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Welcome

We have reached an important stage in the preparation of the joint Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy. For the first time the two Councils are putting forward a plan which they consider should be taken forward for the next 15 years. It does not rely on Regional or County plans, it is our judgement as to how to provide sustainable development to support our communities, economy and environment. It is important that we proceed with the Core Strategy, as the Government has stated clearly the need to progress plans to ensure that the needs of the local community and economy can be met. If we resist this requirement it is likely that we will have development forced upon us of a kind and in locations that will provide least benefit to our area. We believe that it is in the best interests of our communities that the local Councils manage growth to meet local needs.

We face major challenges over the lifetime of the Strategy, some, such as climate change may seem beyond our control, but we all have a role to play and should contribute to dealing with these. At the local level we have an ageing population, expensive housing, low wages, high housing need, internationally protected nature conservation sites, Green Belt, attractive urban areas, town centres facing change, severe traffic congestion and the need to manage the important coastal and river environments and their flood plains, just to name some of the most weighty issues.

Our biggest challenge is how to provide homes to meet local needs while protecting the special environment that we all cherish, and delivering the necessary infrastructure, services and facilities. There are many local households on our Housing Waiting Lists and we are also aware, following the last public consultation on the Core Strategy in Autumn of 2010 of a significant number of 'hidden homeless' who are having to live at home with parents because of the acute shortage of suitable housing.

There are no simple solutions that will leave everyone happy and the Councils have, to some extent, made compromises on deeply held principles. However, we believe that the Strategy provides a positive approach to dealing with our challenges.

The previous consultations have put forward options for the public and other stakeholders to comment on with no decisions made as to preferences where issues remained unresolved. We have heard what has been said and weighed this along with extensive evidence and appraisals. Difficult judgements have had to be made, balancing many competing factors. We believe that the Strategy strikes the correct balance. However, it is a consultation document and we hope that the excellent response we received for the Options document will be repeated.

We therefore look forward to hearing from our communities and other stakeholders throughout the 12 weeks of the consultation. We very much appreciate your views and they are important in preparing a Core Strategy that can deliver all of our aims.



Councillor Ray
Nottage

Leader of
Christchurch
Borough Council



Councillor
Spencer Flower

Leader of East
Dorset District
Council



1 Introduction

The Core Strategy

1.1 What is the Core Strategy

1.2 The Core Strategy is the document that sets out the planning strategy for Christchurch Borough and East Dorset District over the next 15 years to 2028. It sets out how much, what type, where and how development should take place and how this should be catered for. It sets out a vision and objectives for the area which are reflected in planning policies to achieve this.

1.3 A Joint Core Strategy

1.4 Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council are working in partnership to deliver their plans. This reflects the similarity in issues that each area faces and enables financial savings in the production of documents for the Councils and other stakeholders. The document contains many policies that are common to both areas, but others relate specifically to one or the other Council area.

1.5 The Pre-Submission Consultation Document

1.6 The publication for consultation of the Pre-Submission document is a formal statutory stage in the production of the Core Strategy, as set out in Regulation 27 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008. The Strategy is supported by a series of Background Papers. These consider all of the relevant information, including previous consultation responses, existing policies and evidence reports in order to identify the most appropriate conclusion. If you wish to understand in detail the reasoning behind a particular approach it is recommended that you view the relevant Background Paper.

1.7 The document uses the same structure as the earlier Options document i.e. the chapter headings are the same. The first chapter provides a description of the area, setting out the most important features that should be taken into account in the Strategy. This leads to a chapter that sets out a vision and objectives for the area and then the overall Key Strategy. Subsequently, the Core Strategy focuses on specific places before considering policies that apply across the whole area.

1.8 A standard format is applied for the policies within the different chapters, as follows:

Introduction

This sets out the main issues being considered.

Explanation

This sets out the key facts and relevant evidence that support the policy approach.

The Policy

As well as the policy itself this includes a policy reference that should be used when making consultation responses.

Delivery and Monitoring

This explains how the policy is to be delivered and establishes targets by which the success of the policy can be monitored.

1.9 How you can respond to the Consultation?

1.10 Consultation on the Pre-Submission Core Strategy will be undertaken over a 12 week period from the 2nd April to the 25th June 2012. It is important that the Councils receive a good response to this consultation. For this stage it is important that responses are based around the 'Tests of Soundness' that require the Core Strategy to be 'Justified', 'Effective' and consistent with national policy. To be 'Justified' the Core Strategy must be:

- Founded on a robust and credible evidence base.
- The most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives.

1.11 'Effective' means that the Core Strategy must be:

- Deliverable
- Flexible
- Able to be monitored

1.12 There are a number of ways that you can view and learn about the Strategy and then make consultation responses, as follows:

- All documents are available to view on the Councils' website, www.dorsetforyou.com.
- The documents can be viewed at the Christchurch Civic Offices, East Dorset District Council Offices at Furzehill, Wimborne, Town and Parish Council Offices and at all libraries throughout Christchurch and East Dorset.
- We will hold a number of public exhibitions in the main town centres and at locations where development may take place. Dates and venues will be published on www.dorsetforyou.com.
- The Core Strategy Consultation will be publicised in the local media and there will be special features in the Christchurch Courier and the East Dorset News which are delivered to every household in the two areas.
- Comments on the Consultation can be made in several ways:
 - By using our 'Objective' consultation software to directly input your comments to the document online through the website, www.dorsetforyou.com.
 - By completing a response form – available from our offices, at our exhibitions, from libraries, Town and Parish Council offices, or on our website.

