Core Strategy

09 Town, Village and Neighbourhood Centres
Key Issue Paper

Options for Consideration Consultation
4th October – 24th December 2010

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

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Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 This paper has been prepared as part of the Local Development Framework to inform the development of the spatial strategy for matters relating to town, village and neighbourhood centres. 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 spatial issues affecting Christchurch and East Dorset. These issues have been identified from the Regional Spatial Strategy, 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 spatial strategy for the vitality of town, village and neighbourhood centres 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 healthy and vital town, village and neighbourhoods. 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)
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Core Strategy Issues and Options Stakeholder Engagement
- Evidence studies undertaken by the Council and key stakeholders.

1.2 Town, village and neighbourhood centre vitality is a key issue for the Core Strategy as set out in Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4)). The market towns and villages are the main service centres in the area, providing a range of shops, services, leisure facilities and employment opportunities for the local catchment area and further afield. The hierarchy of centres provide a highly important focus for day to day needs, health services, economic development and tourism.

1.3 To set the town centres of Christchurch and East Dorset in spatial context, the table below illustrates where the towns sit in the South East Dorset sub region. The following hierarchy of shopping centres impact directly on the vitality and viability of the settlements in Christchurch and East Dorset:

Hierarchy	**South East Dorset**	**Hampshire and outside SE Dorset**
Regional Centre	Castlepoint Shopping Centre	West Quay, Southampton
City Centre		Salisbury
Town Centre	Bournemouth Poole Christchurch Ferndown	Blandford Fordingbridge New Milton Ringwood

	Verwood West Moors Wimborne Minster	Lymington
District Centre	Highcliffe	

Table 1.1

1.4 Source: Information extracted from the Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment – Volume 1 - 2008

1.5 In recent years it has become apparent that the health and vitality of our principal towns, such as Christchurch, Ferndown and Wimborne is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the competition posed by nearby larger shopping centres in Bournemouth, Poole and Southampton, and by changing lifestyle patterns. This Paper will address the need to define the role of the town centres in the context of current policy and factors of competition, and consider the issues affecting the town and village centres, trends, and ways to ensure their vitality and viability in the future.

1.6 The topic of town centre vitality overlaps with the following topic papers:

- The Historic Built Environment
- Transport Improvements
- Tourism
- Community Issues
- Sustainable Economic Growth
- Climate Change
- The Natural Environment

2 Baseline

2.1 This baseline section sets the context through the identification of critical spatial planning issues relating to town centres that will be addressed through the Core Strategy. Spatial issues are identified from the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report informed by the LDF evidence base and the policy background.

2.2 There are six towns within Christchurch and East Dorset which are of differing size, significance and function, as defined in the current local plans. These are complemented by a variety of local and neighbourhood centres in the villages and suburban areas.

2.3 Christchurch Borough

2.4 Christchurch is a relatively small authority in Dorset, with a population of 44,870. 33.5% of the residents are of pensionable age (The Dorset Data Book, 2008), with a relatively high level of affluence. Christchurch is located on the edge of the Bournemouth conurbation, with easy access to the A338 to the north. It has a railway station and is in close proximity to Bournemouth International Airport. The Borough has two main shopping areas, the town centre in Christchurch and the district centre in Highcliffe. Apart from that it has two designated local centres, on Barrack Road and Purewell, which provide a range of small shops, serving a relatively small catchment area. Also there are three out of centre retail parks located at Somerford, Stony Lane and Bailey Drive Retail Park

2.5 Christchurch

2.6 Christchurch Town Centre is the main centre for the Borough, and performs a number of important functions such as providing a range of shopping, leisure, entertainment, recreation and employment opportunities. There is a library, the Regent Centre theatre, a number of national multiples such as Argos, Boots, Marks and Spencer, New Look, Co-op, WH Smith and Waitrose and a high number of small independent retailers. The centre is a vibrant and viable place; nevertheless there are areas where enhancements are required, most prominently Saxon Square and Druitt Gardens. A refurbishment programme would improve the attractiveness of the shopping environment and draw in more visitors, increasing expenditure and prosperity. There is sufficient parking provision in the centre at present, better use of underused car parks was recommended to satisfy future demand (Colin Buchanan Parking, Access and Signing Strategy 2006)

2.7 The shopping area is concentrated along Bargates and the High Street, with some shops located within the Saxon Centre and Saxon Square, where markets are held every Monday and a Farmer's Market held the first Friday of the month. There are 209 ground floor units in the centre (80 of which are comparison), the majority of which are traditional in style although modern units can be found both at Saxon Square and the Saxon Centre. The units vary considerably in size. Larger units like the Co - op store (957 sq m) and Marks and Spencer (1,210) are set beside small scale units located along Pound Lane in Saxon Square and the High Street.

2.8 The Borough as a whole has several large food stores including Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Marks & Spencer and Co - op. There is a high retention rate for convenience shopping within the Borough with Sainsbury's on Lyndhurst Road attracting 62% of respondents to the household survey conducted for the Joint Retail Assessment (2008). There is also a reasonable level of convenience expenditure outflow to stores in Bournemouth.

2.9 Bournemouth is the main destination for non-food items. It is the main destination for buying clothes and shoes (34%). Castlepoint Shopping Centre is the preferred location for purchasing electrical appliances (67%), other electrical goods (61%), furniture (48%) and DIY/hardware/garden (76%). Christchurch is the preferred location for buying health/ beauty and chemist items (61.4%) and books, CDs, toys and gifts (35.9%). (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail study Volume 1, 2008)

2.10 **Highcliffe**

2.11 Highcliffe is a coastal town located to the east of Christchurch. The centre of the town is characterised predominantly by post war architecture. The area is defined by many of the characteristics of a typical British coastal holiday town, with many uses in the area centred on tourism and a high proportion of retired residents living in the area.

2.12 The main shopping area of Highcliffe is concentrated along the linear form of Lymington Road and provides for convenience shopping (Somerfields, Tesco Express, butchers, greengrocers and an off licence), small independent shops covering a variety of goods, public houses, restaurants, takeaways and other services. There are 120 outlets in the centre, 48 of which are comparison. The centre's Shopping Core runs along the Lymington Road frontage, with the Secondary Core continuing to run along the road after its junction with Waterford Road. There is sufficient parking provision in the centre at present, better use of underused car parks was recommended to satisfy future demand. (Colin Buchanan Parking, Access and Signing Strategy 2006)

2.13 The centre is well used and there are few vacant units although vehicle congestion and poor access for pedestrians cause conflict.

