

# Core Strategy

## 18 Design and Landscape Key Issue Paper

Options for Consideration Consultation  
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Prepared by Christchurch Borough Council and  
East Dorset District Council as part of the Local Development Framework

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## 1 Introduction

**1.1** This paper has been prepared as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) to inform the development of the strategy for matters relating to design of the urban environment and protection of landscape areas. The preferred strategy will be set out in the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy. This paper is one of a number of thematic background papers which address distinct key issues affecting Christchurch and East Dorset. These issues have been identified from local policy, local development framework evidence base and the Community Plans of Christchurch and East Dorset. This document sets out the process of how the strategy for design of the urban environment and protection of landscape areas has been refined toward the development of a preferred strategy following Issues and Options work undertaken for the Core Strategy in spring 2008. This paper sets out the critical issues, problems and challenges to be considered in planning for a high quality, sustainable built and natural environment. The development of a preferred key strategy to address these issues has been informed by the following:

- National and local policy
- Objectives of other relevant plans and programmes (National to local)
- Evidence studies undertaken by the Council and key stakeholders.
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Core Strategy Issues and Options Stakeholder Engagement

**1.2** The Core Strategy's 'key strategy' provides the context for the preparation of specific policies to inform decisions about appropriate and sympathetic design of the built environment. The attractiveness of an area is dependant on the high quality built form and associated landscape.

## 2 Baseline

**2.1** This section sets the context through the identification of critical planning issues from the baseline data and policy review relating to design and landscape that will be addressed by the Core Strategy.

### Christchurch

**2.2** Christchurch Borough has a diverse natural and built environment. It contains a range of high quality environmental assets including an attractive coastal environment, nature conservation sites of international importance, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, historic buildings and townscape along with areas of open countryside. The town centre area contains many listed buildings, a few dating from the medieval period and the majority from the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century. There are also ancient monuments and areas of archaeological interest. Townscape quality is complemented by attractive natural features and surroundings and is a vital element of the Borough's importance as a tourist centre.

#### Landscape designations:

**2.3** Christchurch has no designated special landscape areas although the 'Environmentally Sensitive Area' in the Avon Valley is a positive landscape protection area administered and funded by Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Nevertheless there is a diversity of rural landscapes in the Borough, which gives it an interesting, relatively complex rural setting. It has to be noted that various landscapes within Christchurch are extensions of wider landscape character areas found to the north and west; there is continuity of landscape up the Avon Valley towards Ringwood and up to the urban area of Bournemouth and Ferndown to the West. The New Forest National Park lies on the border of both Christchurch and East Dorset and neighbouring development could impact on the landscape quality of the Park.

#### Nature conservation sites

**2.4** A significant proportion of the Borough is protected by Nature Conservation designations which include international, national and locally designated sites. These biodiversity designations cover areas of important landscape quality. The Dorset Heathlands and the Avon Valley are designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites in recognition of their importance to specific bird species.

**2.5** A number of these international status designations overlap with Sites of Special Scientific Interest designations (SSSI) within the Borough. The SSSIs are identified and described in the Local Plan. These include: Avon Valley; Hurn Common, St Leonards and St Ives Heath; Moors River System, Parley Common, Town Common/St Catherine's Hill Nature Reserve; Purewell Meadows, Christchurch Harbour, Highcliffe to Milford, River Avon System.

### East Dorset

**2.6** East Dorset falls within two character areas: The Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase to the north west (part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wilts Downs and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - AONB) which lies on chalk downland, and the Dorset Heaths which lie to the south east of the District, on sands and clays. The sand and clays to the south east of the District comprise a landscape of heaths, woodlands and extensive coniferous

plantations interspersed with an intimate landscape of small fields separated by hedgerows. The area contains a number of modern suburban developments, often built at a low density and well planted with pines and other ornamental trees, with a scattering of housing in the remainder of the countryside. Although quite different in character to the AONB, much of this landscape is very attractive, although parts have been spoiled by the pressures and the developments of the urban fringe of the conurbation. Parts of the area have been designated as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) in the East Dorset Local Plan.

**2.7** At the beginning of the twentieth century, Wimborne Minster, a Georgian market town, was the main centre serving the rural hinterland. Since the second world war, urban growth and development has been rapid transforming the character of the District. The main settlements now are concentrated in a crescent shape to the south east of the District, with a single 'finger' of growth stretching up towards Verwood and Alderholt in the East.

**2.8** The District is also characterised by a small number of large land owning rural estates, which aside from planning legislation has undoubtedly influenced the way development has taken place in the countryside. These include the Cranborne Estate, the Crichel Estate, Deans Court Estate, Edmondsham Estate, the Gaunts Estate, High Hall Estate, Kingston Lacy (owned by the National Trust since 1981), and the St Giles Estate. These predominantly rural land holdings have retained control over estate cottages for workers and the farming communities in these localities. Additionally, some of the great houses have fine gardens, which are listed or registered Historic Gardens.

### **2.9** English Heritage Register Grade II\*

- Cranborne Manor
- St Giles' House

### **2.10** English Heritage Register Grade II

- Boveridge House School
- Crichel House
- Deans Court
- Kingston Lacy

### **2.11** East Dorset Gardens Trust Recommendations for the Local List

- Dean's Court
- Edmondsham House

- High Hall, Wimborne
- Gaunts House, Hinton Martell

**Landscape Designations**



Picture 1 Principal environmental & policy constraints in Christchurch and East Dorset

**2.12** A large part of the downlands are included in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Settlements are sparse, being generally confined to the river valleys, and the landscape is open and rolling with scattered woods, many of which are ancient remnants of the Chase's forests. Landownership is concentrated with a small number of major estates, centred on a few great houses. The area is one of the richest in Britain in archaeological remains, forming an historic landscape of great importance.

**2.13** Four distinct Areas of Great Landscape Value have been identified in the Local Plan which are high value unspoiled countryside, with a strong historical dimension, containing many traditional cottages and farm buildings and forming attractive and richly varied human and natural landscapes. Because of these qualities, they have been protected by Policy LSCON2, where any development must be sensitive to the surrounding character and quality of the landscape.

**2.14** The Avon Valley has been designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) by the government because of the traditional pastoral landscape that has evolved over the centuries through the farming of the fertile flood plains. The combination of grassland, streams, small woods, scrub and willow create a varied lowland landscape of high value.

#### **Nature Conservation sites**

**2.15** The heathlands are of international importance for wildlife. The heathlands and areas formerly covered by heathland host a number of protected species. Many of them have been designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive, and many are Special Areas of Conservation (SCA) under the Habitats Directive. In addition, several which include areas of wet heath have been designated as sites under the Ramsar Convention for the protection of wetlands as SSSI's. Many other locally identified sites are designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI's).

#### **Sustainability Appraisal Baseline Information**

**2.16** The Christchurch and East Dorset Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (August 2008) sets out baseline information and identifies sustainability issues, some of which are relevant to this paper are set out below.

#### **Environmental Baseline and Issues**

##### ***Historic Environment***

**2.17** There are areas of significant built historic importance and aesthetic quality in both Christchurch and East Dorset. The landscape and cultural heritage is an important factor that defines the character of the countryside and the towns for both residents and visitors.

**2.18** There are 12 conservation areas in the Borough of Christchurch, including the Central Conservation Area, which covers the town centre