1.13 *It would be most helpful if you could use the 'Objective' online consultation system to make your responses.*

1.14 As the Pre-Submission stage has a statutory status, we will not be able to accept responses after the end of the 12 week consultation period.

Preparation to date

1.15 The Core Strategy has been in preparation for a number of years. This has involved considerable community consultation, the collection of evidence and working with partners, including other Local Planning Authorities, service providers, town and parish councils, community groups, the Local Community Partnerships, businesses, government organisations and developers/agents. The key stages that have taken place so far are:

- Evidence gathering – work on baseline data and studies which inform the issues to be addressed in the Core Strategy.

- Issues and Options – where consultation took place to identify issues and a range of possible options for addressing them. Consultation and engagement on this stage took place during 2008 and 2009.
- Options – where the Councils identified one or more options for dealing with key issues and published them for consultation. This took place between October 2010 and January 2011.

1.16 Evidence Base

1.17 A substantial amount of evidence has been prepared and considered in order to develop the Core Strategy. The key studies that have been produced are as follows:

- Christchurch Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
- East Dorset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
- Joint Affordable Housing Viability Study
- Dorset wide Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Joint Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Christchurch Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Joint Town Centres Retail Study
- Employment Land Review Stages 1 and 2
- Joint Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study
- Christchurch Urban Extension Master Plan
- East Dorset New Neighbourhoods Master Plan
- South East Dorset Multi Modal Transport Study
- East Dorset Town Centre Pedestrian Footfall Counts
- Bournemouth Airport Ecology and Economic Studies

1.18 All of these studies are available for viewing at the Councils' Offices at Bridge Street and Furzehill or on the Councils' website www.dorsetforyou.com/388121.

1.19 As well as the evidence specifically produced locally, policy formation has been informed by other sources e.g. Census and other agencies' plans and programmes.

What Comes Next?

1.20 Following the Pre-Submission consultation the Councils will give consideration to the responses and decide whether further changes should be made to the Strategy before it is submitted to the Secretary of State. Once submission has taken place the Secretary of State will ask an Inspector to consider the soundness of the Strategy taking into account national policy, available evidence and the consultation responses. Once the Inspector's report has been published the Councils will have to decide whether to accept the recommendations and adopt the Strategy.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.21 The Core Strategy has been informed by a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment. A Scoping Report has been consulted on and was approved by the Councils in 2010. This set out key issues that the Strategy should take into account and established objectives by which it should be assessed. This is available to view at the Council Offices and on www.dorsetforyou.com.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.22 A Habitats Regulation Assessment has been carried out to inform the production of policies. This assesses the potential impacts of policies on the conservation objectives of designated sites of European importance which include the Dorset Heathlands and the River Avon.

Equalities Assessment

1.23 Local authorities have a responsibility to minimise discrimination and disadvantage under the Equalities Act 2010. Public bodies are required to consider the needs of diverse groups in the community when designing and delivering public services. An Equalities Impact Assessment is a recognised method of undertaking an appraisal of a service or of a policy. Its key purpose is to help identify in the development of policies and practises unlawful discrimination of a particular group or sector of the community whether it is on the grounds of race, gender, disability, religion, faith or belief, sexuality or age. An assessment was undertaken for the Options consultation and this has been updated to consider the Pre-Submission Core Strategy.

Health Impact Assessment

1.24 The Health Impact Assessment is a tool which can be used to assess how policies, plans or programmes can help to identify the health impacts of the policy. Using such an assessment it is possible to identify the actions needed to improve the impact on health and minimise the negative impacts. An assessment has been undertaken of the Pre-Submission document and this builds on previous work that considered the Options consultation.

Consultation Responses

1.25 The Issues and Options consultation in 2008 attracted about 1,700 individual responses. These were used to help inform the Options Consultation of 2010/2011, which in turn received 21,900 individual responses. This unprecedented response was also supported by feedback from a wide range of focus groups and meetings with stakeholders. The Options Consultation responses are available to read on www.dorsetforyou.com or at the main Council Offices. Representations to the Pre-Submission document will be used to help inform the Core Strategy before it is submitted to the Secretary of State.

Sustainable Community Strategies and Other Strategies

1.26 The Core Strategy is informed by the Christchurch Community Plan (2007) and the East Dorset Community Strategy (2008). These have been agreed by the respective Local Community Partnerships which comprise representatives from regional, public and local agencies and the community and voluntary sector. Since the Localism Bill received royal assent in 2011 it is anticipated that these will be replaced by new strategies. Neither existing strategy currently provides a clear vision that can be used to lead the Core Strategy. However, they do provide important guides for the Core Strategy in terms of the key issues to be addressed.

1.27 Additionally, the Core Strategy has been developed to reflect a clear and effective relationship to the Councils' Corporate Plans and Housing Strategies. It also takes forward the important policies and proposals contained in the most recent Local Transport Plan.

Delivery

1.28 The success of the Core Strategy relies upon delivery of its policies and proposals. The Strategy is based on the delivery of sustainable development and goes beyond land use planning to bring together other policies and programmes that influence how the area functions. The means of delivery accompanies each policy in the Strategy and an Implementation Plan has also been produced. This is available to view at Council Offices, libraries and on www.dorsetforyou.com.

Saved Policies

1.29 At present each Council has a series of 'saved' policies originally contained in their Local Plans, as well as the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan. The Core Strategy will replace most, but not all of these policies. The status of the current Saved policies is set out in Appendices 3 and 4.