2.14 **East Dorset District**

2.15 **Ferndown**

2.16 Ferndown is the largest settlement in East Dorset with a population of 20,196 (2001 Census). The town centre provides a wide range of shopping facilities and services accessible by car, foot and public transport. The primary shopping area in Penny's Walk has a large Tesco supermarket which acts as a key destination for shoppers to the town, supporting the large number of independent comparison retailers nearby.

2.17 The modern town centre is partly pedestrianised offering an easily accessible environment in Penny's Walk to the shops, library, Barrington Theatre and community buildings. The town enjoyed paving and street enhancements in the 1980's in Penny's Walk and along Victoria Road and Ringwood Road, although the precinct is now dated and would benefit from an enhancement scheme, to improve the attractiveness of the centre to visitors, shoppers and future traders. Ferndown is served by a large free car park to the west of Penny's Walk and has a number of bus services which operate along Victoria Road, providing a key transport hub in the central area, essential for the above average number of retired residents who live locally.

2.18 Ferndown also has an out of town retail development located at Tricketts Cross. Here there is a Sainsbury's supermarket, Lidl, Halfords, a furnishing store, car dealer and McDonalds. Ferndown has a high retention rate for convenience shopping with 43% of residents shopping at Tesco in the town centre and 29% at Sainsbury's. (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment Volume 1 – March 2008). The primary shopping frontages are identified within Penny's Walk, and there are currently no secondary frontages. However, most residents travel to Bournemouth (31%) or Poole (23.2%) for comparison goods, such as clothes, hardware items and books, with just a retention rate of 12.7% in the town.

2.19 **Verwood**

2.20 Verwood is a smaller town with a population of just over 14,000 (Dorset Data Book 2008). The town of Verwood has recently seen a transformation in the centre, with the creation of Ferrett Green, The Hub – a large community centre – 6 new shops units and a large free car park. Whilst a small town, Verwood has good facilities for its residents with a number of small comparison shops and a Spar and One Stop grocers, bank, library, doctor's surgery and fire station in the centre. A monthly Farmers Market takes place on Ferrett Green. The town has just 42 shop units with a high level of independent small retailers or services. There is a lack of national store recognition and few medium sized units. Verwood does not currently have a Primary shopping frontage policy.

2.21 The town is fragmented with additional shops and services located around the Morrisons supermarket situated 1km to the south of the town centre within a housing area. Morrisons has a high retention rate for convenience shopping for local residents at 51%, with 19% choosing to travel to Sainsbury's at Ferndown (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment - Volume 1 March 2008). Most residents travel to Bournemouth to purchase non food items, 34.2% - clothes and shoes; 32.9% books and toys and 19% - furniture, although Verwood retains a strong market share in electrical appliances of 25.3% of residents and 41.8% for beauty and chemist items.

2.22 **West Moors**

2.23 The population of West Moors stood at 7,210 in 2006 (Dorset Data Book 2008). It has the smallest centre of the four towns of East Dorset having just 44 shop units in the main shopping street of Station Road. There is a Tesco Express and a Co-op with a Post Office desk, a library, doctor's surgery and dentist located here. There are many service shops but no national multiple comparison shops. Being such a small centre, there is also no prime retail pitch. Due to its size, shopping outflow results identified by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners placed West Moors and Ferndown together. Shoppers at West Moors tend to travel out of the settlement for their main grocery shopping to Ferndown (72%) or to Castlepoint in Bournemouth (7%). Bournemouth was again the most popular destination for comparison goods.

2.24 An enhancement programme was undertaken in the late 1990's at the southern end of Station Road to improve the pavements and shopping environment of the centre, so the shopping area is modern with a high number of small comparison units.

2.25 The busy B3072 (Station Road) runs through the centre of West Moors dividing the main shopping street in half, although 2 pedestrian crossing points have been provided to assist pedestrians.

2.26 **Wimborne Minster**

2.27 Wimborne Minster is an ancient and historic market town with a busy town centre which is the main centre for East Dorset. Wimborne has a relatively small population of 6,627 for such a well established and well served market town, although the nearby suburban areas of Colehill and Merley increase this to over 17,000. The town centre has 162 shops which include a Somerfields supermarket, a library, the historic Tivoli Theatre, the Priests House Museum, a number of chain store branches and a high number of quality small independent retailers. A monthly farmers market takes place in Mill Lane, and the town market is held on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at the market halls 0.5 km from the town centre. A new Waitrose supermarket received planning permission in September 2008, and was completed in the summer of 2010.

2.28 The town is very popular with visitors to the historic town and Minster and day trippers to the market. However, there is little cross over between the two shopping destinations, shoppers and visitors tending to prefer one or the other. The Square acts as the central public transport hub and there are a number of public car parks serving the centre. Plans are underway to repave and enlarge The Square with a quality scheme in natural materials, to provide a larger paved area for shoppers and visitors to enjoy the town centre and to safely cross the road, and to reduce the number of vehicles circulating around the centre causing conflict with pedestrians.

2.29 The small shop units provide an attractive centre for niche retailers and for visitors to the town. However a high number of residents travel to Ferndown (22%) or to Poole, Bournemouth or Ringwood (45%) for their convenience shopping needs. In terms of comparison shopping expenditure, 21.6% is retained in Wimborne, 42.4% is spent in Poole and 16.1% in Bournemouth. It is considered that Wimborne like other historic towns in Dorset is a relatively strong comparison shopping destination within the local catchment area. However the outflow of non-food shopping trips to larger centres is still significant. (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment Volume 1 – March 2008)

2.30 Local Shopping Centres and Local Shopping Parades

2.31 The following locations are important in the local communities to provide a range of comparison goods and convenience products

Christchurch	East Dorset
Local Centres	
Barrack Road **Purewell**	
Out of Town Centres	
Meteor Retail Park in Somerford **Stony Lane Retail Park** **Bailey Drive Retail Park**	
Local Shopping Parades	
Hurn 88-98 Mudeford	Verwood Road, Tricketts Cross Pinehurst Road, West Moors