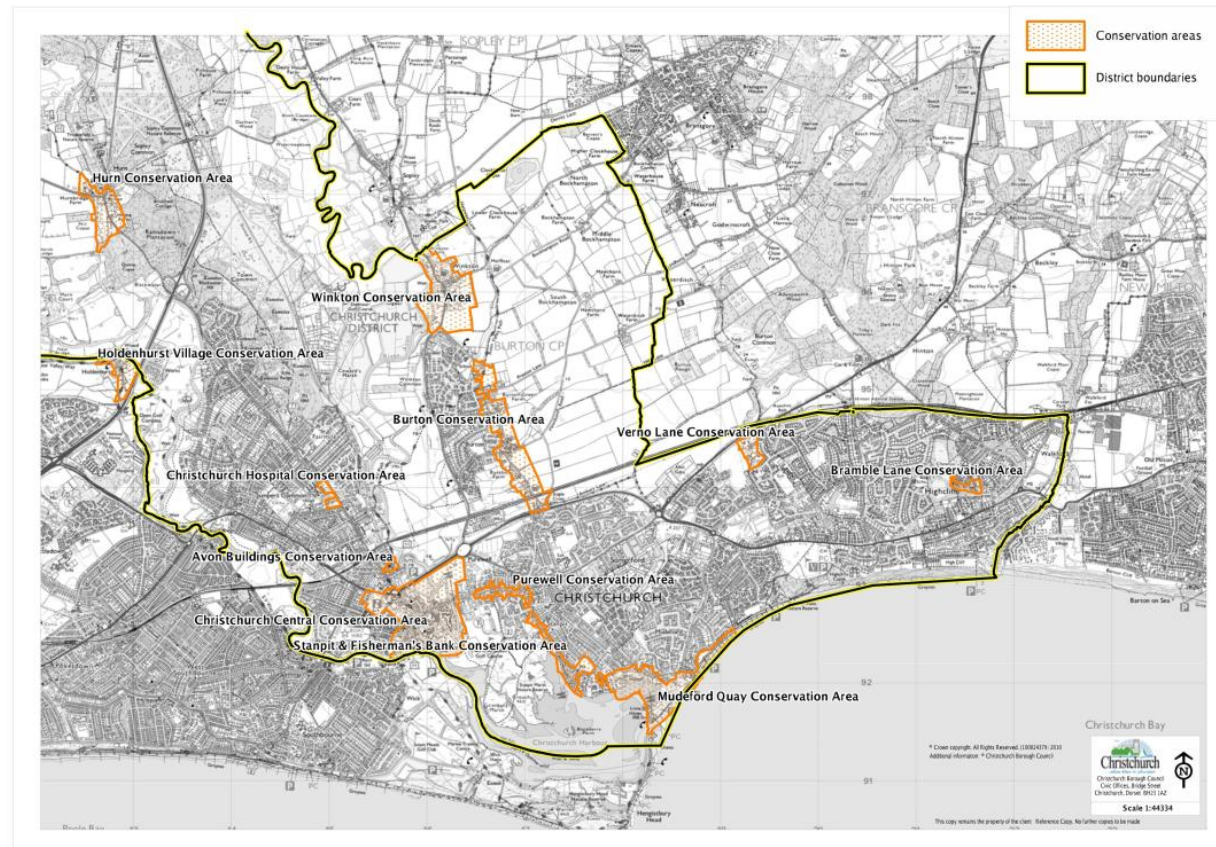


Figure 1 Conservation areas in Christchurch

**2.19** East Dorset District has 19 designated conservation areas, which cover rural settlements as well as parts of the larger, urban centres of the District. The historic centre of Wimborne also lies within a conservation area and it has a medieval street pattern which contributes to the charm of the town. The small shops and scale of these buildings along with the magnificent Minster should be acknowledged and respected when considering new development within the town centre. In this respect future development should make a positive contribution to the conservation areas, respecting the setting and character of the historic built environment.

**2.20** The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is particularly rich in archaeological remains. Whole areas particularly in the north from the Criche Down to Pentridge, and in the south in the area around Badbury Rings, must be considered to be archaeological landscapes of outstanding interest. The design and location of new development should respect these qualities.

### ***Biodiversity***

**2.21** Both districts enjoy diverse natural environments which support a range of biodiversity. As many of these areas are open to public recreation, conflicts can arise between nature conservation objectives and the location of new development, especially where habitats can be easily disturbed by the presence of humans.

### ***Countryside***

**2.22** Approximately 80% of the area of the two districts is rural and residents generally have easy access to the countryside for informal recreation.

**2.23** Whilst Christchurch appears to be predominantly urban in character, in fact approximately 70% of the Borough is undeveloped, and of this less than half is in agricultural production. The remaining areas are in combination of forestry and recreational uses. In most locations there is a sharp contrast between the edge of the built up area and the countryside; there is no extensive 'urban fringe' landscape around the Borough. The pressure for development within the Borough has led to most sections of the built up area being defined by clear physical boundaries such as river flood plains, woodland, the railway or roads.

**2.24** To contain urban sprawl and to maintain the separate identity of settlements the South East Dorset Green Belt was introduced in the 1980's and this has reduced the loss of green fields to development. . Other significant natural areas include beaches along the south coast of Christchurch and Bournemouth and the New Forest to the east.

### ***Water***

**2.25** The rivers Stour and Avon flood regularly and wide areas of Christchurch are subject to both river and tidal flood risk. The town has a major flood protection scheme but is threatened by projected sea level rises. Within East Dorset, the Stour and its tributaries and the Allen have historically caused serious flooding problems, notably in Wimborne, Shapwick, Longham and Sturminster Marshall. The floodplains are an important part of the river system, providing necessary water storage. There is a need to ensure development does not impinge on this or exacerbate flooding elsewhere

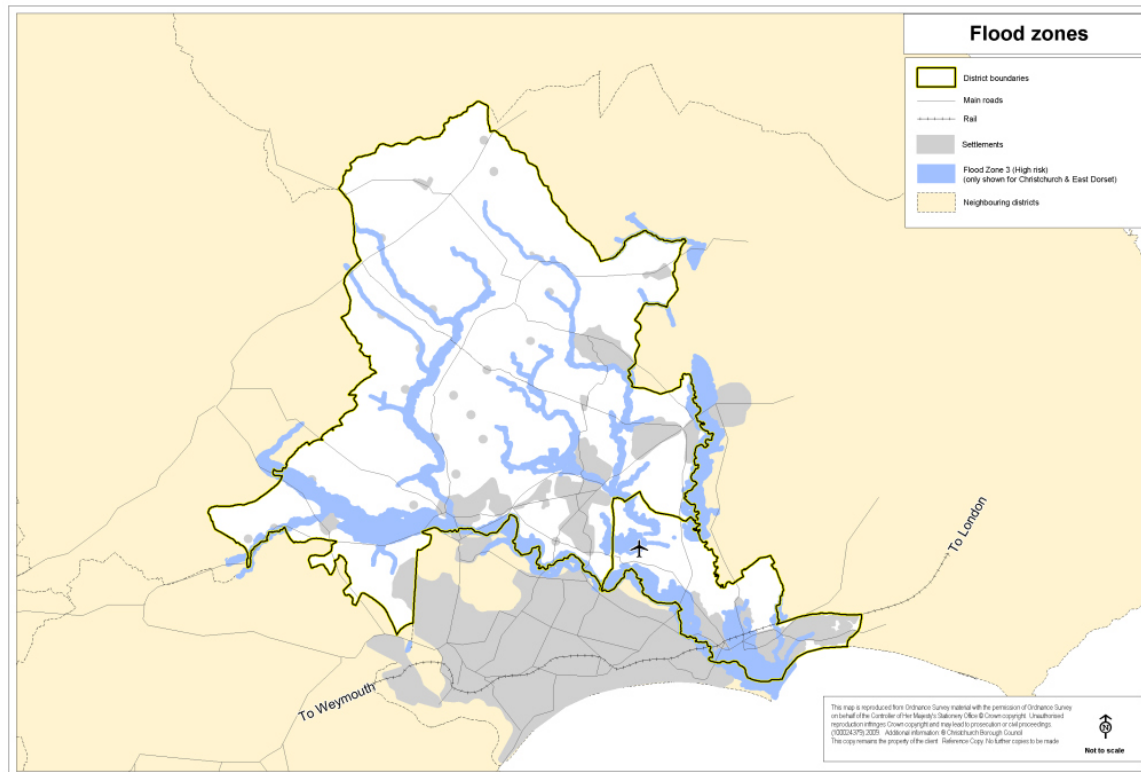


Figure 2 Flood zones

### ***Culture, Leisure and Recreation***

**2.26** All leisure activities contribute to the quality of life of residents, providing amenity and opportunities for enhancing intellectual, spiritual and physical well being. They also represent a tourism asset attracting visitors to the towns and rural areas and supporting economic activity. Moors Valley Country Park in East Dorset is one of the most visited countryside sites in the county. The Core Strategy should recognise the significance of the countryside and the built environment in supporting recreation activities

## Economic Baseline and Issues

### *Retail*

**2.27** Town centres provide the hub of community life and the retailing offer is essential in maintaining and strengthening their vitality. The Core Strategy must address the design and scale of new shops and developments in the centres, and in particular respect the historical context of Christchurch and Wimborne.

### *Economy and Tourism*

**2.28** Well designed and attractive buildings and places offer a pleasant environment for residents and visitors. They also are attractive to inward investors to the area and help to support the tourism sector. Tourism is a key part of the local economy, particularly in Christchurch where 10% are employed in tourism (1,860 jobs), and East Dorset had 6% (2,443 jobs) employed in the tourism sector in 2007. The total annual spend by visitors was £70.9m in Christchurch and £101.0m in East Dorset in 2007, representing a significant input to the local economies. (South West Tourism, 2008)

**2.29** The Core Strategy should support quality and innovative design of new buildings and spaces as an attractive built environment will draw in visitors and contribute to the economic growth of the area.

### *Housing*

**2.30** It is expected that high levels of new housing will be provided in the plan period in the urban areas to meet local needs. New development will be expected to be attractive, functional, sustainable and of the highest quality in traditional materials, optimising the site potential and respecting the scale of the locality. The new neighbourhoods will provide an opportunity to create sustainable new areas of housing of high quality exemplar design, well located and carefully linked with the existing communities they adjoin.

