from the focus group. There is a need to have some form of protection of A1 uses in primary shopping cores. The critical issue is whether to keep the proportion of non-retail uses at 20% or raise it to 30%. Changing shopping habits have been the subject of national debate recently in the context of a report commissioned on the future of our High Streets. There may be a need for flexibility to allow for the changes of shopping habits to achieve more of a variety of uses, but there is a need to provide opportunities to meet the needs for retail floorspace in the future.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

Planning Policy Statement 4: The policy approach in CH4 and 5 remains consistent with PPS4 which advises that primary and secondary frontages should be realistically defined and policies should be set making clear which uses should be permitted in these locations.

Draft National Planning Policy Framework (2011) The policy approach in CH 4 and CH 5 is consistent with emerging national planning policy in the draft NPPF which advises that local authorities should define the extent of the town centre and the primary shopping area, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres and set policies that make clear which uses should be permitted in such locations.

The Portas Review: An Independent review into the future of our High Streets. (December 2011) was commissioned by Government. It put forward 28 recommendations, one of which was to have more flexibility to enable changes of uses between use classes within shopping areas. The need to have an appropriate mix of uses within the town centre is also highlighted. However the report also advises that too many of the same uses in a High Street puts off potential retailers and investors and recommends a diversity of uses. The government has not responded to this report and it is not yet known if there will be any changes to national retail policy in the NPPF as a result.

Joint Retail Study (2008):The retail study concluded that the retail policies of the Local Plan for Christchurch Town Centre 'appear to be sound' given that they were largely in line with PPS6 and the frontage policies are effective at safeguarding the predominance of A1 use within the core shopping area.

The NLP retail study concluded that the current policy of a 20% threshold of A1 uses in primary shopping cores enables the provision of a suitable range of retail outlets and other uses to meet the needs of the community. This option assists in ensuring the provision of sufficient A1 floorspace to meet projected requirements in the 2008 retail study for the plan period. NLP have determined that this policy approach is appropriate and robust in meeting future retail requirements to support the vitality and viability of the town centre.

The 2008 Retail Study specifically appraised the soundness of the Local Plan shopping core policies and concluded that the 20% threshold represented a sound approach consistent with the aims of PPS6. The aims and objectives of PPS6 are in line with current national policy set out in PPS4.

Monitoring of Primary Shopping Cores (Christchurch Annual Monitoring Report 2009/10) This shows that the proportion of non retail uses in the town centre primary shopping core has risen over the past 6 years from 22% in 2005 to 25% in 2011. The percentage of non retail uses in the Highcliffe primary shopping core has risen from 28% to 30% and the Bargates primary core has remained consistent at 28%.

‘Options for Consideration’ Sustainability Appraisal

Relevant Sustainability Appraisal Objectives	Preferred Option CH 4	Non Preferred Option CH 5
9: Support social cohesion and access to services	Uncertain Impact	Positive Impact
12: Sustainable economic growth	Strong Positive Impact	Adverse Impact

Table 2.6

The SA records an uncertain impact on objective 9 for Option CH 4 as the restriction of non A1 uses in the shopping cores could potentially lead to a deficiency in other town centre uses. However this can be mitigated by encouraging the expansion of non-retail uses in secondary frontages to ensure that communities have access to basic services and facilities. Overall CH4 performs better than CH 5 in terms of sustainability. NLP have determined that Policy CH 4 approach is appropriate and robust in meeting future retail requirements to support the vitality and viability of the town centre.

‘Options for Consideration’ Habitats Regulations Assessment

The HRA assessment for these options concluded that they are not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of any European site in Christchurch or East Dorset (+15km). These options would not in themselves lead to development.

‘Options for Consideration’ Health Impact Assessment

The HIA assessment for these options does not identify any adverse impacts but identifies positive impacts on access to food and promotion of active travel objectives.

‘Options for Consideration’ Equalities Impact Assessment

The EQIA does not identify any adverse impacts on equalities objectives of these options. Option CH4 has a positive impact on age, disability, gender, race and areas of deprivation. Protection of the existing retail benefit these groups, although those without transport living in the rural are would have no benefit.

Infrastructure Requirements

Options CH4 and CH5 relate to alternative thresholds of shopping core policies and do not themselves involve infrastructure requirements.

Conclusions

The joint retail study identifies a need to provide significant additional comparison floorspace within use class A1 during the plan period. The primary shopping cores have seen a loss of A1 units and in this respect it is appropriate to put forward an A1 threshold policy to help ensure that sufficient A1 floorspace is provided in the centres to meet need identified from the evidence base.

A crucial issue relating to this option is to determine whether the policy restricting non-retail in the primary shopping area uses should be retained at the current level or whether a higher percentage of non-retail uses should be permitted.

Overall CH4 performs better than CH5 in the Sustainability Appraisal. The HRA, HIA and EIA assessments do not identify any significant adverse impacts for either option and the EIA identifies benefits for Option CH 4.

Evidence from the Retail Study supports the 20% threshold as appropriate and robust in meeting future retail requirements to support the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Evidence from the Christchurch AMR 2009/10 indicates that the proportion of non retail uses in the primary shopping cores is already at 30% in the Highcliffe Core, has remained at 28% in the Bargates primary core and has risen from 22% to 25% in the town centre primary core over the past 6 years. There is also evidence of pressure for changes of use from A1 to A3 in the town centre over recent years. Nationally there has been a debate over the future of our town centres with a recent report recommending a need for more flexibility in changes of use to enable a diversity of uses, although cautioning against too many of the same uses.

The results of consultation do not give a clear picture of one option being supported over another as both options attracted fairly equal numbers of support and objections. Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce supported a threshold of 30%. The issue was discussed at the focus group with concerns raised. There was an acknowledgment of the benefits of setting a threshold but again no clear support for one threshold over another.

A 30% threshold for non-retail uses would not have an impact on the Highcliffe primary shopping core and would have a negligible impact on the Bargates primary shopping cores as they already have a 30% or close to 30% proportion of non-retail uses. The impact of raising the threshold to 30% in the Christchurch town centre shopping core would allow some flexibility in changes of use within this core. It is estimated that it would allow for approximately 5 A1 units to change use.

In conclusion, although the Joint Retail Study evidence supports the retention of the 20% threshold, it is not supported over the alternative 30% threshold by the results of consultation. Issues raised in consultation highlight the need for flexibility and to take into account changing shopping habits. Evidence from monitoring indicates that a 30% threshold would allow some flexibility within the town centre shopping core but have little impact on the Highcliffe and Bargates primary shopping cores. On balance Option CH 5 would seem an appropriate approach to take forward. The Council intends to appoint consultants to update the retail assessment and look again at the threshold policy to test whether a 30% threshold would be a sound approach. The results of the study will be ready in time to inform the submission document.

Options CH4 and CH5 set out alternative policies for the determination of A1 thresholds within the primary shopping cores. However, the saved primary and secondary shopping core policies in the adopted Local Plan (2001) (Policy ES2 and ES3) contain extra criteria, defining appropriate Use Classes, setting a limit to non-retail shop frontages, retaining shop front appearances and addressing the impact on amenities of local residents. In the light of this, and to ensure that the Pre - Submission Core Strategy Primary and Secondary Shopping Core policies are comprehensive the opportunity should be taken to include these criteria in addition to the 30% threshold within the Core Strategy policy, rather than leave it to be addressed in the Development Management Policies DPD.