2-10 Falcon Drive	Gordon Road, Wimborne
172-190 Somerford Road	Leigh Road, Wimborne
42-44 Hunt Road	Dales Drive, Colehill
27-45 Somerford Road	Middlehill Road, Colehill
22&28 Jellicoe Drive	Wareham Road, Corfe Mullen
111, 98-112 Ringwood Road and 2 Glenville Road	Horton Road, St Leonard's
15-22 Lakewood Road	High Street, St Leonard's
5-11 Saulfland Place	Ringwood Road, Verwood
Bure Lane Arcade	Station Road, Sturminster Marshall
111-113 Burton Green, Salisbury Road	High Street, Sixpenny Handley
1-11 Avon View Parade	Parley Cross, West Parley
1-5 Fairmile Parade	Ameysford Road, Ferndown
St Catherines Parade, Fairmile Road	Glenmoor Road, Ferndown
32-60 The Grove	Turbary Road, Ferndown
1-15 Marlow Drive	Stapehill Crescent, Ferndown
108-116 Stour Road	Wimborne Road East, Ferndown
	Furzehill Stores, Furzehill
	Longham Post Office, Longham
	Ringwood Road, Alderholt
	The Square, Cranborne

	Wimborne Street, Cranborne Shell Garage, St Leonard's Texaco Garage, Pinehurst Road, West Moors Texaco Garage, Wimborne Road West, Ferndown Post Office Stores, Wimborne St Giles Littlemoors Farm, Hampreston Pamphill Dairy Vines Close Farm Honeybrook Farm

Table 2.1

2.32 These provide a critical local service function to the neighbourhoods and village settlements, offering a range of convenience products in a sustainable community setting.

Sustainability Appraisal Baseline Information

2.33 The Christchurch and East Dorset Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report assesses broad environmental, social and economic characteristics of the plan area and how these are changing. It sets out baseline information and identifies sustainability issues, some of which are relevant to this paper and are set out below. This baseline information forms part of the identification of key issues to be addressed by the Local Development Framework.

2.34 Key Sustainability issues of relevance to this background paper include:

2.35 **Environmental Baseline and Issues**

2.36 ***Historic Environment***

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

2.38 Christchurch Town Centre lies in a conservation area; in this respect future retail development should make a positive contribution to the conservation area, respecting the setting and character of the historic built environment.

2.39 The historic centre of Wimborne is also 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 retail development within the town centre.

2.40 ***Culture, Leisure and Recreation***

2.41 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 and their provision can result in economic benefits to the area, attracting visitors to the towns and encouraging spending. Both Christchurch and East Dorset have a range of cultural, leisure and recreational facilities, including theatres, restaurants, leisure centres and exhibition halls which are used by both residents and visitors.

2.42 The Core Strategy must assess the quantitative need for culture/leisure/recreation facilities in the town centres to attract visitors. The level and type of provision needs to be carefully considered, taking into account the proximity of nearby large centres such as Bournemouth and Poole which have a wide range of leisure facilities.

2.43 ***Flooding***

2.44 The recently undertaken Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 assessment revealed that part of Christchurch town centre lies in flood zone 3a (Stour Road, Wick Lane, Bridge Street). As a consequence there can be no net increase in dwellings. Commercial uses defined by PPS25 as ‘Less vulnerable’ can be provided in 3a subject to passing the sequential test and ensuring that the development is safe and where possible flood risk is reduced overall. Existing development in areas of high flood risk may not change use to a more vulnerable use class.

2.45 In Wimborne there is also risk of flooding in the town centre from the Rivers Stour and Allen. The eastern side of the town along the line of the Allen falls within Flood Zones 1 and 2 and is at high risk from flooding. Development should be avoided in this area and should follow guidance and advice from the Environment Agency.

2.46 **Economic Baseline and Issues**

2.47 ***Retail***

2.48 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 retention of A1 units in the centres, and review the vacancy rates of shop units, particularly in the current economic climate. The critical issues associated with the high leakage of expenditure to Bournemouth and Poole and out of town supermarkets should be taken into account when assessing the need for retail provision in the centres both in terms of comparison and convenience provision.

2.49 ***Economy***

2.50 The town centres play an important role in providing small office space to professional businesses traditionally located in the towns, such as solicitors, surveyors and land agents. There are also a number of larger employers, such as Christchurch Borough Council, the Primary Care Trust in Ferndown, and Teachers Building Society and Savills in Wimborne who are based centrally. These users perform a complementary role to the retailers and strongly support the local economy and the vitality of the town centres. It will be necessary to continue to support and provide for small office space businesses in the town centres in new development proposals.

2.51 ***Tourism***

2.52 Tourism is a key part of the local economy, particularly in Christchurch Borough where 10% of the population were employed in tourism (1,860 jobs), and 6% of the East Dorset population (2,443 jobs) were employed in the tourism sector in 2007. The total annual spend by visitors was £70,850,613 in Christchurch and £100,999,000 in East Dorset in 2007, representing a significant input to the local economies and is particularly important to Christchurch and Wimborne. (The Value of Tourism Key Facts 2007). Policy interventions should be aimed at securing an appropriate mix of uses that will attract visitors into the centres. Heritage assets combined with a strong leisure and retail offer should underpin future strategies.

2.53 ***Transport***

2.54 Car dependency in the plan area is particularly high in the rural areas of East Dorset where many rural communities have lost their local shops, and have no local employment or schools. This means that residents have to rely on the provision within towns, which in turn generates more car journeys. Whilst the urban public transport provision is generally good, the rural villages and smaller town centres of Verwood and West Moors could be improved upon.

2.55 In Christchurch, the historic town centre core is surrounded by large dispersed areas of low density housing. This pattern of development results in a higher need to travel within the area. This coupled with the fact that the Borough has quite an affluent population (with a higher than average number of elderly residents) results in a significantly higher level of car ownership than comparable towns across the Country. The 2001 census indicates that 19,3% of households have no car; 48,8% have 1 car; 25.7% have 2 cars; and 6,1% have 3 and more cars. (The Dorset Data Book 2008).

2.56 Provision of adequate transport facilities is therefore crucial in maintaining the viability and vitality of the centres and communities, as is the provision of sufficient well signed and well located public car parking. The Core Strategy will address demand management measures, aimed at reducing the need to travel and encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport. This will not only ensure better accessibility but also contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases as advocated in government policy. Reference should be made to the Transport and Access Key Issues Paper for the spatial approach to accessibility and car parking in relation to town centres.

2.57 ***Housing***

2.58 The provision of housing in the town centres is essential to create more dynamic, secure and busy centres. This is a significant issue as new development in the town centres is likely to be mixed use and at higher densities than elsewhere in the area.