## Social Baseline and Issues

### *Population*

**2.31** Christchurch has a population of 46,950, East Dorset 87,557 (ONS Mid Year Population Estimates 2009). Both districts have a higher proportion of elderly persons compared to national averages; whilst the population of the UK as a whole is ageing, the percentage over retirement age in East Dorset (31.8%) and in Christchurch (34.1%) far exceeds the national average of 19.5%. The districts also have two of the lowest proportions of population in the age group 0-39. This demographic will have an impact on the demand for smaller units for elderly residents, and could influence the provision and design of new housing units

## Policy Background

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

<b>Analysis</b>
This sets out the legislative protection for sensitive habitats and species.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should continue to protect the sensitive habitats from development.

Table 2.1

<b>PPS 1 ‘Delivering Sustainable Development’ 2005</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
The policy statement makes it clear that good design, including consideration of access issues, is crucial to the delivery of sustainable development. Accordingly, <i>‘The plan led approach encompasses broader principles of urban design, sustainability and heritage protection. Policies should not only be concerned with the physical aspect of development but rather how it should work for people in accordance with the fundamental principles of good urban design.’</i> It also states that local authorities should prepare design policies based on an understanding and evaluation of an area’s defining characteristics and needs. This means that policies should be tailored to the character, pressures and opportunities presented by the area they cover.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy must set out a design strategy aimed at protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and character of the countryside, and ensure high quality, locally distinctive development through good and inclusive design.

Table 2.2

<b>PPS1 Supplement ‘Eco- towns – A Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 2009</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As well as being zero carbon as part of the whole built environment, homes in eco towns and new developments should achieve Building for Life Silver Standard and Level 4 of the code for Sustainable Homes as a minimum and meet Life Time Homes Standards and space standards.</li> <li>• Demonstrate high levels of energy efficiency in the fabric of the building, and meet the changing Building Regulations relating to zero carbon homes up to 2016.</li> </ul>
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>

The design of new development needs to achieve the highest levels of energy efficiency, incorporating the latest advances in zero carbon technology and sustainability.

Table 2.3

<b>PPS 3 'Housing' 2006</b>
<b><i>Analysis</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The statement promotes sustainable homes, suggests the use of the 'Code for Sustainable Homes' as an assessment tool, and calls for 'innovative' designs to help create better places.</li> <li>• It lists criteria to be considered when assessing design quality.</li> <li>• It discusses the need for open space, both private and public, particularly for family housing and children within housing developments.</li> <li>• Strictly control the development of new homes in the countryside away from established settlements.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Core Strategic Messages</i></b>
The Core Strategy should support the provision of sustainably constructed, innovatively designed and sustainably located homes, restricting the development of dwellings in the open countryside away from established settlements.

Table 2.4

<b>The Future of Design Codes: Further information to support Stakeholders reading draft PPS3 (Dec 2005)</b>
<b><i>Analysis</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design codes were used by the Georgians, Victorians and Edwardians in the Garden Cities, offering a basis for design and layout of new development.</li> <li>• They provide clarity as to what constitutes acceptable design quality and a level of certainty for developers and the local community alike that can help facilitate the delivery of good quality new development.</li> <li>• A design code should build on the vision of a masterplan or development framework, providing a set of design principles or components to achieve the vision.</li> </ul>

The design code should be drawn up in partnership with a range of local stakeholders, and in order to provide some certainty of outcome, should carry some weight in terms of its role in the planning process or through developer agreements.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The delivery of good quality new developments, particularly in the urban extensions, should be provided through the development of design codes and master plans. These should be supported by policies in the Core Strategy.

Table 2.5

<b>PPS 7 ‘Sustainable Development in Rural Areas’ 2004</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
PPS7 advocates that all development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping with the scale of its location. It should also be sensitive to the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside. In the AONB, the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should be given significant weight in planning policies. The plan should support innovative, high quality contemporary designs that are sensitive to their immediate setting and help to maintain the area’s local distinctiveness and protect the AONB from inappropriate development. It advises local authorities to take a positive approach to innovative, high quality contemporary designs that are sensitive to their immediate setting and help to maintain the area’s local distinctiveness and protect the AONB from inappropriate development.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The importance of sensitive high quality design in the rural area is key to maintaining the area’s local distinctiveness and protecting the AONB from inappropriate development.

Table 2.6

<b>PPS 9 ‘Biodiversity and Geological Conservation’ 2005</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
This statement advises that plan policies on the form and location of development should take a strategic approach to the conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geology. Local policies should promote opportunities for the incorporation of biodiversity and geological features within the design of the development.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>



The Core Strategy policies must recognise the importance of biodiversity conservation in promoting sustainable development and the role a rich and diverse natural environment plays in contributing to rural and urban renaissance.

Table 2.7

<b>PPS12 ‘Creating strong and safe and prosperous communities through Local Spatial Planning’ 2008</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spatial plans should aim to produce a vision for the future of places that respond to the local challenges and opportunities, and are based on evidence and a sense of local distinctiveness</li> <li>• Plays a central role in place shaping</li> </ul>
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should produce a spatial vision for the future of Christchurch and East Dorset based on local distinctiveness.

Table 2.8

<b>PPG 13 ‘Transport’ 2001</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
The statement advises local authorities to actively manage the pattern of urban growth to make the fullest use of sustainable public transport, and to seek safer communities and road safety in the design and layout of new developments.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy will take into account the principles set out in the policy guidance, treating transport issues as an integral part of good design.

Table 2.9

<b>PPS 5 Planning for the Historic Environment (2010)</b>
<b>Analysis</b>

<p>The PPS recognises the value of the historic built environment and gives planning a central role in conserving heritage assets to deliver sustainable development. Accordingly, para 7 of the document states that consideration of the historic environment should be integrated into planning policies, promoting place shaping. Policy HE3.4 states that at a local level, plans should consider the qualities and local distinctiveness of the historic environment and how these can contribute to the development of the spatial vision in the LDF core strategy. Policy HE7.5 recommends LPA's consider the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.</p>
<p><b>Core Strategic Messages</b></p>
<p>New development should respect the historical context of a settlement and be sympathetic in design to the character of an area, avoiding pastiche and be of high quality design and materials.</p>

Table 2.10

<p><b>PPG 17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' 2002</b></p>
<p><b>Analysis</b></p>
<p>PPG 17 states that '<i>Local networks of high quality and well-managed open space help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe and can play a major part in improving people's sense of well-being</i>'. <i>New open spaces should improve the quality of the public realm through good design</i>'.</p>
<p><b>Core Strategic Messages</b></p>
<p>The Core Strategy must recognise that high quality open space should be an integral element of well designed schemes and settlements.</p>

Table 2.11

<p><b>PPS 25 Supplement Development and Coastal Change</b></p>
<p><b>Analysis</b></p>
<p>PPS25 contains very clear guidance to inform local authorities planning for flood risk, allocation of land for development and handling of planning applications. Due to a scarcity of developable land outside of flood risk areas, there is a justifiable need to continue building in flood zones in Christchurch, but only where development can be made safe. The Core Strategy will need to include policies regarding suitable locations, forms of development and appropriate flood attenuation and mitigation measures.</p>
<p><b>Core Strategic Messages</b></p>

The Core Strategy must take precautionary measures against receding coastlines; consider managed retreat where the coast is undefended; restrict development in areas at risk of erosion or flooding and consider policies to improve and enhance the coastline, through the provision of car parks or footpaths and the removal of eyesores. The Core Strategy should seek to improve the attraction of seaside resorts, by regenerating the sea front and designating land as suitable for new functions and activities.

Table 2.12

<b>The State of the Natural Environment (2008) Natural England NE85</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
The landscape is vulnerable to change. Respect of natural habitats and biodiversity sites is critical to ensure rare and endangered species are not lost.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should continue to guard against harmful developments which threaten vulnerable ecological species and environments.

Table 2.13

<b>Manual For Streets (2007)</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This sets out how the design of residential streets can be enhanced, and how street design can help create better places – with distinctiveness and identity.</li> <li>• It establishes a common reference point for those involved in the design of residential neighbourhoods.</li> </ul> <p>It establishes a user hierarchy with pedestrians at the top and the role of streets as spaces for community functions.</p>
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should support multi-disciplinary planning of new development proposals in order to achieve the highest level of design for a space. The layout of streets and paths is critical to help create better places.

Table 2.14

**East Dorset Local Plan (2002)****Analysis**

The Local Plan aims to support good design principles and to protect the landscape of the area.