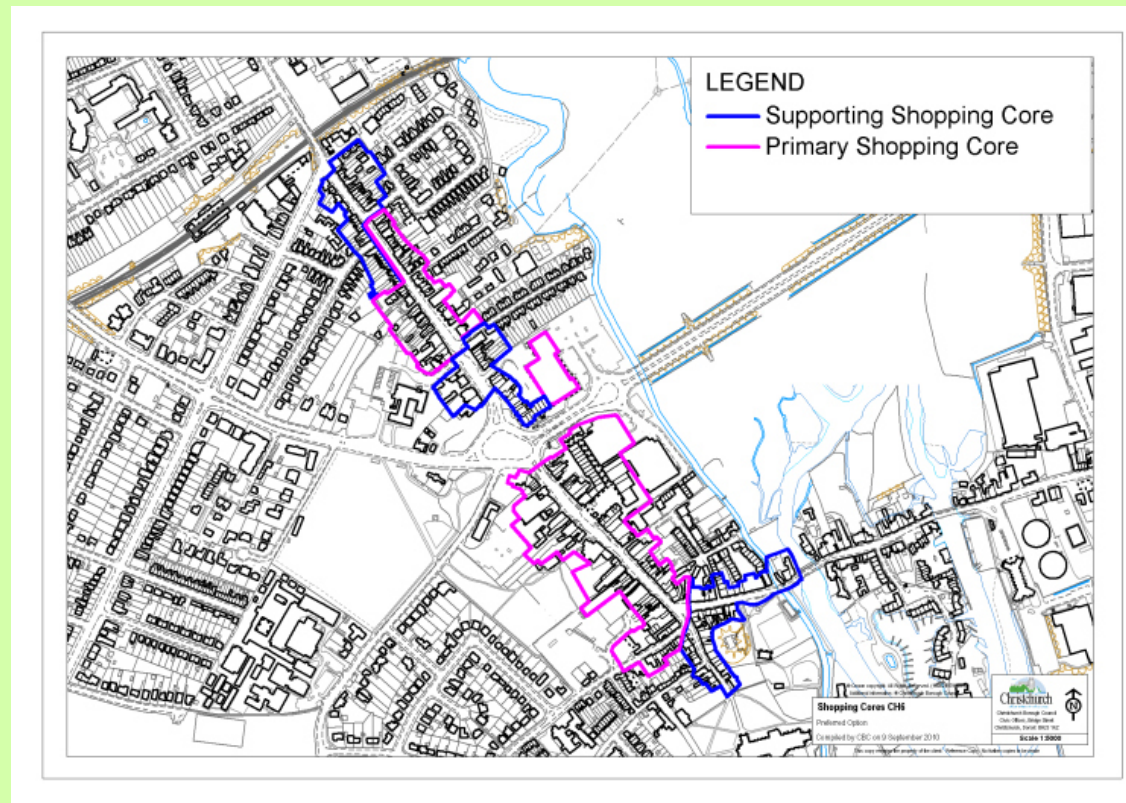
Issue and Options Identified in 'Options for Consideration' Core Strategy:

Defining primary and supporting shopping core frontages:

Preferred Option CH 6

Defining primary and supporting shopping core frontages -Option 1

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

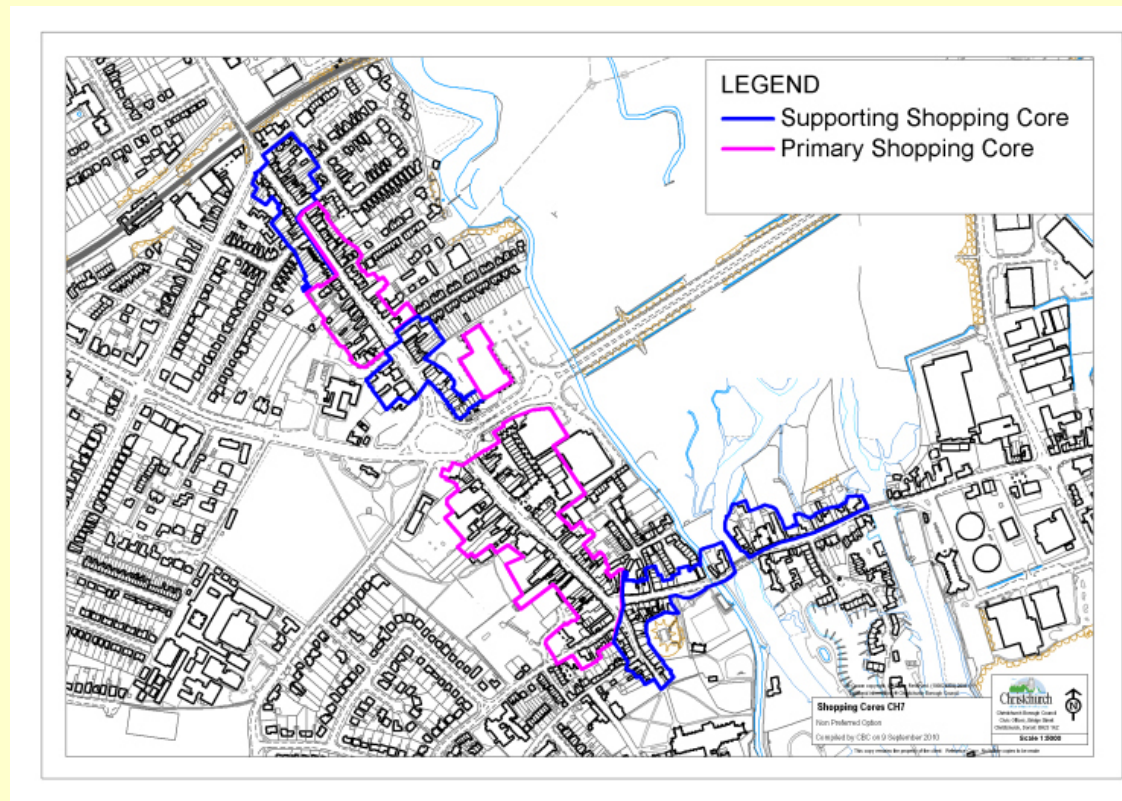


Picture 2.4

Non Preferred Option CH 7

Defining primary and supporting shopping core frontages -Option 1

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

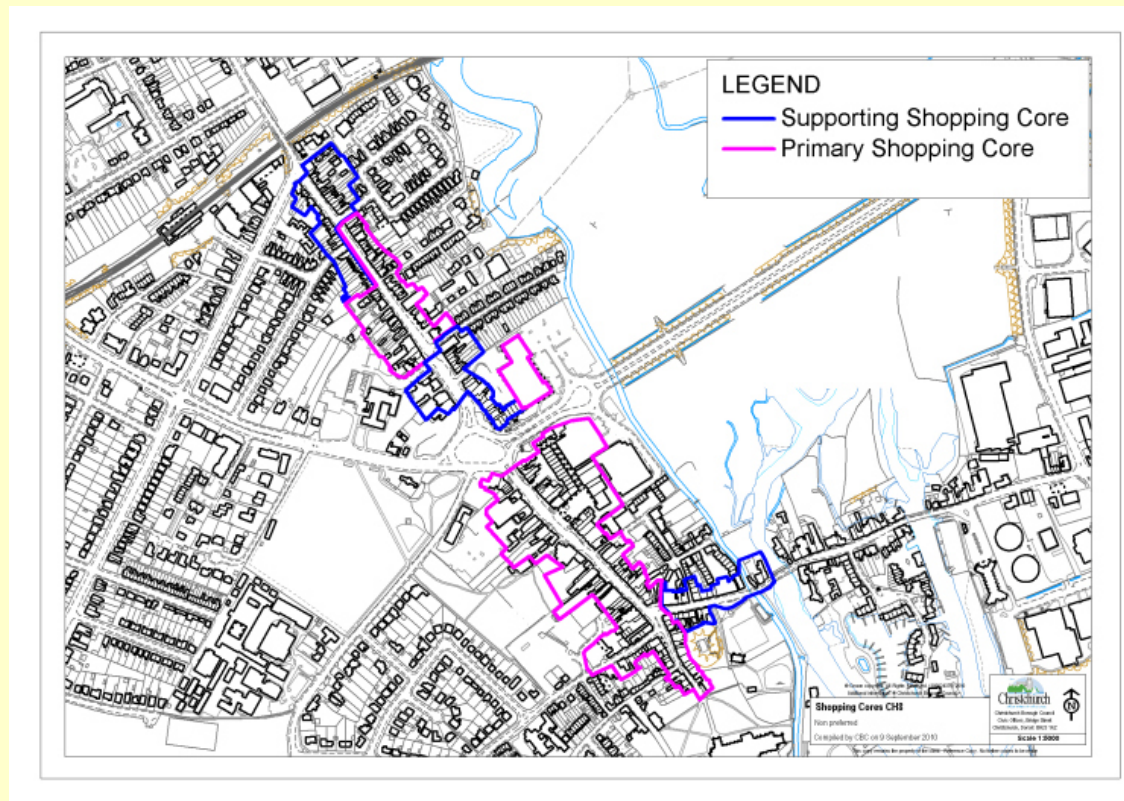


Picture 2.5

Non Preferred Option CH 8

Defining primary and supporting shopping core frontages -Option 1

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

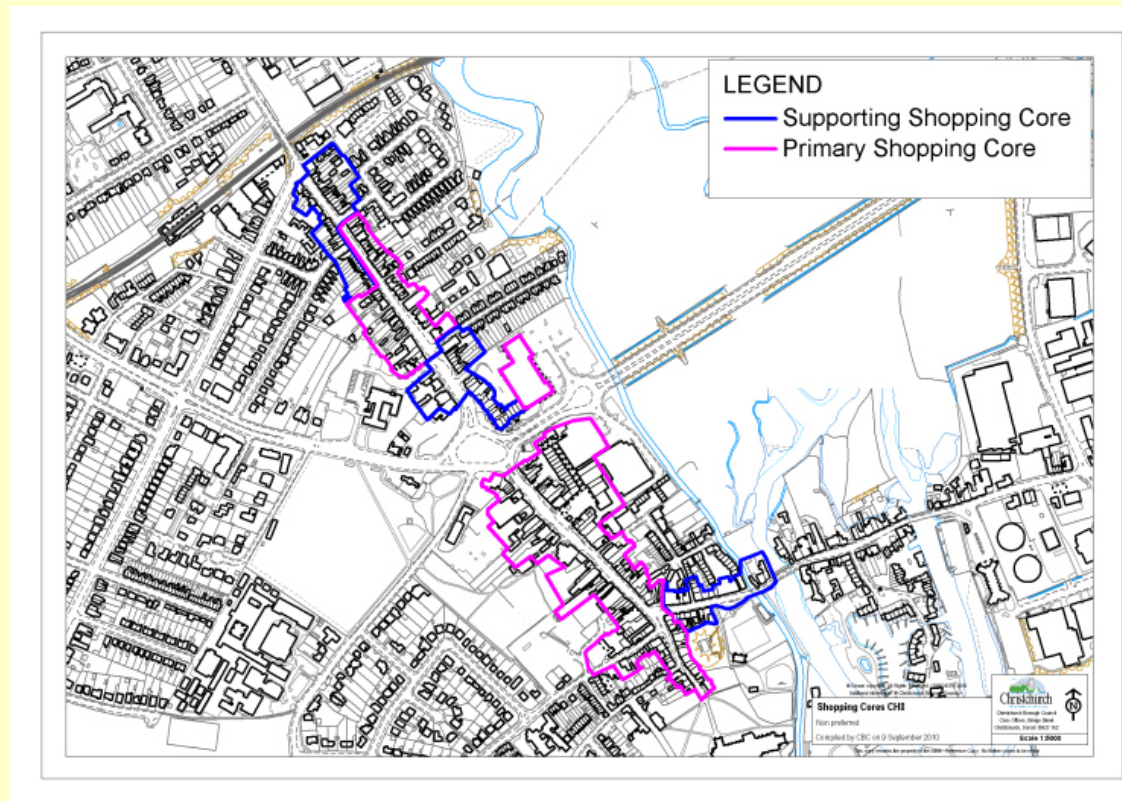


Picture 2.6

Non Preferred Option CH 9

Defining primary and supporting shopping core frontages -Option 1

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



Picture 2.7

Consultation Response

Option	Support	Object	No Opinion	Total
Preferred Option CH 6	3	0	0	3
Non Preferred Option CH 7	0	3	0	3
Non Preferred Option CH 8	1	2	0	3
Non Preferred Option CH 9	0	2	0	2

Table 2.7

Key Comments on Preferred Option CH 6

Christchurch Chamber of Trade & Commerce

Support maintaining High Street as primary shopping core, leaving Bridge, Church and Castle Streets as supporting area. It may also be beneficial to designate all of Bargates as a supporting area to permit redevelopment and reinvigoration of the shopping offering there.

Response

It is maintained that the Bargates primary shopping core should be retained as the area is well connected and accessible, and achieving better linkages to the High Street could help to revitalise Bargates. The redevelopment of the Magistrates Court site could also stimulate interest.

General Comments

Support re designation of Church St for evening economy. This will have a positive effect on vitality and viability of town centre.

Key Comments on Non Preferred Options CH7 and 8 (no comments on CH9)

Object to CH7 as extending supporting core will lead to a less concentrated centre.

Support CH8 as do not want further development of cafés and restaurants on Church Street. Have enough already. Need more independent food retail outlets - e.g. butcher or baker yet need for more non-food outlets referred to in document.

Response

The Primary shopping core area together with the threshold policy discussed above in CH4 and CH5 retains an area primarily for A1 uses. This can provide opportunities for independent food retail outlets to locate.

Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres Focus Group 6 December 2010: Comments relevant to Preferred Option CH6 and Non Preferred Options CH7, 8 and 9.

Suggest consider removing Wick Lane from Primary Shopping Core and reclassifying to Secondary Shopping Core. Footfall has dropped since the relocation of the Post Office site.

Response

The Joint Retail Study 2008 recommends the removal of Wick Lane from the Primary Shopping Core. Also the Wick Lane shopping environment is changing as the Post Office site has been given permission for mixed use and Pizza Express has been approved on the corner of Wick Lane and the High Street. Therefore it is proposed to remove Wick Lane from the Primary Shopping Core and reclassify as Secondary Shopping Core.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

It is consistent with national policy in PPS4 to determine a policy approach based on evidence to determine the appropriate extent of the primary and secondary shopping cores and the uses permitted in each. However PPS4 also requires the definition of the primary shopping area. It is suggested that this is defined on the plan which accompanies Policy CH4, so that the plan which shows primary and secondary shopping cores also identifies the primary shopping area.