2.59 **Core Strategic Messages**

- The town, village and neighbourhood centres provide the hub to community life
- Their vitality is essential for sustained economic growth to small businesses and shops
- Tourism is a key feature in both market towns of Christchurch and Wimborne
- Ease of movement around the towns is essential for shoppers, pedestrians, cycles, vehicles and delivery vans

Policy Background

Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for a Sustainable Economic Development (2009)
Analysis
The central message is for development plans to have clear, proactive, proportionate and flexible policies aimed at supporting the start up and growth of businesses, attracting inward investment and increasing employment, particularly in deprived areas The Government's overarching objective is sustainable economic growth. To help achieve sustainable economic growth, the Government's objectives for planning are to: • Build prosperous communities by improving the economic performance of cities, towns, regions, sub regions and local areas, both urban and rural • Reduce the gap in economic growth rates between regions, promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation • Deliver more sustainable patterns of development, reduce the need to travel, especially by car and respond to climate change • Promote the vitality and viability of town and other centres as important places for communities. • New economic growth and development for main town centres uses should be focused in existing centres • Promoting competition between retailers and enhanced consumer choice through the provision of innovative and efficient shopping, leisure, tourism and local services in town centres • The historic archaeological and architectural heritage of centres to be conserved and, where appropriate enhanced to provide a sense of place and focus for community and civic activity • Raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas by promoting thriving, inclusive and locally distinctive rural communities whilst protecting the open countryside. At the local level local authorities should: • Assess the detailed need for land and floorspace for economic development, including for all main town centre uses over the plan period • Identify any deficiencies in the provision for local convenience shopping and other facilities to serve people's day to day needs • Assess the existing and future supply of land available for economic development • Assess the capacity of existing centres to accommodate new town centre development taking into account the role of centres in the hierarchy and identify centres in decline where change needs to be managed.

• Set out a clear economic vision and strategy for their area, which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth. • Make the most efficient and effective use of land, prioritising previously developed land • Locate development which creates substantial transport movements in accessible locations • Plan for a delivery of sustainable transport and other infrastructure needed to support planned economic development • Set flexible policies for town centres which are able to respond to changing economic circumstances and encourage, where appropriate, high density development accessible by public transport, walking and cycling • Define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes to meet the needs of their catchments • Define the extent of the centre and the primary shopping area, distinguishing between defined primary and secondary frontages in designated centres • Consider setting floorspace thresholds for the scale of edge of centre and out of centre development • Encourage residential or office development above ground floor retail, leisure or other facilities within centres • Plan proactively to promote competitive town centre environments and provide consumer choice • Manage the evening and night time economy in centres Planning for economic development in rural areas: Local authorities should: • Strictly control economic development in the open countryside away from existing settlements • Identify local service centres and locate most new development in or on the edge of existing settlements where employment, housing, services and other facilities can be provided close together. • Seek to remedy any identified deficiencies in local shopping and other facilities to serve people's day to day needs
Core Strategic Messages
The Core Strategy should promote the vitality and viability of sustainable town and village centres, supporting their growth and enhancement, acknowledging the variety of functions and recognising their local and wider significance in the community and region developed in a town centre hierarchy. The key towns such as Christchurch, Highcliffe, Ferndown, Verwood, West Moors and Wimborne should designate primary shopping frontages (where appropriate), threshold policies for out of centre development, and flexible policies should be developed to support above ground floor uses. The Core Strategy will support the provision of higher density development levels in town centres where there is likely to be good accessibility to public transport.

Table 2.2

Planning for Town Centres Good Practice Guide on Need, Impact and the Sequential Approach (Living Draft) (May 2009). **GVA Grimley on behalf of DCLG**

Analysis
• To promote the vitality and viability of town centres – through inter alia enhancing consumer choice, supporting efficient competitive and innovative retail, leisure and tourism and promoting social inclusion; • To adopt a proactive approach to planning for town centres - identifying the needs of consumers, requirements of retailers and leisure operators etc – and by identifying suitable sites to accommodate these needs; • Planning authorities should actively promote new development of the right scale, in the right place and at the right time as part of an overall vision and strategy for the town centres; • Applicants should demonstrate the 'need' for proposals which are on an out of town or edge of centre location, and which are not supported by an up to date development plan – the 'need' remains an important consideration in the development of robust town centre strategies.
Core Strategic Messages
This encourages CBC and EDDC to support town centre investment, encourage competition and local prosperity, by offering a wide range of services for consumer choice in our town centres, and aims to support the development of town centre strategies in Christchurch, Highcliffe, Ferndown, Verwood, West Moors and Wimborne. Development of a vision for the town centres will ensure the right development comes forward at the right time in the right place.

Table 2.3

PPG13 Transport (with respect to retail development) 1994
Analysis
This PPG advocates an integrated approach to transportation and land use planning with the aim of reducing reliance on the car. • Local authorities should establish a hierarchy of town centres, taking account of accessibility by public transport • Identify preferred locations for major retail and leisure investment • At the local level, preference should be given to town centre sites, followed by edge of centre and, only then, out of centre sites in locations which are (or will be) well served by public transport. • Car parking provision can contribute to demand management objectives and can help shift to other forms of transport. Policies should be contained in the Local Transport Plan.

Core Strategic Messages
PPG13 recommends we provide a hierarchy of town centres to support sustainable objectives. These centres are more likely to be served by public transport and are the preferred location for major retail and leisure facilities, helping to support the growth and vitality of the town centres. Car parking policies should be set out in the Local Transport Plan.

Table 2.4

Planning for a Sustainable Future White Paper (May 2007).
Analysis
• To support current and prospective town centre investment that contributes to economic prosperity, national social and environmental goals; • To promote competition and improve consumer choice avoiding the unintended effects of the current needs test • This White Paper emphasises the need for local authorities to proactively manage the role and function of their town centres and to promote growth and development of their town centres by facilitating a wide range of shopping, leisure and local services to enhance consumer choice.
Core Strategic Messages
The Core Strategy should support town centre investment, encourage competition and local prosperity, by offering a wide range of services for consumer choice in our town centres of Christchurch, Highcliffe, Ferndown, Verwood, West Moors and Wimborne.