The following local plan policies contain provisions which seek to achieve this:

Policy CSIDE1 – Preventing development which may damage the rural character of the countryside

Policy LSCON1 – Harmful development within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will not be permitted

Policy LSCON2 – Sensitively designed development may be permitted within Areas of Great Landscape Value

Policy BUCON1 – Seeks to prevent inappropriate development within and adjacent to Conservation Areas

Policy BUCON3 – Redevelopment within a Conservation Area will be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character

Policy BUCON6 – Development in the Special Character Areas must respect the features or characteristics intrinsic to its character

Policy ADSDEV1 – Advertisements must respect the character of the building and area in which they are sited

Policy ADSDEV2 – Advertisements should be sympathetic in Conservation Areas

Policy ADSHEV3 – New Shopfronts in Conservation Areas must respect the character of the building and the area

Policy HODEV1 – The location and form of new housing in urban areas and village policy envelopes must be appropriate

Policy HODEV2 – Seeks to promote good layout and designs in housing developments

Policy DES1 – Development should be in accessible locations which reduces the need to travel

Policy DES2 – New development will be located sensitively in relation to other uses

Policy DES3 – New development which generates traffic must be served by vehicular access and local highways

Policy DES4 – New publicly accessible development must have access for those with limited mobility

Policy DES5 – New development proposals must be accompanied by a detailed landscaping scheme

<p>Policy DES8 – To raise the standards of good design in development, the detailed requirements of this policy must be met</p> <p>Policy DES9 – The use of materials which enhance and are compatible with the surrounding area will be encouraged</p> <p>Policy DES10 – Planning applications will be assessed in relation to designing out crime</p> <p>Policy DES11 – New roads, cycle lanes and pedestrian routes will be designed to blend in with their surroundings</p> <p>Policy WIMCO14 – Development within the area of St Catherine’s will respect its character</p> <p>Policy CHASE1 – New buildings in Cranborne will respect the scale and character of existing vernacular buildings</p> <p>Policy CHASE4 – New dwellings will respect the local vernacular in Gussage All Saints</p> <p>Policy CHASE5 – New dwellings will respect the local vernacular in Gussage St Michael</p> <p>Policy CHASE7 – Development on a site in Sixpenny Handley will reflect local distinctiveness</p> <p>Policy CHASE13 – Development on a site in Witchampton will be in keeping with the adjacent vernacular buildings</p> <p>These policies have generally performed very well during the plan period, in particular BUCON3, BUCON6, CHASE1, DES3, DES4, DES9, DES10 and DES11 having a 100% success rate at appeal. BUCON1, CSIDE1, DES5, DES8, HODEV1, HODEV2, LSCON1 and LSCON2 had between 66 – 82% success rate at appeal, so are strong policies. The weaker polices were DES1 and DES2 with a 50% and 54% success rate respectively.</p>
<p><b><i>Core Strategic Messages</i></b></p>
<p>The raft of design policies demonstrates a commitment to high quality design and layout of new development in East Dorset, respecting local traditions and distinctiveness. In the rural areas, the value of this land is recognised and these policies help to protect it from insensitive development proposals.</p>

Table 2.15

<p><b>Christchurch Local Plan 2007</b></p>
<p><b><i>Analysis</i></b></p>
<p>The Plan contains general development policies aimed at ensuring appropriate development.</p> <p>Policy H12 sets out criteria that general residential development must meet</p>

<p>Policy H13 sets out criteria that replacement dwellings in the green belt must adhere to.</p> <p>BE4 Seeks to protect the quality of conservation areas and individual buildings within a conservation area.</p> <p>BE5 Seeks to protect the character and appearance of conservation areas when considering development proposals which are outside but close to the boundaries of a conservation area.</p>
<p><b>Core Strategic Messages</b></p>
<p>The policies recognise the importance of sympathetic development that respects the existing townscape character, distinctive features of the area and amenities of neighbouring properties. However, more detailed policies to guide the design of new development schemes are needed.</p>

Table 2.16

<p><b>East Dorset Corporate Plan 2010 to 2016</b></p>
<p><b>Analysis</b></p>
<p>The plan has managing and safeguarding the natural and built environment for the benefit of current and future generations as a priority area. The plan sets out the need to improve access, to provide opportunities to learn about the environment and protect the heathlands and other special protection areas as well as conservation areas, historic and archaeological features.</p>
<p><b>Core Strategic Messages</b></p>
<p>The priority area indicates the importance of design and the environment to the council and will need to be reflected in the Core Strategy</p>

Table 2.17

<p><b>Christchurch Shopfronts and Advertisement Design Guide (2005)</b></p>
<p><b>Analysis</b></p>
<p>The document, produced as supplementary guidance, sets out the basic principles of good shop front and advertisement design to maintain a high quality shopping environment in the Borough of Christchurch.</p>
<p><b>Core Strategic Messages</b></p>

The design principles set out in this document should be taken into consideration in establishing higher level design policies in the Core Strategy.

Table 2.18

<b>Planning, Design &amp; Development Framework: Land west of High Street inc. Druitt Gardens, the Lanes and Cornfactor sites 2005</b>
<b><i>Analysis</i></b>
The study contains recommendations for the future redevelopment of land west of the High Street in Christchurch Town Centre. It envisages Druitt Gardens being transformed into a woodland park and a cultural centre for Christchurch with a mixed use development in the 'Lanes' as identified by policy ES5 of the Local Plan.
<b><i>Core Strategic Messages</i></b>
The redevelopment represents a great opportunity to provide an attractive area of open space within the town centre and should be incorporated into the Christchurch town centre vision.

Table 2.19

<b>Christchurch Borough Wide Character Assessment 2003</b>
<b><i>Analysis</i></b>
The study identified the most important Borough-wide characteristics that contribute to it's unique and distinct character. It contains guidance on the capacity of each area to accommodate new development or other forms of environmental change, along with the advice on the characteristics that new development would need to successfully integrate with its location and the neighbourhood's sensitivity to change.
<b><i>Core Strategic Messages</i></b>
Policies relating to design issues and landscape character should take into account the assessment contained in the report.

Table 2.20

<b>Christchurch Town Centre Strategy Nov 2003</b>
<b><i>Analysis</i></b>

The central theme and aim of the strategy is to maintain and enhance the attractiveness and performance of the town centre, to ensure it is distinctive, vibrant and a thriving place where people enjoy living, working and visiting. Environmental enhancement of the street scene and parkland are seen as an important factor in increasing the vitality and viability of the town centre.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The key themes and issues identified, that relate to design of the town centre, should be taken forward in the Core Strategy.

Table 2.21

<b>Dorset County Council Landscape Characterisation July 2008</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
This sets out the geological characteristics of the County and the impact the different soils and rocks have made to the development of the landscape. It provides a key analysis of the many landscape forms across Dorset and notes the chalk downlands to the west, and the tertiary heaths, gravels and clays to the east of East Dorset. It provides an overview of the landscape designations and the protective measures covering the landscapes.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should have special regard to the unique landscapes and designations.

Table 2.22

<b>East Dorset Landscape Character Assessment October 2008</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
The quality of the local landscape is very high. This provides an overview of local landscape designations, such as the AONB and Ramsar and SSSI sites.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should have special regard to the unique landscapes and designations.

Table 2.23

<b>Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2009-2014)</b>
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<b>Analysis</b>
The quality of the landscape of the Cranborne Chase has been nationally recognised in the designation of the AONB. The Plan looks to continue to support vibrant and well balanced communities, sustainable villages with strong local traditions; a diverse, thriving and sustainable rural economy in which agriculture, forestry and tourism are viable sectors; and to nurture the unique landscape of the downlands, ancient woodland and vales.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The unique landscape of the AONB should be respected, and the rural economies and villages located in the AONB should be sustainably managed for the future. Access to services is crucial and the community planning process should help to foster better links and engagement in the planning process.

Table 2.24

<b>East Dorset Countryside Design Summary (Supplementary Planning Guidance No.21, August 1999)</b>
<b>Key Messages for the Core Strategy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Encourage greater regard for and understanding of the local landscape, in order to influence the design of new development in rural areas.</li> <li>· Local distinctiveness is vitally important to encourage in the rural areas of East Dorset; new development should respect and relate to its neighbours and to its landscape setting. It should not be a pastiche, but should be of present age, avoiding suburban styles such as cul de sacs and bungalows.</li> <li>· A code of practise has been developed and should be observed in all rural areas of East Dorset.</li> </ul>
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should reinforce the need to respect the traditional building styles, form and materials in the rural areas.

Table 2.25

<b>Nature Conservation and the Planning Process (2009) East Dorset District Council</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
East Dorset has a rich and diverse ecological environment, many species and areas of which are protected under European or national legislation. The sensitivity of these areas to potential development is recognised, and the Core Strategy should continue to safeguard and protect them from harmful developments. The provision of nature conservation should be encouraged in new developments.

<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should continue to guard against developments which threaten vulnerable ecological species and environments. Nature conservation should be encouraged and integrated into new developments.