Emerging policy in the draft National Planning Policy Framework 2011 states that local planning authorities should define the extent of the town centre and the primary shopping area, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary shopping frontages in designated centres, and set policies which make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations.

The analysis carried out by the Joint Retail Study 2008 recommended that Church Street and Wick Lane be re-designated as a secondary shopping areas and Town Bridge (along Castle Street) be deleted as a Secondary Retail Frontage.

Church Street is a peripheral area of the centre, dominated by independent rather than multiple retailers and pedestrian flows appear much lower. There is a diversity of non A1 uses e.g. numerous restaurants, estate agents and hairdressers. This area of town is more secondary in nature as per definition provided by PPS4. Designating Church Street as a secondary frontage would allow for more flexibility in an area that has effectively become an evening economy hub. This would have a positive impact on the economy as a whole, ensuring the centre remains vibrant in the afternoon and evening. Similar issues apply to Wick Lane as the Post Office site has already been given permission for mixed uses and Pizza Express has been granted permission at the corner of Wick Lane and the High Street.

The secondary frontage which previously designated after Town Bridge along Castle Street has been deleted as it is considered that the bridge offers a natural geographic end to the town centre shopping area. In addition, footfall is low and there are breaks in the frontage. Therefore, it is not considered that these units add to the vitality or viability of the town centre and consequently it is not considered necessary to restrict the use of these units through frontage policies.

‘Options for Consideration’ Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainability Objectives	Appraisal	Preferred Option CH6	Non Preferred Option CH7	Non Preferred Option CH8	Non Preferred Option CH9
9: Support social cohesion and access to services		Positive Impact	Positive Impact	Positive Impact	Adverse Impact
11: Local distinctiveness		Strong Positive Impact	Strong Positive Impact	No Impact	Uncertain Impact
12: Sustainable economic growth		Positive Impact	Positive Impact	No Impact	Adverse Impact

Table 2.8

Both Options CH6 and CH7 score the same in terms of sustainability. The preferred option is CH6 because it reflects the evidence contained in the retail assessment. CH 8 is not a preferred option as, even though it proposes to de-designate the secondary frontage after Town Bridge, it does not enable Church Street to be utilised for non A1 uses including cafes and restaurants which will contribute to the evening economy and long term economic viability of the centre.

‘Options for Consideration’ Habitats Regulations Assessment

The HRA assessment for these options concluded that they are not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of any European site in Christchurch or East Dorset (+15km). These options would not in themselves lead to development.

‘Options for Consideration’ Health Impact Assessment

The HIA assessment for these options does not identify any adverse impacts but Option CH6 identified a positive impact for employment objective as the promotion of vitality of the town centre and allowing cafes and restaurants on Church Street should increase employment.

‘Options for Consideration’ Equalities Impact Assessment

The EIA does not identify any adverse impacts on equalities objectives of these options.

Infrastructure Requirements

Options CH 6 - 9 are alternative shopping frontage boundaries and do not in themselves involve any infrastructure requirements.

Conclusions

Option CH6 is supported by evidence. The Joint Retail Study makes clear recommendations for amendments to the Christchurch Town Centre shopping core boundaries which will enhance the evening economy and in combination with maintaining sufficient A1 in the primary shopping core will promote town centre vitality and viability.

Option CH 6 is also supported by the results of consultation. The Sustainability Appraisal indicates that CH6 is the preferred option. The HRA and EIA do not identify any adverse impacts for any of the options. The HIA identifies a positive impact for CH6.

However, in response to an issue raised in consultation and a recommendation of Joint Retail Study it is proposed to amend the boundary of Policy CH6 to delete Wick Lane from the primary core and to include within the secondary core.

In the discussion of an appropriate town centre boundary in Options CH2 and 3 above, it was concluded that the primary shopping area also needs to be defined. This is required by PPS4. It would seem appropriate to amend the diagram for Policy CH4 to define the Christchurch primary shopping area as well as the primary and secondary cores. The primary shopping area is defined in PPS4 as 'a defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are contiguous and closely related to the primary shopping frontage).' It is proposed that the Primary Shopping Area is drawn tightly around the existing town centre shopping area (High Street, Bargates, Wick Lane, Church Street, Castle Street) as recommended in the Joint Retail Study (2008).

In conclusion, option CH6, amended to delete Wick Lane from the Primary Shopping Core and re-designated to the Secondary Shopping Core is considered to be an appropriate approach to defining the shopping frontages in Christchurch town centre. A primary shopping area will also be defined on the diagram.

Issue and Options Identified in 'Options for Consideration' Core Strategy:

What should the vision be for Highcliffe Centre?

Preferred Option CH 10

Highcliffe Centre Vision

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

To achieve this vision:

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

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

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

Consultation Response

Key Comments on Preferred Option CH 10			
Support	Object	No Opinion	Total
3	1	0	4

Table 2.9

Key Comments on Preferred Option CH10

General Comments

Comments were received relating to the following themes in the Highcliffe Vision:-

Community Facilities

Support, but consider more emphasis should be placed on important role that community facilities (such as Post Offices) play in creating sustainable communities. (BNP Paribas Real Estate)

Response

There is little mention of the role of community facilities in the Highcliffe vision. The vision could be amended to refer to the need to retain, support and where possible enhance the community facilities in Highcliffe to support the vitality and viability of the centre.

Housing

High density residential development will encourage even more retired people to come to Highcliffe. More social housing needed for young people.

Further development of flats should be resisted except for a few sites where there are limited opportunities for intensification without adverse effects. Suggest develop south side of secondary shopping core more intensely. Elsewhere the emphasis should be on retaining potential family properties. Should aim for a better balance of demographic profile in Highcliffe.

Response

The reference to higher density development in Highcliffe does not fit with the limited scale of frontages to which it would apply. It is therefore proposed to delete point 5 of the vision. Policies to influence an appropriate mix and balance of housing and increase the provision of affordable housing are contained in the Meeting Local Needs chapter of the Core Strategy.

Transport

Support vision as will aid self containment and reduce the need to travel. Welcome intention to encourage use of sustainable modes of transport as part of this vision. (Highways Agency)

Object as more frequent pedestrian crossings will increase congestion. Suggest 20mph limit.

Need for types of uses in the Highcliffe shopping area

There is a need for permanent weekly market site.

There is a need for a youth centre and internet cafe to provide local and visiting youths a meeting place.

Response

The suggestion for a permanent weekly market site has already been thoroughly investigated. However problems have arisen with a lack of a suitable site, perceived falling demand from shoppers and no pressure from the business community. Consequently there are no plans to re-instate a Highcliffe market at this time.

The encouragement of expansion of uses such as restaurants/cafe's/pubs to make it more vibrant place in the afternoon and evening hours, as promoted in Point 2 of the vision, could enhance the attractiveness of Highcliffe district centre for the youth.