Table 2.5

Regional Economic Strategy for the South West 2006 - 2015
Analysis
• The Core Strategy should support the identification of Strategically Significant Cities and Towns in South East Dorset, and the emphasis placed on them in accommodating the majority of development. • Development Policies B and C of the draft Regional Spatial Strategy should be amended so as to adopt a more positive stance to promoting the successful regeneration of market and coastal towns, the renaissance of rural areas and the diversification of the rural economy.

Core Strategic Messages
The Regional Development Agency supports the focus of growth within the Strategically Significant Cities and Towns and the hierarchical approach to development in towns and villages, to ensure support of the rural economies and market and coastal towns, such as Christchurch, Verwood and Wimborne Minster.

Table 2.6

Dorset Economic Partnership Terms of Reference 2008
Analysis
• Create a more positive image of Dorset as a place to do business. • Promoting culture as a key sector of the economy.
Core Strategic Messages
The Partnership seeks to positively promote Dorset towns and businesses, recognising the role of tourism and culture in the economy. The Core Strategy should support cultural and tourism uses in the town centres and enhancements to the town centres.

Table 2.7

Raising the Game - Economic Development Strategy 2005 – 2016 (Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Economic Partnership)
Analysis
The strategy sets out a vision for the sub region: *'to develop a thriving, competitive business environment that delivers better quality employment opportunities and a better quality of life for local people in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole'. '* The following issues are important for the Core Strategy • Significant room for improvement in productivity • A relatively low wage economy

• Skills gaps and shortages that may be made worse by a rapidly ageing population and out migration of young people • Poor affordability in terms of the ratio of house prices to incomes • Infrastructure deficiencies limiting inward investment
Core Strategic Messages
The Partnership encourages the Core Strategy to support the growth and promotion of the local economy, and to recognise there are local economic issues, such as low wages, a skills gap, low levels of economic productivity, poor housing affordability and infrastructure deficiencies.

Table 2.8

Christchurch Local Plan (2001)
Analysis
The plan seeks to support and protect the vitality and viability of the town centre, local centres and public houses in Christchurch. The following policies relate to town centre development: • **Policy ES1** sets out criteria under which new shopping and leisure development located outside the core, secondary and local shopping areas will be permitted. This policy is aimed at concentrating retail/leisure development in the town centre. • **Policy ES2** restricts the change of use from retail premises to non-retail within the Primary Shopping Cores. • **Policy ES3** prohibits the change of use of non-retail premises in the secondary core to uses other than A2, A3, D1 and D2. • **Policy ES4** seeks to protect retail uses in local centres. • **Policy ES5** concerns the development of land west of the High Street in Christchurch. • **Policy ES8** sets out the criteria for development of land adjoining the Royalty Inn in Christchurch • **Policy ES10 seeks** to protect the loss of public houses in the Borough. The primary shopping cores identified at Bargates, the Town Centre, Saxon Square and Highcliffe emphasise the retention of retail uses (Policy ES2). From regular monitoring it appears that this policy has been successful in maintaining a strong retail presence essential to the vitality and viability of the centre, as the level of non-A1 units has not changed significantly in the last 4 years. Also monitoring shows that the present level of retail outlets across the Borough is sufficient to serve current local needs. However, projected population growth and expenditure over the plan period requires the provision of additional A1 comparison floorspace as set out in the 2008 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners retail study.

Core Strategic Messages
The Core Strategy will need to develop policies to determine the extent of town centre boundaries, primary / secondary shopping cores, percentage of non A1 uses within the shopping cores, the focus for retail development and an approach to maintaining retail uses that support town centre vitality. The Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Document will determine the precise location for future retail development.

Table 2.9

The Christchurch Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Guidance (2003)
Analysis
The document sets out a vision for the town centre, clarifying the development objectives over the next 20 years. The study emphasises that the strength of the town centre lies in its heritage assets and distinctiveness. The main objectives identified in the strategy are: • To provide a network to accommodate change whilst protecting the range of high quality heritage assets • To examine and make proposals for improvements to the existing transportation network • To enhance present levels of vitality and viability • To inform the preparation of a Community Plan, together with reviews of the Structure Plan and Local Plan • To assist bids for public sector external funding and to attract private sector investments. The study identified opportunities for new mixed use development to take place in a number of key sites located at the heart of the town centre, principally: • Saxon Square, modernisation and extension • The Lanes around Druitt Gardens • The Magistrates Court site • Bridge Street/Stony Lane South sites.
Core Strategic Messages
The Core Strategy should take into account the recommendations of the Town Centre Strategy in establishing a vision for the town centre.

Christchurch Shopfronts and Advertisement Design Guide (2005)
Analysis
The Supplementary Planning Guidance sets out basic principles of good shop front and advertisement design, which has an impact on the quality of the built environment.
Core Strategic Messages
The Core Strategy policies should encourage good shop front design. Attractive shopfronts are important in maintaining the centre's vitality and its local distinctiveness.

Table 2.10

Christchurch Parking, Access and Signing Strategy 2006
Analysis
The study, carried out by Colin Buchanan analysed the current and future town centre parking capacity and possible signage improvements. The following overall recommendations relevant to this theme are: • There is currently sufficient car parking capacity in the town centre, however better use of underused car parks is required to satisfy future demand. • Future capacity can be gained by a reduction in demand in general, or increasing prices to reduce demand, or by increasing supply. • Changes are recommended to the hierarchy of car parks, together with re-designations and a comprehensive parking and tourist signing strategy to compliment these changes. • The present relatively poor retail offer suggests that increases in tariffs above inflation levels would impact on the vitality of the town centres.
Core Strategic Messages
The study contains recommendations on the future parking strategy for the town centre and should be taken into account in the Core Strategy.
Planning, Design & Development Framework: Land west of High Street inc. Druitt Gardens, the Lanes and Cornfactor sites 2005

Analysis
The study contains recommendations for the future redevelopment of the area. It envisages the area to be transformed into a Woodland Park and a cultural centre for Christchurch.
Core Strategic Messages
The redevelopment represents an opportunity to provide an attractive area of open space within the town centre and should be considered for incorporation in the Christchurch town centre vision contained in the Core Strategy.
Christchurch Corporate Plan 2008-2012
Analysis
The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities for the period to 2012. It identifies 7 key themes that affect the quality of life. For each of the themes specific objectives have been set. The relevant objectives for the town vitality theme are presented below. BT1 Develop robust plans to support the creation of business and employment opportunities BT2 Increase the level of business activity in the Borough BT3 Support sustainable commercial growth in Christchurch and Highcliffe TR1 Encourage the use of a variety of sustainable and fuel efficient modes of transport to help reduce congestion TR3 Develop speed management and pedestrian improvements in areas of greatest need PE2 Maintain a high quality environment

Core Strategic Messages
The Core Strategy will address all of the above objectives.