Table 2.26

<b>Areas of Great Landscape Value (Supplementary Planning Guidance No.19, June 1997) East Dorset District Council</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
East Dorset has four Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) in addition to the AONB. These areas have significant characteristics which should be borne in mind when development proposals are contemplated.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Areas of Great Landscape Value have high quality and unique characteristics which should be closely regarded when considering development proposals.

Table 2.27

<b>Special Character Areas: Supplementary Planning Guidance No.27 (2005) East Dorset District Council</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
There are a number of areas within the District that have a distinctive character and sense of place. These established areas have a mature quality and identity that sets them apart from the urban environment as a whole, but have no other Local Plan recognition of their environmental quality. They are typically pre 2nd <sup>d</sup> World War family housing with larger mature gardens and specimen trees. Special Character Areas rely less on the intrinsic value of individual buildings. Rather, they have been selected on account of their street pattern and/or presence of strong landscape elements that are of high environmental quality.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The concept of Special Character Areas should be retained in the Core Strategy as this preserves their landscape quality, high environmental quality and street pattern.

Table 2.28

<b>New Forest Management Plan (October 2009) Revised Draft</b>
<b>Analysis</b>
The New Forest Plan will conserve and enhance the wealth of individual characteristics that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the villages and landscapes of the New Forest and will protect and enhance the large-scale cultural landscapes and semi-natural habitats of the New Forest.
<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
The Core Strategy should respect the New Forest's landscape and characteristics across the boundary between Christchurch and East Dorset.

Table 2.29

**2.32** In addition there are programmes championed by the government, setting higher standards for development schemes. Even though their implementation is not mandatory, buildings built to those standards are considered as best practice. These are set out in the table below.

<b>Code for Sustainable Homes</b>
The Code is the national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes. The Code aims to reduce our carbon emissions and create homes that are more sustainable. The Code measures the sustainability of a new home against nine categories of sustainable design rating the 'whole home' as a complete package. From May 2008 new homes are required to be assessed against the Code, even though it remains voluntary to design and build a home to meet the standards set out in the code.
<b>Lifetime homes</b>
Lifetime Homes is a national standard aimed at ensuring that the housing stock is flexible and able to be adapted to the needs of the population from young families to older people and individuals with a temporary or permanent physical impairment. The goal is to 'make life as easy as possible for as long as possible through thoughtfully designed new developments'. The design Criteria forming the Standard relate to interior and exterior features of the home, including accessibility issues.
All public sector funded housing in England will be built to the Lifetime Homes standard from 2011 (it is a requirement now in Wales and Northern Ireland), with a target of 2013 for all private sector dwellings.
<b>'Building for life' standard</b>

<p>The 'Building for Life' is the national standard for well designed homes and neighbourhoods. The programme uses a set of 20 criteria to evaluate the quality of new housing developments. New housing developments are scored against a set of 20 criteria to assess the quality of their design with regards to the following categories: environment and community, character, streets, parking, pedestrianisation, design and construction.</p>
<p><b>Cleaner, greener, safer</b></p> <p>The objective of this Government Programme is to create cleaner, safer and greener communities by improving the quality of planning, design, management and maintenance of public spaces and the built environment.</p>

Table 2.30

<p><b>Dorset Community Strategy 'Shaping Our Future' 2007 – 2016</b></p>
<p><b>Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The Dorset Community Strategy supports the protection, conservation and enhancement of Dorset's environment</li> <li>· Dorset has a high quality built environment</li> <li>· There should be quality access for all to Dorset's environment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Core Strategic Messages</b></p> <p>The Core Strategy should support the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, and support a high quality built environment, with good access for all.</p>

Table 2.31

<p><b>East Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy: Building Communities Together 2008</b></p>
<p><b>Analysis</b></p> <p>One of the 10 Key strategic messages of the Community Strategy is to protect and enhance the natural environment, as this is highly valued by residents.</p>
<p><b>Core Strategic Messages</b></p>

The Core Strategy should contain policies which continue to support the protection of the natural environment.
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Table 2.32

Christchurch Community Plan 2007-2010
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<i>Analysis</i>
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The Plan contains a vision of Christchurch where design is recognised to be an important part of the development strategy, a place where ‘ <i>(...the high quality natural and built environment is protected and enhanced).</i> ’
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<b>Core Strategic Messages</b>
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The Community Plan emphasises the importance of high quality design.
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Table 2.33

### 2.33 Core Strategic Messages

**2.34** At present there is no planning policy statement, exclusively dedicated to design issues. However, good design, as an integral part of sustainable development, is a prominent objective of PPS1 and other policy statements. Also, the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE), as the Government’s advisor on architecture, has produced a number of publications, which cover all aspects of good and inclusive design. The design principles, set out by CABE are considered good practise and need to be taken into account when designing new schemes.

- • By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System: towards better practise’, 2000
- • By Design: Better Places to Live (Companion Guide to PPG3), 2001
- • By Design, Safer Places the Planning System and Crime Prevention and Planning and Access for Disabled People: A Good Practise Guide (2003)
- • Making design policy work (2005)
- • ‘By Design’: Good urban design’

**2.35** To conclude, policy advice suggests that the Core Strategy should set out a comprehensive design strategy that will:

- Firstly, secure high quality development through good, interesting and inclusive design that respects the context and historical features of the surrounding built environment.
- Secondly, protect and enhance the character of the countryside and protect landscape areas, sensitive to change.

## 3 Identification of Issues

### Design of the urban environment-identification of issues

#### Justification for consulting on urban design issues at the Options stage.

**3.1** Design issues were not put forward as a separate theme during the issues and options consultation. However, several responses suggested the Core Strategy should include specific design policies. The quality of the built environment determines how a settlement is regarded by its own community, visitors and investors and consequently should be seen as a priority in the development plan making process.

**3.2** As discussed in the previous section, national policy emphasise the need to integrate good design into the planning framework. PPS12 states that Development Plans should aim to produce a vision for the future of places that responds to the local challenges and opportunities, and are based on evidence and a sense of local distinctiveness. PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' calls for a considered approach to design policies, based on understanding of the local area. It also makes clear that good design and access issues are crucial to the delivery of sustainable development, not separate from it. Policies should be tailored to the character, pressures and opportunities presented by the area they cover.

**3.3** Both Councils have published some documentation on general design matters. Nevertheless there is no generic design guidance for those areas outside Conservation or Special Character Areas. This will be redressed and supported through the Core Strategy.

#### Issues relating to design, identified in response to other Core Strategy thematic areas from the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation (March 2008).

#### 3.4 Consultation responses to the 'Built Environment Theme' relevant to the Design and Landscape theme.

#### BE2 'Should we identify special character areas where the form and design of new development will be controlled through design guidance?'

**3.5** Consultation identified strong support for the concept, and role of Special Character Areas, which were viewed as an effective tool in preventing harmful development in sensitive areas. In general the responses highlighted the importance of good design in all new development (including high quality design of buildings, streets and spaces). Schemes should respect the local context (especially in areas with high heritage value).

**3.6** When asked whether there were any other issues relevant to BE2, the following comments were received:

- Policies to support Special Character Areas need to be more robust than the current EDDC ones.
- If areas are worthy of protection they should be designated as conservation areas, they should not be imposed simply to limit development.
- There is adequate guidance and policies on design which, together with conservation area designations, are sufficient to control development. Further designations may stifle imaginative development and therefore stifle development.

**3.7** Response: The need to retain/amend the extent of existing Special Character Areas or designate new ones within the plan area will be thoroughly considered in section 4 under *pDL1. How can we ensure that development is of a high design standard which complements local character, environmental qualities and makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and cultural vitality?*

**3.8** Other issues identified under the theme (**BE3 'Have we identified all of the issues under this Theme?'**) relevant to the Design and Landscape Key Issue Paper can be summarised as follows:

- Secure low density development in Highcliffe, Mundeford and Burton
  
- 1.
  - Introduce height restrictions to new development in Highcliffe, Mundeford and Burton.
  - Resist development in semi-rural areas i.e. West Christchurch, Highcliffe.
  - Consider an option recognising the aesthetic and environmental value of tree-lined roads.

**3.9** Response: The above comments, relating to the form, design and density of new development will be addressed in Section 4 'Formation of Options' under *pDL1 How can we ensure that development is of a high design standard which complements local character, environmental qualities and makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and cultural vitality?*

1.
  - Christchurch is urban and coastal and has more in common with Hampshire, then with rural East Dorset.

**3.10** Response: both Christchurch and East Dorset have distinctive design and landscape characteristics. This unique character will be taken into account when devising preferred options.

**3.11** **2. Consultation responses to the 'Town Centre Vitality Theme' relevant to the Design and Landscape theme.**

**3.12** Responses to **TC3 'What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres'**, revealed that design of new development was seen as a crucial element to ensure continued investment in the centres and a contribution to their vitality and viability.