The remit of the **Christchurch and Highcliffe Centre Focus Group** held on 6 December 2010 included Highcliffe as well as Christchurch town centre issues. However the focus group did not make any comments on the Highcliffe elements of the presentation. The focus group attendees represented businesses in the town centre, therefore discussion tended to focus on issues relating to Christchurch town centre.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

The approach is consistent with PPS4 in respect of promoting the vitality and viability of sustainable town centres, supporting their growth and enhancement and acknowledging the variety of functions. Flexible policies should be set which are able to respond to changing economic circumstances and encourage, where appropriate, high density development accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

The policy approach of CH10 remains consistent with the Local Development Framework evidence base including the following:-

- Joint Retail Assessment (2008)
- Christchurch Parking, Access and Signing Strategy (2006)
- Dorset Survey of Housing Need and Demand: Christchurch (2008)
- PPG17 Open Space Study (2007)
- Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study (2012)

‘Options for Consideration’ Sustainability Appraisal

Relevant Sustainability Appraisal Objectives	Preferred Option CH 10
2: Make sustainable use of resources	Strong Positive Impact
3: Minimise pollution	Positive Impact
4: Climate Change	Positive Impact
5: Reduce the need to travel	Strong Positive Impact
6: Safe and secure environment	Strong Positive Impact
8: Suitable and affordable housing	Strong Positive Impact
9: Support social cohesion and access to services	Positive Impact
11: Local distinctiveness	Strong Positive Impact
12: Sustainable economic growth	Strong Positive Impact

Table 2.10

The single option presented for this issue is the only acceptable approach that is consistent with national policy. The vision supports many of the SA objectives. The town centre will be a thriving place for community and retail opportunities. However, growth may contribute to some traffic congestion in the medium and long term. The increased use of public transport represents a key factor in reducing levels of emissions and congestion that contributes to climate change. The uptake of public transport may mitigate the increase of the number of visitors/generated car journeys. The increased level of emissions could be mitigated further by the installation of renewable energy technologies and sustainable construction techniques.

The successful implementation of the vision will therefore depend on effective delivery of other policies, central to the vitality and viability of town centres. These include adoption of a comprehensive transport strategy, climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, effective design and landscape policies and measures aimed at enhancing and conserving the historic built environment.

'Options for Consideration' Habitats Regulations Assessment

The HRA assessment concluded that Highcliffe district centre is not in proximity to any European sites and, as such, the proposals outlined in this option are not considered to have likely significant effects on these sites.

'Options for Consideration' Health Impact Assessment

The HRA identified no adverse impacts on health objectives of the Highcliffe district centre vision. It recorded positive impacts on built environment, access to food, active travel, employment and community facilities objectives.

'Options for Consideration' Equalities Impact Assessment

The EQA does not identify any adverse impacts on equalities objectives of these options.

Conclusion

Option CH 0 is supported by consultation, Local Development Framework evidence base and consistent with national policy. The SA, HRA, HIA and EIA assessments do not identify any significant adverse impacts.

In conclusion this option, amended to take into account comments on a lack of reference to the role of community facilities and to delete Point 6 which refers to higher density residential development, is considered an appropriate approach for a vision to achieve the long term vitality and viability of Highcliffe district centre.

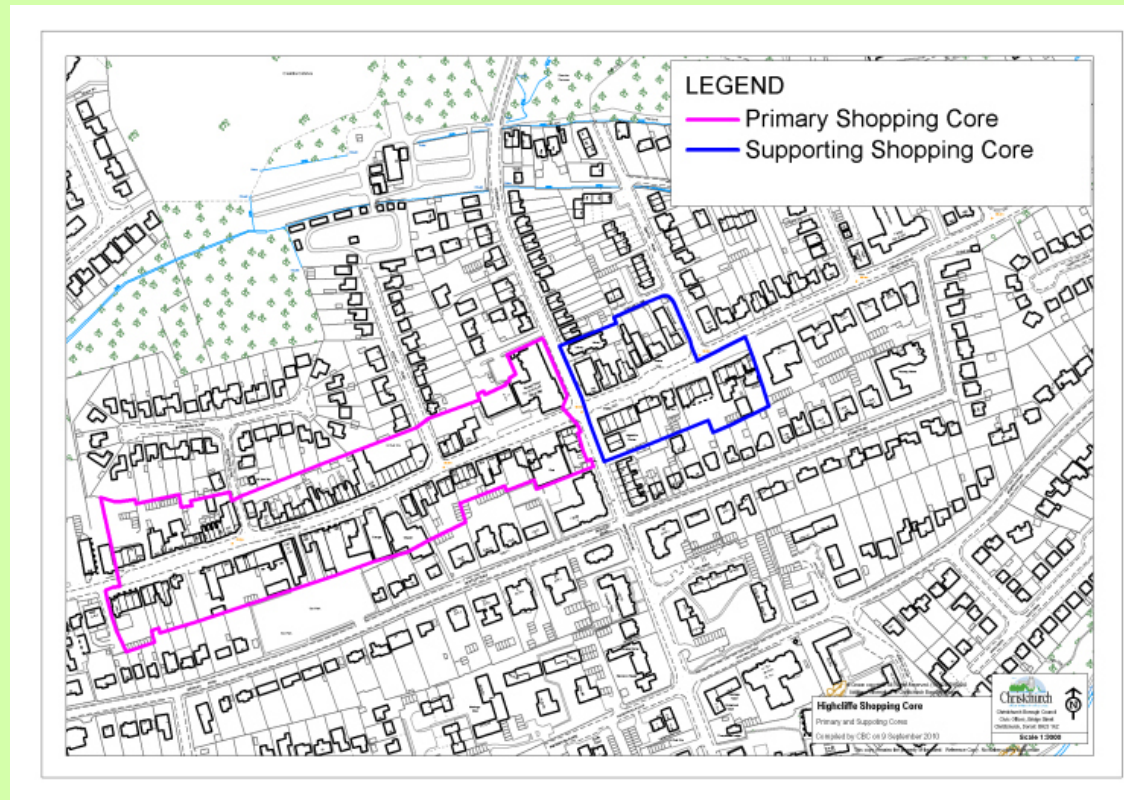
Issue and Options Identified in 'Options for Consideration' Core Strategy

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

Preferred Option CH 11

Highcliffe retail frontages

In Highcliffe to retain the existing retail frontages



Picture 2.8

Consultation Response

Key Comments on Preferred Option CH 11			
Support	Object	No Opinion	Total
2	0	0	2

Table 2.11

There was support but no comments were made relating to this option.

The remit of the Christchurch and Highcliffe Centre Focus Group held on 6 December 2010 included Highcliffe as well as Christchurch town centre issues. However the focus group did not make any comments on the Highcliffe elements of the presentation. The focus group attendees represented businesses in the town centre, therefore discussion tended to focus on issues relating to Christchurch town centre.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

The policy approach in CH11 remains consistent with PPS 4 which advises that primary and secondary frontages should be realistically defined and policies should be set making clear which uses should be permitted in these locations. This approach is also consistent with emerging national planning policy in the draft National Planning Framework (2011). The Joint Retail Study concluded that the frontage policies are effective at safeguarding the predominance of A1 uses within the shopping core area. However it considered that the distinction between the primary and secondary shopping areas in Highcliffe is not reflective of the way the centre functions.

'Options for Consideration' Sustainability Appraisal

Relevant Sustainability Appraisal Objectives	Preferred Option CH 11
9: Support social cohesion and access to services	Positive Impact
11: Local distinctiveness	No Impact
12: Sustainable economic growth	Positive Impact

Table 2.12

The SA does not identify any negative impacts on sustainability objectives of Option CH 11. Positive impacts on access to services and economic objectives are identified as the option encourages a diverse range of retail uses in Highcliffe centre. This reflects the evidence contained in the retail assessment.