Table 2.11

Christchurch Community Plan 2007 **Christchurch Sustainable Community Strategy/ Christchurch Community Partnership Borough wide consultation**
Analysis
The Plan recognises that businesses are the life force of any community, providing jobs for people and contributing to the prosperity of the community. The Plan supports an 'Evening Café Culture' initiative, to encourage tourists and local residents into the town centre during the evening. The Christchurch Community Partnership has 7 themed action groups which identify priority issues for the Borough for consideration through the community planning process. The most recent Borough wide consultation to identify issues was undertaken in 2006. The following action groups address issues of relevance to town centres: **Culture Learning and Lifestyle** *Vision - A Christchurch valued for its range of cultural and educational opportunities and where the quality of life is high.* • Town centre vitality • Encouraging tourism **High Quality Environment:** *Vision – A Christchurch where the high quality natural and built environment is protected and enhanced.* Relevant Issues from 2006 consultation • The need to provide sufficient open spaces and parks. • Noise and light pollution • Pollution from road traffic in the town centre and Parley Lane • The need to provide adequate flood defences to address flood risk

Increased Prosperity –

Vision: A Christchurch which is economically vibrant and where people want to live, study, work, bring up children, be supported through unemployment and retire.

Relevant Issues from 2006 consultation

- Insufficient range of shops in the town centre and dominance of charity shops.
- Too many empty shops
- The need to promote tourism
- The need to regenerate Saxon Square
- Run down appearance of the town centre
- The Monday Market- problems associated with closure of the High Street, 'low quality' of stalls
- High parking charges in the town centre that subsequently have a detrimental impact on trade
- Providing too many facilities for tourists and discriminating against residents.
- The physical severance of the Bargates and associated access problems
- The lack of leisure facilities for young people, especially in Highcliffe

Travel and Access –

Vision – A Christchurch where travel is efficient, affordable and sustainable

Relevant Issues from 2006 consultation

- Car parking charges and the effect on local business
- The need for fully accessible demand responsive transport services to the town centre.
- Traffic congestion (Town centre, Fairmile and Barrack Road, A35, Parley Lane)
- The lack of a bypass or solution to Fountain Roundabout.
- The need to pedestrianise the High Street

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy should address the following issues of relevance to the town centres:

- The need for flood defences to reduce risk in the town centre
- The provision of suitable open space and recreational facilities
- The provision of transport infrastructure improvements to improve access and reduce congestion to the town centres.

• The need to promote the use of more sustainable modes other than the car to reduce harmful emissions and congestion. • The need for town centre enhancements to improve town centre environments to enhance their vitality, viability and accessibility.

Table 2.12

East Dorset Local Plan 2002
Analysis
• **Policy SHDEV1** supports the development of shops in use classes A1, A2 and A3 within the town centres, where they do not result in a detrimental impact on the environment and amenities of the centre. • **Policy SHDEV3** concerns limiting the uses of retail warehouses which could otherwise impact and harm town centres. • **Policy SHDEV4** concerns the siting of retail warehouses only on employment land. • **Policy SHDEV5** concerns the provision and restrictions on where to site hot food takeaways and restaurants. • **Policy SHDEV6** considers the provision of small scale local shops in residential areas in urban areas and within village envelopes. • **Policy SHDEV7** concerns the provision of farm shops. • **Policy SHDEV8** seeks to protect the loss of village shops, public houses and community facilities in rural areas.
Core Strategic Messages
These policies have worked successfully in the current Local Plan encouraging the provision of comparison retail units in the town centres, and other uses in areas where they would not harm the vitality of the town centres. They have also attempted to retain and support village facilities, although some village shops have closed during the plan period. The Core Strategy should continue to promote comparison A1 uses in the primary area and A2 and A3 uses in the secondary areas. The Core Strategy should continue to recognise the importance of neighbourhood and local facilities in towns and rural areas, often considering combined provision in rural buildings e.g. Pub with shop or tea room to provide a sustainable option.
Footfall Counts in East Dorset (2007, 2008 and 2009)
Analysis
• In spite of the current economic climate, the East Dorset towns remain buoyant, with relatively constant numbers of shoppers and visitors to the towns over the last three years. • The vitality of the towns relies on the safe and easy access of visitors and shoppers to them. • External factors may contribute to reduced trade – such as the state of the economy, unemployment and road closures.

Core Strategic Messages
The Core Strategy should continue to support vibrant and attractive town centres to support the local economies.

Table 2.13

East Dorset District Council's Corporate Plan (2010 – 2016)
Analysis
Priority Area - Communities To promote thriving communities that are well served, healthy and safe with a strong local identity. Our town centres are a main focus for our communities. They provide places to shop, work, socialise, learn and live. We have three town centres in East Dorset which are complemented by a variety of local and neighbourhood centres in villages and suburban areas. Our role is to support these areas and encourage people to shop locally to retain strong local identities, support the local economy and reduce traffic congestion and Co2 emissions from having to travel to other areas. We will work with bus companies to encourage them to provide more transport in rural areas to local town centres. We will have succeeded if, by 2016 we have lively local centres, and rural communities have access to the services they need.
Core Strategic Messages
The Core Strategy should create a living thriving East Dorset with better access to services for the rural communities, and lively local and town centres.

Table 2.14

East Dorset Sustainable Community Strategy (2008)
Analysis
This Strategy highlights four Strategic Challenges, of which two relate to the towns, villages and facilities: • **Declining facilities in villages**

Many villages and smaller settlements have lost, or face losing, key local services and facilities. These include public services such as libraries and commercial concerns including village shops and post offices. • **Poor access to urban areas and large settlements** The decline in local facilities in rural areas increases the need for good transport links and access to the larger settlements where services, employment, cultural, learning and leisure opportunities are available.
Core Strategic Messages The Core Strategy should aim to improve access to facilities for residents particularly in the rural area.