**3.13** Summary issue:

- How can we ensure that appropriate development comes forward in the town centres that would create an attractive and high quality built environment which contributes to the historic character and attracts inward investment? This issue is addressed under consolidated issue pDL1.



**3.14** The responses to TC3 informed the emerging visions for town centres located in the joint Plan Area. Please note that the visions for individual town centres are discussed in more detail in the Town, Village and Neighbourhood Centres Key Issue Paper.

### **Evidence Studies relevant to the design theme**

**3.15** In addition, the following issues have been identified through the analysis of the evidence base.

#### **3.16 Christchurch Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009).**

**3.17** The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a technical study which assesses the theoretical potential of sites in the Borough to accommodate future housing development. It sets out Christchurch Borough's housing land supply for the period 01 April 2008 to 31 March 2023. It was prepared in line with national Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing' (PPS3) and the accompanying Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments Practise Guidance.

**3.18** An urban extension 'to the north of Christchurch' is projected to deliver between 600-900 dwellings. Based on the analysis of past trends, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment indicates that a considerably high proportion of the remaining housing figure will be provided through the redevelopment of existing housing. Recent trends across the south east Dorset conurbation shows an increase in the number of houses being replaced with higher density flats, although in Christchurch the rate of these types of development is still relatively low. Taking into account the substantial number of ageing buildings within the Borough, new housing development through this land source can be expected to continue, however, the impact of the Coalition Government's recent announcements on 'garden grabbing' and the removal of minimum densities are likely to have an affect on these trends and a re-assessment of the SHLAA will have to take place.

**3.19** Summary issue:

**3.20** Faced with a prospect of urban intensification schemes the main issue to address is, '**How can we ensure that future development in Christchurch does not dilute features that give an area its intrinsic character?**' This issue is addressed under pDL1.

#### **3.21 Christchurch Borough-wide Character Assessment (2003)**

**3.22** In recognition of the Borough's varied character, the council adopted the Borough-wide Character Assessment as supplementary planning guidance in 2003. The document contains a detailed analysis of the Borough's landscape and built environment features and assesses its sensitivity to change. It identified which elements of built form and townscape, such as mature trees and gardens, plot widths, building scales and uses, are most sensitive to various forms of developments.

**3.23** The report suggests that new development might erode the character of some areas, identified as being sensitive to change. A need to update the study will be considered in this paper.

**3.24** **Summary Issues:**

**3.25** **How can we best protect areas of distinct character against harmful and inappropriate development?**

### 3.26 Should the Borough-wide Character Assessment continue to inform the design strategy in the Borough?

3.27 These issues are addressed by issue pDL1.

### 3.28 Christchurch Town Centre Strategy (2003)

3.29 The strategy identified a range of issues affecting the urban design of the centre, including opportunities and constraints for development. The study observed that the centre suffers from poor quality landmarks (such as gasometers, located on Bridge Street and buildings fronting the High Street including the Arcade). The core of the Town Centre with the High Street and surrounding environment was seen as an asset. Other 'transition' areas have been identified as 'unfriendly and potentially hostile environments'. Recommendations were made to enhance Saxon Square, Druitt Gardens and introduce pedestrian friendly places at Fountain Way Roundabout, at junction of High Street/Castle Street, adjacent the Kings Arms Hotel. Redevelopment of prominent sites located within the centre (the Magistrates Court, The Lanes, Bridge Street/Stony Lane), to create mixed use schemes, was identified as an opportunity for enhancing the centre.

### 3.30 Summary Issue:

- **How can we ensure that appropriate development comes forward in the town centres that would create an attractive and high quality built environment which contributes to the historic character and attracts inward investment?** This is addressed by issue pDL1.

### 3.31 East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2008)

3.32 The East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment considered the potential for housing development and redevelopment across the whole of the district. There were very few vacant/derelict sites to consider, and the majority of potential will be within existing housing areas should they come forward. The housing stock is however relatively modern and in good repair. Recent evidence of planning applications, suggests that the trend for 2 for 1 or 3 for 1 replacement dwellings is the likely trend to continue. In some cases, the combinations of several sites, or a particularly large site, may provide the opportunity for flats. These schemes all lead to the intensification of the existing low density housing environment, and require a carefully designed approach to reduce harm to the existing character and landscape of the area.

### 3.33 Summary issue:

3.34 Faced with a prospect of urban intensification schemes the main issue to address is, **'How can we ensure that future development in East Dorset does not dilute features that give an area its intrinsic character?'** This issue is addressed under pDL1.

### 3.35 The East Dorset Local Plan contains Policy BUCON6 which states that:

3.36 *'In Special Character Areas defined on the proposals maps and insets, development or redevelopment must respect those features or characteristics which are key to maintaining the environmental quality of the area'.*

**3.37** There are a number of areas within the District that have a distinctive character and sense of place. These established areas have a mature quality and identity that sets them apart from the urban environment as a whole, but have no other Local Plan recognition of their environmental quality. They are typically pre-war and inter-war family housing with larger mature gardens and specimen trees. Special Character Areas rely less on the intrinsic value of individual buildings.

**3.38** Although they are not of sufficient historic or architectural interest to warrant designation as Conservation Areas, and the individual buildings may be undistinguished, it is important that they should be protected because of their intrinsic quality and their local importance – although this protection is less than that given in Conservation Areas themselves. It should be stated, there is no presumption against redevelopment, so long as it respects those features and characteristics which are important for the quality of the area.

**3.39** Within East Dorset there are 17 Special Character Areas. They are mainly concentrated in the urban areas such as Colehill, Corfe Mullen, Ferndown, St Leonards and St Ives, Verwood and West Moors. Here the policy seeks to protect areas of pre war and inter-War housing characterised by large family housing set in spacious plots with mature trees of this environment. Elsewhere the cottages of St Catherine's 'Railway Town' and the villas in Victoria Road, Wimborne have very distinct Victorian character. At Gaunts Common, there is a rural Special Character Area.

**3.40** Some Special Character Areas are quite extensive; others confined to part of a single street. Unlike Conservation Areas, which feature groups or larger areas of buildings of architectural or historic importance, Special Character Areas rely less on the intrinsic value of individual buildings. Rather they have been selected on account of their street pattern and/or presence of strong landscape elements that are of high environmental quality.

**3.41** In October 2005, the Council adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance No. 27 in respect of development in Special Character Areas, following a period of public consultation. In that document, the Council sets out the special character of each of these areas, and provided criteria that seek to maintain that local distinctiveness.

**3.42** This Policy has been tested at appeal. Between 2004 and 2009, 55 appeals were made relating to Policy BUCON6, where this was one of the main reasons for refusal. Of these, 7 were allowed and 48 were dismissed. The Inspectors have given the Special Character Areas considerable weight in the determination of the appeals.

**3.43** Regarding New Road Ferndown: *'The New Road Special Character Area is typified by detached dwellings set back from the roadside within generous sized plots. The plot sizes and extensive tree cover create an attractive, spacious character and afford a pleasing sense of enclosure and seclusion to many of these dwellings. I conclude on the first issue that the proposed development would fail to respect the features and characteristics which are key to maintaining the quality of the area.'*

**3.44** Regarding Glenmoor Road, Ferndown: *I acknowledge that the design of both schemes reflects a cottage style which takes the existing dwelling as a reference point. This would result in attractive elevations facing Glenmoor Road and into the new courtyard. However, in my opinion this aspect of the design does not outweigh the concern I have regarding the intensity of both schemes as a whole.....I conclude that both appeal schemes would fail to respect the characteristics of the Special Character Areas and would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Local Plan Policy BUCON6 and SPG No.27. (October 2008)*

**3.45** The proportion of appeals allowed does not appear to have altered since the introduction of PPS3, which seeks the efficient use of land for redevelopment. Inspectors tend to support the Local Planning Authority when the proposal at appeal can be held to be contrary to stated specifics and characteristics which are the key to maintaining the environmental character of an area, and which have been identified in the accompanying Supplementary Planning Guidance.

**3.46** Where appeals have been allowed, the Inspectors have assessed the proposals against the criteria in the Supplementary Planning Guidance, but have not agreed with the Local Planning Authority that the appeal scheme would cause harm.

**3.47** Summary issues:

**3.48** **How can we ensure that future development does not dilute features that give an area its intrinsic character?**

**3.49** **Should Special Character Areas continue to be part of development management strategy in East Dorset?**

**3.50** These issues are addressed by pDL1

**3.51** **Ensuring High Quality Design in the Proposed New Neighbourhoods.**

**3.52** As has been discussed above, both Christchurch and East Dorset will have to accommodate a significant number of new dwellings in the plan area.