'Options for Consideration' Habitats Regulations Assessment

The HRA assessment for this option concluded that it is not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of any European site in Christchurch or East Dorset (+15km). This option would not in itself lead to development.

'Options for Consideration' Health Impact Assessment

The HIA did not identify any adverse impacts of this option on health objectives.

'Options for Consideration' Equalities Impact Assessment

The EIA does not identify any adverse impacts on equalities objectives of these options

Conclusions

CH11 is supported by the evidence and consultation. The Sustainability Appraisal identifies positive impacts. There are no adverse impacts identified by the HRA, HIA and EIA. Although the Retail Study concludes that there is no distinction between the primary and secondary shopping areas in Highcliffe, it is not proposed to change the boundary. Retaining an area for the secondary shopping core allows more for more flexibility of ground floor uses, particularly as the proportion of non-retail uses is already at 30% in the Highcliffe primary shopping core. In conclusion this option as set out is considered an appropriate approach for a retail frontage boundary in the Highcliffe shopping area.

General Comments on Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres Chapter

Need for new supermarkets in town centre

Para 5.11 Do not support assertion that Christchurch town centre does not have a requirement for new supermarkets. There is evidence to suggest that the town centre could support an additional major supermarket to balance the offering of Waitrose. (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

Response

The Joint Retail Assessment (2008) also states that Christchurch has a good provision of food stores including the large Sainsbury's, Waitrose, M&S and Co-op store. The conclusion of the retail study taking into account the results of the household survey concludes that there is no obvious deficiency in main and bulk food shopping provision in the Borough.

Need for office accommodation in town centre

Para 5.13. Should be greater emphasis on provision of office accommodation in the town centre. Offices employ a larger number of people which will contribute to footfall of shops in the town centre. (Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

Response

The Christchurch and East Dorset Employment Land Review Study indicated that there is not a strong market for offices in the town centre. The main market for office development is located in Bournemouth and Poole. However, the town centre might accommodate some small scale office development. The Airport North West Business Park is likely to accommodate a significant element of Christchurch's future office provision and is able to accommodate smaller scale high quality office development. It is envisaged that limited office development in the town centre should continue. The town centre plays an important role in providing small office space to professional businesses traditionally located in the towns, such as solicitors, surveyors and land agents. These users perform a complementary role to the retailers and support the local economy and the vitality of the town centres. It will be necessary to continue to support and provide for small office space businesses in the town centres in new development proposals. There is no policy restriction for offices above ground floor.

Transport

Para 5.14 - Suggest make Bargates and High Street into precincts linked by cleaned, well lit, underpass. Suggest move main bus interchange to outside the station. Saxon Square should be turned into market and cafe centre. Need to be bold and imaginative. (West Christchurch Residents Association)

Improving pedestrian access across Sopers Lane near Fountain roundabout should be a priority.

Insufficient car park spaces in town centre

Response

Improved links to Bargates is an important objective. Measures to produce a more pedestrian friendly environment around the Fountain roundabout will be an important element of the design of a highways improvement scheme to Fountain Roundabout.

Parking Access and Signage Strategy 2006 concludes that there is sufficient car parking in the town centre but better use can be made of underused car parks. The transport background paper addresses the issue of car parking provision and the Pre Submission Key Strategy chapter will contain the policy approach towards private parking, however the Councils approach policy approach towards town centre public parking provision will not be set out in the Core Strategy as the Council needs to maintain significant flexibility on this issue.

General town centre

Need to find role for disused health centre in Saxon Square - suggest for the additional non food retail space required.

Para 5.8 should refer to Monday Market.

Response

Planning permission has been granted for a Travelodge hotel on the former disused health centre.

Reference should be made to the Monday Market in the High Street.

Burton

We need to develop Burton to make it a vibrant community. Should establish vision guiding future of Burton centre as well as Christchurch and Highcliffe centres. Suggest developing housing and employment on land east of Burton.

Suggest developing Burton with 2,100 - 3,000 sq m of additional non food floorspace. This would solve the supply problem for Christchurch town centre.

Response

These comments on developing Burton and identifying retail floorspace in this location are more relevant to issues considered in the Key Strategy - in particular KS 1 which sets out the settlement hierarchy. Burton is classified as a village - where only limited development will be allowed.

3 Pre Submission Options

3.1 The following policies concerning Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres for inclusion in the Pre Submission Core Strategy have been established following consideration of consultation responses, the evidence base and assessments including sustainability appraisal and habitats regulations assessment:

Policy CH1

Christchurch town centre vision

Christchurch will continue to act as the key town centre in the Borough and will be the main focus for retail development. The town centre sits at the top of the Christchurch town centre hierarchy (Policy KS6), is well served by public transport and has the most development opportunities. The retail offer will be enhanced and the shopping environment improved to provide a more pleasant and pedestrian friendly townscape. Improvements in public transport services will be supported in conjunction with localised infrastructure improvements. Essential services and facilities will also be enhanced within the centre serving residents and local visitors to the town.

To achieve this vision:

1. Retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre. The town centre will accommodate in the region of 8,000sqm of new comparison retail floorspace to meet future requirements to 2028. The strategy will seek to enhance the retail offer and improve the presence of national multiples to provide for better choice in comparison shopping. The regeneration of the Saxon Square Shopping Centre will attract national multiples whilst independent retail shops will continue to thrive on the High Street.
2. Residents of the Borough will continue to have access to a variety of community services and cultural facilities; important town centre uses (such as the Regent Centre, the Central Library) will be retained and where possible enhanced. There is a need to expand the health and fitness offer in the town centre.
3. Expansion of evening economy uses such as restaurants/cafés/pubs will be encouraged especially along Church Street. This will enhance the vitality of the centre, making it a more vibrant place in the afternoon and evening hours.
4. The following sites have been identified as strategic sites that will play a pivotal role in delivering the town centre vision and Key Strategy.
 - The Magistrates' Court Site
 - Saxon Square
 - The Lanes
 - Land between Bridge Street, Stony Lane South and the Civic Offices
 - Stony Lane

Land between Bridge Street, Stony Lane South and the Civic Offices and Stony Lane is located 'out of centre' and within an area of high flood risk. Town centre uses including employment, retail, leisure and entertainment, offices, arts and culture and tourism may be appropriate in these locations subject to compliance with other policy. In particular, development in these locations should not adversely affect the vitality and viability of the town centre and should comply with flood risk policy.

The strategic sites set out above will be brought forward in accordance with site specific allocations and further detail will be set out in a Site Specific Development Plan Document. The Site Allocations DPD will also set out how flood risk will be managed for these strategic sites.

5. Druitt Gardens will be enhanced to provide an attractive area of open space within the town centre. This will benefit tourism and contribute to the promotion of healthy lifestyles by providing high quality open space. Developer contributions will be obtained for the purpose of enhancing community facilities in the Town Centre.

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

7. The town centre will seek to accommodate new office development which complements the overall retail strategy and the vitality and viability of neighbouring centres.