Table 2.15

Dorset Community Strategy
Analysis
Core Strategic Messages

Table 2.16

2.60 ***Core Strategic Messages***

2.61 The Core Strategy must set out a spatial vision and strategy for the network of centres in the plan area. To do this it should:

- Identify a hierarchy and network of centres
- Consider the future needs and capacities of the town centres
- Consider future parking provision to adequately cater for the needs of the centres
- Identify the Primary Shopping Areas and define them on the Proposals Map;
- Identify the extent of the primary and secondary shopping cores and associated policies;
- Focus development in and plan for the expansion of existing centres
- Promote town centre management, creating partnerships to develop, improve and maintain the town centre, and manage the evening and night-time economy
- Regularly monitor and review the impact and effectiveness of their policies for promoting vital and viable town centres

- Recognise the role of rural market towns as the main service centre in the rural area – encourage regeneration, strengthen role as a rural centre, enhance the vitality and viability.
- Support the provision of small scale neighbourhood shops, pubs and village shops to sustain communities

2.62 These principles will be taken forward with the consideration of new and emerging issues identified in Section 3 below. As there are no strategic allocations in either Christchurch or East Dorset, the town centre sites will be addressed in the Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Document.

3 Identification of Issues

3.1 This section will consider the validity of the questions posed in the Issues and Options consultation and how appropriate they were, based on responses and other issues identified by key stakeholders, members of the public and through the evidence base.

3.2 In addition, this section will set out any issues that have been identified from new evidence arising since the Issues and Options engagement. This will then form a consolidated list of issues for the development of preferred options in Section 4.

3.3 This section will also examine new evidence based studies undertaken by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners in 2008, considering each of the town centres in East Dorset and Christchurch, and a separate report which considered the proposed urban extensions in East Dorset and the potential for new retailing facilities in these locations. Annual Footfall counts in East Dorset will also be used as an evidence base when considering the health and vitality of the towns.

3.4 **Issues identified through Issues and Options consultation.**

3.5 The Issues and Options consultation considered the following issues:

3.6 **TC1 What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their vitality?; and**

3.7 **TC2 How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages?**

3.8 **TC3 What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?**

3.9 The original issues posed in the Issues and Options consultation in 2008 are considered to be valid in addressing the vitality and viability of the town centres in Christchurch and East Dorset. They reflect the Core Strategic Messages derived from policy guidance and evidence. It is considered that these issues can be addressed under the single strategic issue of town centre vitality and viability.

3.10 In addition, the responses revealed that a balanced mix of uses within the centres is supported, as well as the promotion of historic aspects of the centres. Farmers markets, facilities for youths, improved public transport in the evenings, and better parking for the disabled were identified as areas for improvements

3.11 When asked whether all the issues have been identified the following additional responses were raised:

- Free car parking /More car parks (CBC)
- Improved interchange facilities for public transport
- One way system Castle Street/ Bridge Street pedestrianisation (CBC)
- Visual improvements to buildings
- Encourage independent shops at low rents (CBC)

- Enhance the present commercial function of Corfe Mullen (EDDC)
- Improvements to be carried out to Druitt Gardens and new Druitt Hall (CBC)

3.12 Preferred options to address these issues will be set out within the town centre visions which include Issues 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

3.13 **Issues identified through evidence**

Joint Retail Assessment (March 2008) by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners

Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners) were commissioned to prepare a Joint Retail Capacity Study for Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset and Purbeck Councils, to provide:

- an assessment of the future needs for additional retail facilities within the four local authority areas up to 2026;
- an analysis of the role, function and network of existing centres within the four local authority areas;
- an assessment of the capacity of each district to accommodate growth, and the identification of potential development sites; and
- a policy review and proposed issues and options for the Local Development Framework.

The report highlighted individual issues for each town centre to take up in the Core Strategy. The table below sets out the key findings and recommendations for each town centre that will inform the creation of preferred options.

	Convenience/supermarket	Comparison	Trade mix	Vacancy levels	Other key issues
Christchurch	The new Waitrose store in Christchurch has absorbed the capacity for new convenience retail development for the foreseeable future. However, there could be scope for further qualitative improvements within the main centres, e.g. discount food retailing which is not represented. It is estimated that Christchurch Borough as a whole will have a negative convenience floorspace	Christchurch/Highcliffe has a relatively low proportion of retail units compared to the national average. The main issue identified by the evidence study was that Christchurch does not offer the local distinctiveness or niche retailing	There is a limited or no representation of retailers in certain sectors, particularly butchers, off licenses, clothing variety shops, jewellers and recreational goods. Also it was considered that the presence of national multiples could be better.	The vacancy levels within Christchurch are in line with the national average. At present there were 19 vacant units in the centre which represents 9.1% of the total number of units. Several vacant units are in the Saxon Square Shopping Centre.	**Hierarchy of centres** Recommendations were made to elevate Highcliffe District centre to a Town Centre and Barrack Road Centre to a District Centre. **Defining Centre Boundaries and Retail Frontages** Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study identified that there may

	Convenience/supermarket	Comparison	Trade mix	Vacancy levels	Other key issues
	capacity during the plan period. The retail study indicates that the requirement for additional convenience floorspace will amount to -323 to 74 Sq M net between 2007 and 2026.	which would give it an edge over other larger centres. The goal should be to enhance Christchurch's role as a specialist retail destination. The retail study predicts that in the planned period 2007-2026 there will be a need to provide 9,685 to 11,200 Sq M additional convenience floorspace in the Borough. The evidence suggests that Christchurch town centre is likely to have the best prospects for accommodating growth and new development. Identified potential development sites in the short term include:	To the Bargates end of the centre there are few comparison retailers with a high concentration of evening economy uses such as takeaways and restaurants.		be some need to reorganise the boundaries of the core and secondary areas. It was recommended that Church Street be re-designated as a secondary shopping area and TownBridge (along Castle Street) be deleted as a Secondary Retail Frontage. **Parking** The study concluded that the location and convenience of the existing car parks is good, with the majority located just off the High Street or within easy reach and at a reasonable cost. Physical constraints There is a pedestrian/vehicular conflict along the High Street. In addition the centre is fragmented,

	Convenience/supermarket	Comparison	Trade mix	Vacancy levels	Other key issues
		• Vacant land rear of High Street • Saxon Square • The Lanes In the medium and long term the following sites could be potentially developed: • Former Post Office and Shopping Parade • The Magistrates Court and Police Station site			being divided by the Fountains roundabout into two sections. Environmental / Townscape Improvements The study identified the following areas of improvement: better street lighting, better presence of public art and better quality of street furniture including bins and chairs. The quality of town centre parks was as an area to be improved on.
Highcliffe		The shopping units are occupied by a mixture of local independent traders. There is minimal representation from the major national multiples with Lloyds Pharmacy the only recognisable national retailer.	There is minimal representation from major national multiples in Highcliffe. In contrast, the quality and proportion of independent retailers is rated to be quite good.	The number and concentration of shop vacancies were considered. At the time of the study there were 6 vacant units,	Environmental / Townscape Improvements The quality of the streetscape was rated as being a reasonably low standard., with the quality and quantity of both street furniture and