**3.53** High quality design is crucial in securing an attractive, accessible and distinctive environment and well functioning, sustainable communities. To provide design guidance on the development of the planned residential new neighbourhoods, the local authorities will produce master plans, which will inform the production of the Core Strategy and Supplementary Planning Documents. Those documents will contain relevant design policies that will build upon the fundamentals prescribed by national policy and guidance and established in the Core Strategy and the Site Specific Allocations DPD. This will be discussed more fully in the Christchurch Urban Extension Key Issues Paper.

### **Conclusions:**

**3.54** Based on the emerging evidence and the consultation responses, the main design issues to be addressed are as follows:

- How can we ensure that future development in both districts does not dilute features that give an area its intrinsic character ?
- How can we best protect areas of distinct character against harmful and inappropriate development?
  - Should Special Character Areas continue to be part of development management strategy in East Dorset?
  - Should the Borough-wide Character Assessment continue to inform the design strategy in the Borough?
- How can we ensure that appropriate development comes forward in the town centres that would create an attractive and high quality built environment which contributes to the historic character and attracts inward investment?

**3.55** All the above identified issues can be drawn together under the following consolidated issue pDL1: How can we ensure that development is of a high design standard which complements local character, environmental qualities and makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and cultural vitality? This will form pDL1 set out at the end of this section.

### Landscape character-identification of issues

**3.56** The original question of Issue NE4: (How far should landscape quality and character be protected throughout the rural area?), posed in the Issues and Options consultation in 2008, is considered to be valid in addressing the issue of landscape quality in Christchurch and East Dorset. The responses revealed there was most support for identifying specific landscape character areas, and to introduce specific rural design policies to minimise the impact of development in the rural area.

**3.57** When asked whether all the issues have been identified in Issue NE6, the following additional issues were raised

- We should not preclude sensitive development in these localities.
- Local landscape designations should be made as a matter of priority, and should be a major factor in deciding whether development is appropriate or not.
- The attractive and intimate landscape of small fields, hedgerows, deciduous copses, small wetlands and other local features should not be overlooked for protection, particularly those on the fringes of the towns most likely to receive new housing development.
- Excluding/protecting areas of existing high biodiversity from development and enhancing areas of poor biodiversity within development. are an important part of sustainability and should not be regarded as lesser objectives than any other sustainability objectives.
- Policies should consider the contribution that the landscape makes to maintaining networks of natural habitats. (Dorset Wildlife Trust)
- Policies should not be prescriptive. We would not favour the identification of local landscape designations – they can be used to prevent legitimate development taking place.
- Not all localities will warrant landscape protection. A criteria based hierarchy should be developed with varying levels of protection.
- There is already adequate protection for landscape areas through current designations.
- Local landscape designations should only be maintained where it can be shown that criteria based policies cannot provide the necessary protections.
- It would have been useful if you could have provided a map showing the summarised results of the character assessments. (GOSW)

**3.58** Response: Many comments support the idea of additional local landscape designations. Some responses were not in favour of additional designations, objecting to the added layer of bureaucracy to restrict development potential. These issues will be considered at the end of this section under pDL2 below in section 4.

### **Evidence Studies**

**3.59** Since the Issues and Options consultation there have been two further reports carried out that consider landscape appraisal.

#### **3.60 The East Dorset Landscape Characterisation Report (October 2008)**

**3.61** This appraises and discusses the local character of the East Dorset landscape. The quality of the local landscape is very high, and provides an overview of local landscape designations, such as the AONB and Ramsar and SSSI sites. It recommends that special regard to the unique landscapes and designations should be had and confirms the significance of the landscape in East Dorset. It does not raise any further new issues.

#### **3.62 Dorset County Council Landscape Characterisation July 2008**

**3.63** This sets out the geological characteristics of the county and the impact the different soils and rocks have made to the development of the landscape. It provides a key analysis of the many landscape forms across Dorset and notes the chalk downlands to the west, and the tertiary heaths, gravels and clays to the east of East Dorset. It provides an overview of the landscape designations and the protective measures covering the landscapes. This report does not in itself however identify a new issue.

**3.64** These evidence studies reinforce the unique nature of the landscapes of East Dorset and Christchurch, and the need to have an understanding of them when setting policy and considering development proposals.

**3.65** In addition, the Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP) for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is currently being prepared, to identify the needs of the landscape and the communities in this sensitive area.

**3.66** The Core Strategy should appraise the current local landscape designations across East Dorset and Christchurch during the plan period. This will be discussed in Section 4 below.

#### **3.67 Consolidated Issue**

**3.68** Based on the emerging evidence and the consultation response, the following is still identified as a critical issue:

**3.69** pDL1 **How far should landscape quality and character be protected in the rural area?** (Original Key Issue NE4 raised at Issues and Options)

## Cross Border Issues

**3.70** Both Christchurch and East Dorset abut the County boundary with the New Forest National Park. Proposals for new development should take in to consideration the sensitivity of the National Park, which may have an impact on it, and follow the guidance from the New Forest National Park Authority as well as design advice offered by each authority, and will be considered under Consolidated Issue pDL1 below.

## Summary of Identified Critical Issues for the Design and Landscape theme

**3.71** Based on the analysis of consultation responses and the evidence base, the main issues to be addressed in the Core Strategy are as follows with associated sub issues listed below:

**3.72** *pDL1: How can we ensure that development is of a high design standard which complements local character, environmental qualities and makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and cultural vitality?*

- How can we ensure that appropriate development comes forward in the town centres that would create an attractive and high quality built environment which contributes to the historic character and attracts inward investment?
- BE2: Should we identify Special Character Areas where the form and design of new development is controlled through design guidance?
- How can we ensure that future development in both districts does not dilute features that give an area its intrinsic character?
- How can we best protect areas of distinct character against harmful and inappropriate development?
  - Should Special Character Areas continue to be part of development management strategy in East Dorset?
  - Should the Borough-wide Character Assessment continue to inform the design strategy in the Borough?

**3.73** *pDL2. How should landscape quality and character be protected through the rural area?*

- Key Issue NE4: How far should landscape quality and character be protected throughout the rural area?

## 4 Formation of Options

**4.1** The formulation of Options set out within this section considers the outcomes of the Core Strategy Issues and Options engagement process, relevant evidence documents and the Sustainability Appraisal process undertaken at Issues and Options. This includes a critical assessment of the options put forward to address issues identified in the Issues and Options paper. Options for Design and Landscape are set out within this section under the consolidated issues identified in Section 3.

**4.2** This section has been divided into two parts; Part 1 addresses design issues and Part 2 addresses issues of landscape character.

### PART 1: Design

**4.3 pDL1: How can we ensure that development is of a high design standard which complements local character, environmental qualities and makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and cultural vitality?**

**4.4 Sub issue**

**4.5 How can we ensure quality and sympathetic development in areas of distinct character? Should we identify Special Character Areas where the form and design of new development is controlled through design guidance? (BE2)**

**4.6 Issues and Options Consultation response to BE2**

Option	Option	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion	Total
A	Yes, for low density housing	62	17	6	85
B	Yes, for town centres	67	17	4	88
C	Yes, for rural villages	74	13	5	92
D	Yes, for coastal and riverfront areas	63	17	7	87
E	Yes, for all areas	54	30	13	97
F	No, there are no such areas	7	40	9	56
G	Other, please specify	21			

Table 4.1



**4.7** The consultation identified strong support for the concept, and role of Special Character Areas, which were viewed as an effective tool in preventing harmful development in sensitive areas. In particular, the need to provide design guidance to guide new development in rural villages was considered vital.

#### **4.8 Consideration of Evidence and Policy**

**4.9** PPS3 is clear that good design is fundamental to using land efficiently and that Local Planning Authorities should facilitate good design by identifying the distinctive features that define the character of a particular local area. The statement recognises that careful attention to design is particularly important where the chosen local strategy involves intensification of the existing urban fabric. Accordingly, para 48/49 states that *'more intensive development is not always appropriate. However, when well designed and built in the right location, it can enhance the character and quality of an area. Successful intensification need not mean high rise development or low quality accommodation with inappropriate space. Similarly in Conservation Areas and other local areas of special character where, if proper attention is paid to achieving good design, new development opportunities can be taken without adverse impacts on their character and appearance.'*

**4.10** Both in East Dorset and Christchurch there are areas of distinctive character that warrant a higher level of protection such as established family housing areas, areas with mature tree cover and planting, and waterside areas. Although they are not of sufficient historic and architectural interest for designation as Conservation Areas, and the individual buildings may be undistinguished, it is important that they are protected because of their intrinsic quality and their local importance. Inappropriate new development could potentially erode the distinctive features and special character of an area.

**4.11** To safeguard such areas from harmful development, the East Dorset Local Plan identified 'Special Character Areas' in which any new development must respect the characteristics that prompted the designation. Policy BUCON 6 has successfully been cited at appeal in dismissing the development proposal because of the harm to the character of the Special Character Areas. As already discussed in Section 3, the Council this policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance has been successfully supported in 82% of appeals.