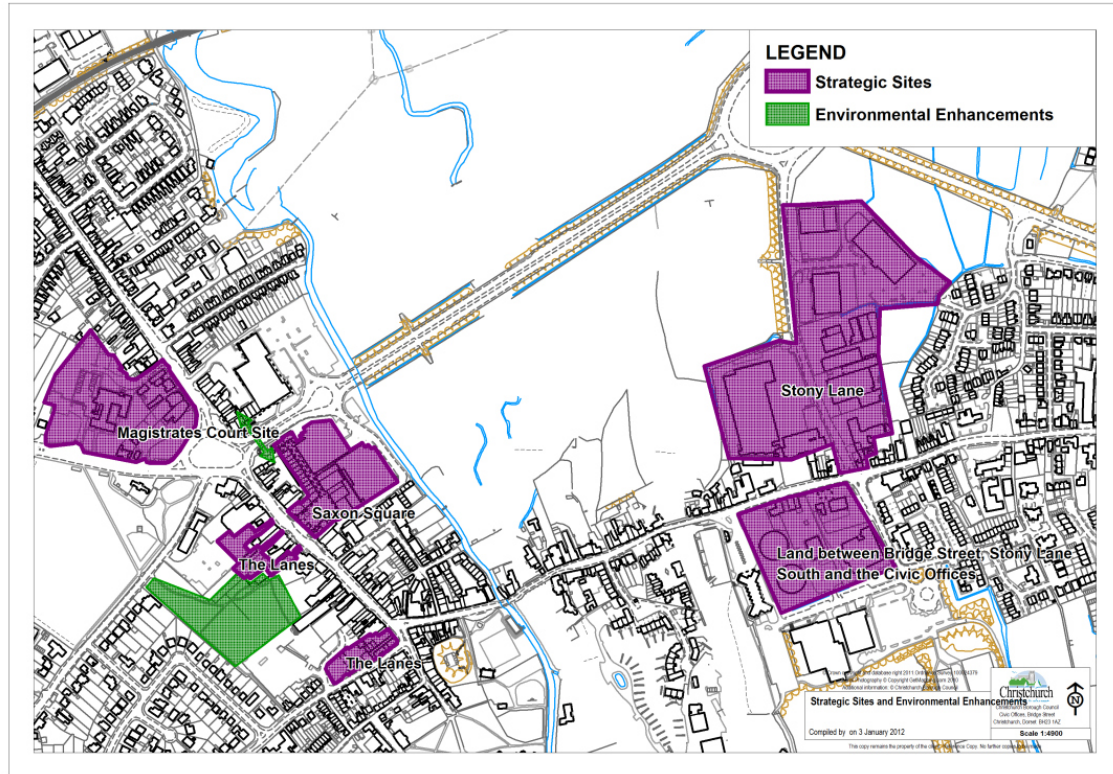
8. Townscape quality will be enhanced by sensitive development and improvements incorporating the built form and the spaces between, including streets, squares, parks, waterfront and car parks. Only high quality development proposals that respect and enhance the historic character of the centre, and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

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

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

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

More effective management of car parks will reduce pressure on 'core' car parks. A strategic signing strategy will also in making the best use of town centre car parks and in reducing congestion.

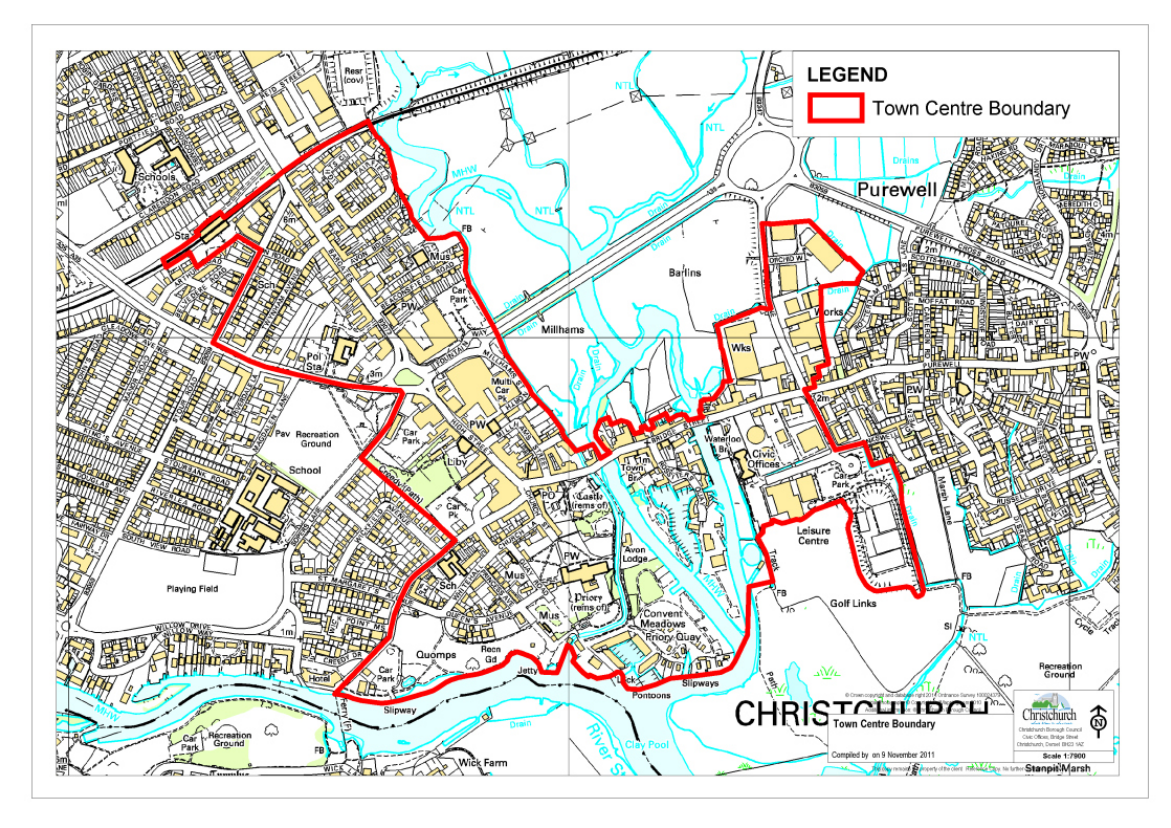


Picture 3.1

Policy CH2

Christchurch town centre boundary.

The town centre as defined by the town centre boundary will be the focus for town centre uses including higher density residential, employment, retail, leisure and entertainment, offices, arts, culture and tourism development subject to compliance with other national and local policy.