**4.12** Christchurch Borough does not currently have specifically designated 'character areas'. The 2003 Christchurch Borough-wide Character Assessment carried out a series of urban neighbourhood studies and specifies the essential qualities which give each area in the Borough its special character, and how these areas are sensitive to change with regard to conservation and heritage policy, The study recommended such areas could be protected through either local townscape character areas or by putting more emphasis on good design during the application stage.

**4.13** It is worth noting that the document identified special waterside areas of character, which not only provide visual amenity and contribute to the special character, but also constitute natural habitats, serve as locations for water based recreation and commercial activities, and as desirable sites for housing development. They are quite often under increasing threat from flooding due to climate change, and potentially coastal erosion. The coastal area of Christchurch is under pressure from many different users; it is a popular destination offering water based recreation facilities and club and training facilities. The Borough-wide Character Assessment assessed their development potential and sensitivity to change, which are vital tools in managing the impacts of these multiple uses and threats in order to ensure preservation of the special character of waterside areas.

**4.14** As well as the need for special consideration being given to Special Character Areas it is important that overall design in the urban areas is kept to a high standard. It is therefore appropriate to introduce design guidance for those areas that are either not conservation or Special Character Areas.

**4.15 Overall Conclusions to pDL1: How can we ensure that development is of a high design standard which complements local character, environmental qualities and makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and cultural vitality?**

**4.16** Taking into account the development pressure, in both Christchurch and East Dorset, it is inevitable that the area will need to face and adapt to change. However the aim of the emerging policies should be to preserve valued features in the towns, which give them their distinctive characters and sense of place. New development should respect the prevailing characteristics of a local area and, where possible enhance those neighbourhoods in need of improvement. The Consultation revealed strong support towards preserving areas with special character, which contribute to the local distinctiveness of Christchurch and East Dorset.

**4.17** National policy contains provisions justifying the designation of Special Character Areas, where higher design standards are required. Appropriate design policies, supporting the preservation and enhancement of areas with distinct character and emphasising the importance of maintaining local features of both the built and natural environment should be introduced. In East Dorset, it is considered that through the existing policies in the Local Plans and the SPGs, the current policies are robust. However, there is the opportunity to review designations and character statements, and this should take place through a rolling programme over the Core Strategy plan period. This issue is considered under pDL1 below.

**4.18 pDL1. How can we ensure that development is of a high design standard which complements local character, environmental qualities and makes a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and cultural vitality?**

**4.19 Sub issue**

**4.20 How can we ensure quality and sympathetic development in areas of distinct character? Should we identify Special Character Areas where the form and design of new development is controlled through design guidance? (BE2)**

### Options

**4.21** The Options set out below can be found in the 'Creating High quality and Distinctive Environments' Chapter of the Core Strategy Options for Consideration document.

**Preferred Option HE 4 - It is proposed that Special Character Areas should continue to form part of the design strategy in East Dorset. A review will be carried out regarding the appropriateness of the designations in the Plan period. When considering this, the local authority will take into account the character of the area by virtue of its function i.e. the accessibility to transport corridors, the design details/ style/appearance/layout of buildings and landscaping.**

**Preferred Option HE 5 - In East Dorset introduce urban design guides for the urban areas outside conservation and areas and Special Character Areas.**

**Preferred Option HE 6 - Christchurch the Borough-wide Character Assessment will continue to preserve decisions regarding protection of character and appropriate design control, and will be updated within the plan period.**

#### 4.22 Alternative Options:

**Non-Preferred Option HE 7 - In Christchurch to introduce Special Character Areas, to preserve the special character of individual areas.**

## PART 2: Landscape

#### 4.23 Issue identified at Issues and Options

#### 4.24 NE4: How far should landscape quality and character be protected in the rural area?

Options		Total Responses	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
A	Only within East Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	84	13 (16%)	45 (54%)	25 (30%)
B	Within the East Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other identified specific areas	98	67 (68.5%)	11 (11%)	20 (20.5%)
C	Introduce new local landscape designations specific to each locality	98	66 (67.5%)	22 (22.5%)	10 (10%)

D	Introduce rural design policies to minimise the impact of development in the rural landscape	102	71 (70%)	13 (12.5%)	18 (17.5%)
E	Other, please specify	16			

Table 4.2

### 4.25 Issues and Options Consultation Response

**4.26** As has been discussed in Section 3 above, the consultation exercise revealed strong support for the protection of landscape quality and character in the rural areas. The responses show that most people would prefer to see rural areas, other than just the AONB area, also protected by special designations, and by stronger policies to guide development in the rural areas. There were some comments however, stating that further designations would stifle development opportunities. However, notwithstanding any other land designations and policies, the issue is not to prevent development, but to ensure appropriate development is sensitively designed and located in the rural areas, so as not to harm landscape quality and potentially enhance it.

### 4.27 Consideration of Evidence and Policy

**4.28** PPS1 and PPS7 recommend that policies should be tailored to meet the character, pressures and opportunities presented by the areas they cover. In particular, the character of the rural landscapes and that of the AONB should be given greater weight in planning policies. Sensitive high quality design in the rural areas is desirable to maintain the area's local distinctiveness. PPS9 advocates the protection of the rural area and the significance of biodiversity and geological conservation in new plan policies. Natural England also advocates that the landscape is vulnerable to change, and there should be respect for biodiversity and natural habitats from insensitive developments.

**4.29** East Dorset's Local Plan Policies CSIDE1, LSCON1 and LSCON2 seek to protect the District from insensitive development proposals in areas of high landscape value or the rural countryside. These policies have been used successfully at appeal to prevent harmful development with between 68 - 80% success rate.

**4.30** The work of the Historic Environment Action Plan in the AONB in East Dorset is actively identifying the needs of the landscape and the communities in this area. The Dorset Landscape Characterisation (2008) and the East Dorset Character Assessment (2008) provide a thorough analysis of the significance of the landscape in guiding development. There is evidence that characterisations of the rural landscapes are increasingly becoming more important in setting the scene for future policies.

### 4.31 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

**4.32** This option supports Sustainability Appraisal objective 1 – Protect enhance and expand habitats and protected species, avoiding damage to designated wildlife sites and strongly supports objectives 18 and 20 relevant to the local and cultural distinctiveness of places.

### **4.33 Conclusion and Implications for Preferred Options**

**4.34** The Core Strategy should address the designation of areas of special landscape character, reviewing the Areas of Great Landscape Value across East Dorset and in Christchurch, if appropriate. Assessment of changes to designations or new designations will be considered during the plan period. Christchurch will continue to use the 2003 Borough-Wide Character Assessment which specifies the qualities which give identified landscape areas in the Borough their special character, and how these areas are sensitive to change. The Borough-wide Assessment will be updated during the plan period.

### **4.35 Options: Overall approach to the Rural Landscapes**

**4.36** The Options set out below can be found in the 'Creating High quality and Distinctive Environments' Chapter of the Core Strategy Options for Consideration document.

**Preferred Option HE 15 - Review the existing Areas of Great Landscape Value in East Dorset, and consider the designation of further areas of special landscape character across East Dorset and Christchurch, based on the Landscape Characterisation work.**

**Preferred Option HE 16 - Rural design policies should be introduced to ensure that alterations and extensions to the housing stock, as well as all new development, sensitively respects and enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the area in which it is situated, particularly in areas with strong traditions and high heritage value.**

### **4.37 Alternative Option**

**Non-Preferred Option HE 17 - Use national policy to provide general rural landscape policies.**

## 5 Implementation

**5.1** *It is proposed that the following schemes, set out in the Implementation Table below, will be undertaken in the lifetime of the Core Strategy. Potential time scales are given for each scheme below:*

Scheme	Partners	Funding	Risks	Delivery timescale
Review of Special Character Areas in East Dorset	East Dorset DC	In house officer time	Human resources	5-10yrs
Review of East Dorset Countryside Design Summary	East Dorset DC	In house officer time	Human resources	5-10yrs
Introduction of new landscape character designations in East Dorset	East Dorset DC	In house officer time	Human resources	Within 5 years
Review Areas of Great Landscape Value in East Dorset	East Dorset DC	In house officer time	Human resources	Within 5 years
Review of Christchurch BC's Borough-wide Assessment	Christchurch BC; appointed consultancy	No funding secured at present	Human resources; project funding	Within 5 years

Table 5.1

**5.2** The Core Strategy will need to consider the current range of landscape designations, based on the Landscape Characterisation Study, and consider their appropriateness. Special Character Areas will be reviewed in East Dorset. Christchurch will continue to use the 2003 Borough-wide Character Assessment which specifies the qualities which give identified landscape areas in the Borough their special character, and how these areas are sensitive to change. The Assessments will be updated during the plan period