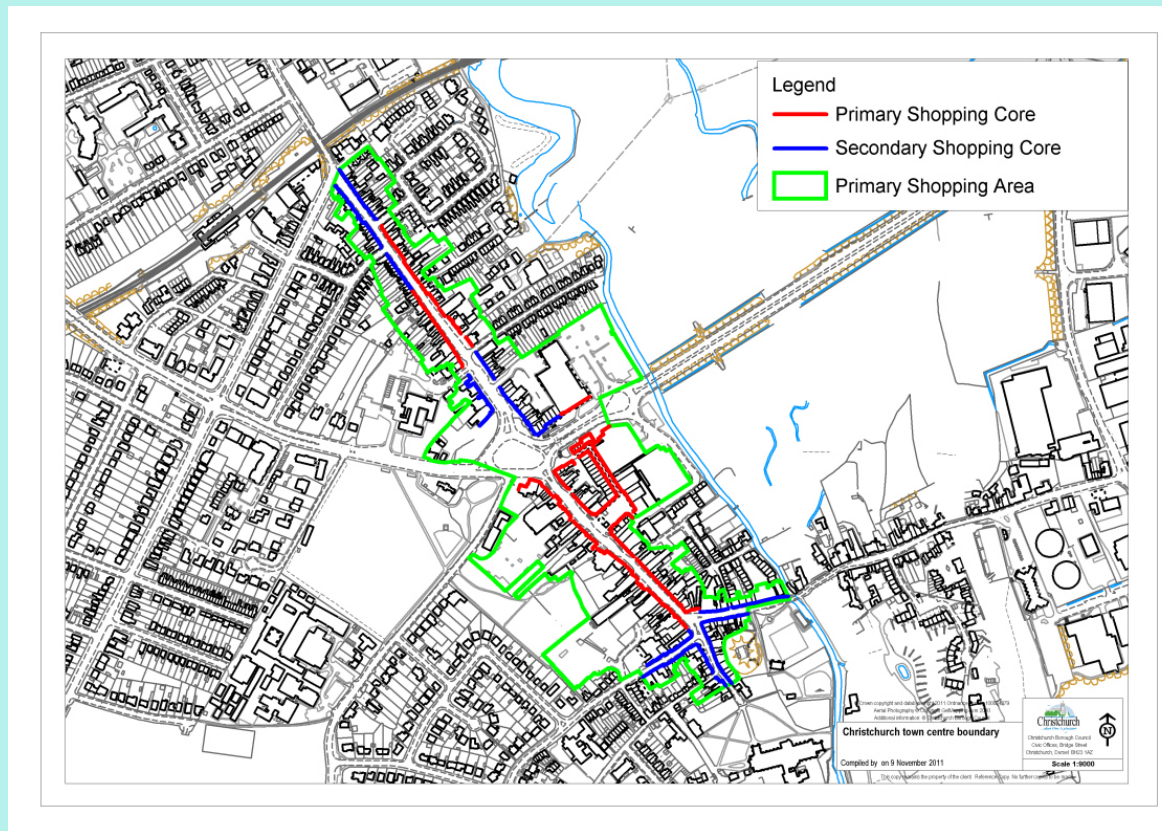


Picture 3.2 Christchurch town centre boundary

Policy CH3

Christchurch Primary Shopping Area and retail cores.

This policy defines the Christchurch town centre Primary Shopping Area, where retail development will be concentrated, and the primary and secondary shopping cores.



Picture 3.3 Primary Shopping Area & Shopping Cores

Policy CH4

Highcliffe District Centre Vision.

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

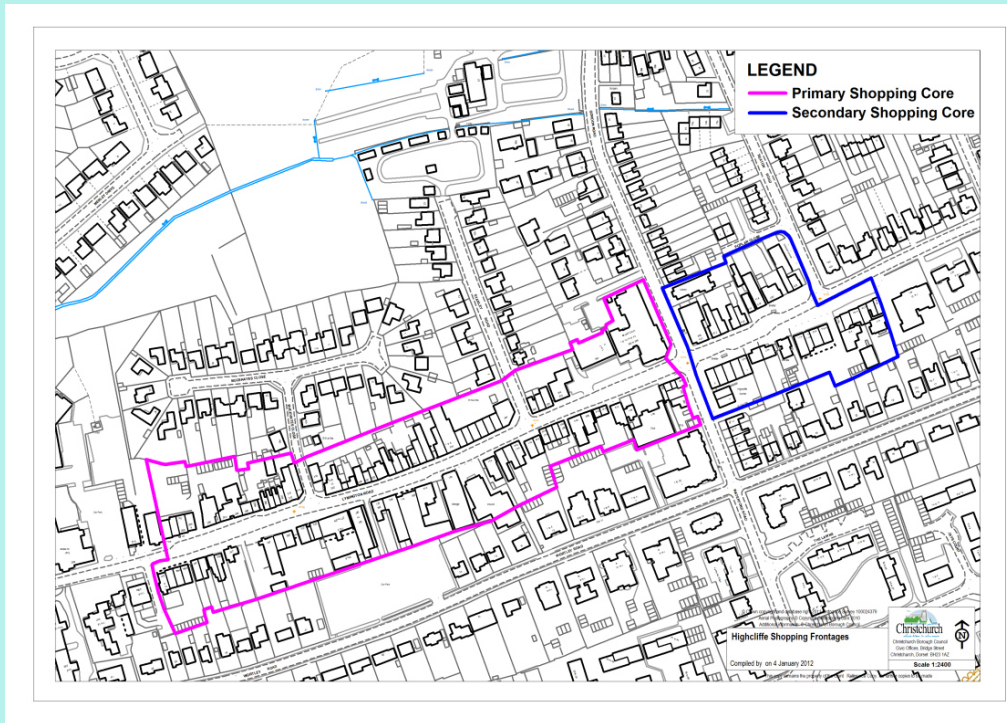
To achieve this vision:

1. Retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre consistent with the Borough retail strategy. The strategy for Highcliffe will seek to enhance the niche retail offer to attract more visitors with unique, specialist shops.
2. Expansion of evening economy uses will be encouraged, especially in the designated secondary shopping cores. This will enhance the vitality of the centre, making it a more vibrant place in the afternoon and evening hours.
3. Community services in Highcliffe will be retained, supported and where possible enhanced to support the vitality and viability of the centre. The enhancement of facilities for older people such as community meeting places, medical and social care will be sought. Opportunities will also be pursued to provide further sports and recreation facilities to meet the needs of children and young people.
4. Better marked/signposted linkages between the Highcliffe beach front and the town centre will draw in more visitors to the centre that will benefit local trade.
5. The townscape quality of the centre will be improved: the objective is to secure a high quality environment that will give the centre a distinct character and enhance its sense of identity. This will be achieved by providing new street furniture and planting in an effort to create an attractive, welcoming and pedestrian friendly environment. The pedestrian-vehicular conflict, apparent on the A337 Lymington Road will be minimised by the introduction of appropriate traffic calming measures and provision of more frequent pedestrian crossings.
6. To minimise congestion and air pollution, sustainable transport infrastructure and services will be encouraged.
7. The Council will ensure that adequate parking levels are maintained within the centre to ensure its vitality and viability.

Policy CH5

Highcliffe Primary and Secondary Shopping Cores

Policy CH5 defines the Highcliffe district centre primary and secondary shopping cores.



Picture 3.4 Highcliffe Shopping Cores

Policy CH6

Development in the primary shopping cores.

Within the Saxon Square and High Street primary core, and the primary cores at Bargates and Highcliffe, planning permission for the change of use of existing ground floor retail premises (Class A1) to non - retail uses will be permitted provided that:

1. The proposed use is for a financial or professional service use (Class A2), or for a food and drinks uses (Class A3), or for non residential institutions falling within Class D1 and leisure and entertainment uses falling within Class D2.
2. Non - retail uses (other than Class A1) will not cumulatively amount to more than 30% of all ground floor units in each of the identified areas.
3. The proposal will not result in more than three continuous frontages in non retail use (other than Class A1).
4. A shop front appearance will be retained.

Policy CH7

Development in the secondary shopping cores.

Proposals for the change of use of existing non residential premises located within the secondary cores at Bargates, Wick Lane, Church Street, Castle Street, Barrack Road and Purewell and Highcliffe as identified on the proposals map will be permitted provided that the following criteria are satisfied:

1. The proposed use is for a financial or professional service use (Class A2), or for a food and drink use (Class A3) drinking establishments (Class A4), hot food take-aways (Class A5) hotles (Class C1), or non - residential institutions falling within Class D1 and leisure and entertainment uses falling within Class D2, and
2. The amenities of the local residents are not adversely affected by noise or disturbance, or by loss of light and privacy.