	Convenience/supermarket	Comparison	Trade mix	Vacancy levels	Other key issues
		The limited range/choice of shops and services was seen to be a weakness as well as a considerable number of charity shops. In Highcliffe there is scope to redevelop the Former Market site in the short term and the Highcliffe Sports and Social Club in the medium term.	Also service and miscellaneous uses are very high compared to the national average (banks and estate agents are prevalent in the town centre.	which amounted to 5% of the total number of units in the centre, which is below national average	planting low. The lack of public art was identified as an issue.
Ferndown	The largest food stores are concentrated in Ferndown with a Tesco's and Iceland in the town centre, and an out of town Sainsbury's and Lidl located at Tricketts Cross 1 km to the E of the town centre.	Ferndown has a relatively low proportion of comparison retail units compared to the national average (36.3% compared to 48.3% nationally).	The town has a very high proportion of service and miscellaneous uses for its size, in particular banks, financial services and estate agents, takeaways and restaurants. There is a lack of national multiple names in the town.	The number of vacant units in the town centre is low with just 3 units being recorded at the time of the research	**Environmental improvements**, which include street furniture/planting, were recommended for Ferndown as the town centre is outdated. **Pedestrian/vehicular conflict** Ringwood Road and Victoria Road have high levels of traffic movement which leads to conflict with

	Convenience/supermarket	Comparison	Trade mix	Vacancy levels	Other key issues
					pedestrians. Ringwood Road in particular, is an unfavourable environment for shoppers. **Shopping Frontages** Changes to the Primary Shopping Frontages are recommended and Secondary Shopping Frontages should be introduced. **A Primary Shopping Area should be identified.**
Verwood	Verwood unusually has two centres. The main supermarket, Morrisons is located 1 km to the south of the main shopping streets in a precinct with the local leisure centre and a parade of shops. In the centre, there is a Spar and a One Stop convenience store.	Verwood has a low proportion of comparison retail units when compared to the national average (24.3% compared to 48.3%), with a high proportion of services and miscellaneous units.	There are a large number of service units, such as beauty salons and hairdressers, and a high volume of estate agents for the size of the town.	Verwood has a low vacancy rate, far below national rates.	**Lack of national multiples** Given the size of Verwood (only 37 units) it is not surprising there are a lack of national multiple names in the town. However, there is scope for additional stores with the provision of 5 new retail units in the centre during 2008.

	Convenience/supermarket	Comparison	Trade mix	Vacancy levels	Other key issues
					<u>**Evening economy**</u> There are no pubs or evening opening cafes in the centre, although the newly opened community hall has a theatre which may attract evening visitors to the town. <u>**Hierarchy of Centres**</u> It is recommended that Verwood becomes a District Centre, rather than a town centre due to its size, function and number of units. **A Primary Shopping Area should be identified.**
West Moors	West Moors is another small centre with just 44 units in a linear structure. Here there is a Tesco Express and a Co-op convenience store, both of which are relatively newly opened. There is also an independent butcher.	The comparison units are varied and tend to be specialist types. There is a lack of shoe shops, clothes and book shops, but good provision of carpet and furniture shops and chemists.	The centre lacks a bank, although it has a building society branch. It also lacks representation from national multiples.	There were just 3 units vacant at the time of the survey dispersed throughout the centre. This is lower than might be expected nationally.	<u>**Hierarchy of Centres**</u> It is recommended that West Moors becomes a District rather than a town centre, due to its size, function and number of units. <u>**Evening Economy**</u>

	Convenience/supermarket	Comparison	Trade mix	Vacancy levels	Other key issues
					There are 2 pubs and 3 takeaways in the centre, but no restaurants or evening places of entertainment which would contribute to an evening economy. **A Primary Shopping Area should be identified.**
Wimborne	Wimborne has a Somerfield store in the town centre and several independent convenience retailers. Planning permission has recently been granted for a Waitrose store on the edge of the centre near to Crown Mead, which should open in Summer 2010.	Wimborne is well represented in comparison shop units with a high number of quality independent units. This reflects the national trend of 46.9% in Wimborne and 48.3% nationally.	The trade mix is good between comparison goods types. However there is an under representation of national retailers which might help to enhance the attractiveness of the town.	Vacancy rates are quite low and vacant units are dispersed throughout the town.	**<u>Convenience Floorspace</u>** The need for an additional supermarket was identified in the study, and since the report, Waitrose has been granted planning permission for a store in the town. **<u>Pedestrian/vehicular conflict</u>** The historic narrow streets lead to conflict between pedestrians and vehicles in the town centre. **<u>Streetscape</u>**

	Convenience/supermarket	Comparison	Trade mix	Vacancy levels	Other key issues
					Although there are some very high quality streets in the town centre, it was considered there is room for improvement in some. Materials, paving, street furniture, public art and signs were areas highlighted for improvement. **Shopping Frontages** Changes to the Primary Shopping Frontages are recommended and Secondary Shopping Frontages should be introduced. **A Primary Shopping Area should be identified**.

Table 3.2

Table 3.1

3.14 To summarise, the following key issues need to be addressed in each settlement:

Settlement	Define Town Centre boundary	Define Primary Shopping Area	Define Primary & Secondary frontages	Change hierarchy of settlement	Improve pedestrian/vehicular conflict	Public realm improvements	Support national multiples	Support evening economy	Support more convenience floorspace
Christchurch	**X**	**x**	**X**	Barrack Road	**X**	**X**	**x**	**x**	
Highcliffe				**X**	**x**	**X**	**x**	**x**	
Ferndown	**X**	**X**	**X**		**X**	**X**			
Verwood	**X**	**X**					**X**	**X**	
West Moors	**X**	**X**		**X**				**X**	
Wimborne Minster	**X**	**X**	**X**			**X**			**X**

Table 3.3

3.15 Expenditure Leakage from the local economies

3.16 In addition, the Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Study highlighted the level of expenditure being lost to other towns and shopping centres in the sub region. This is illustrated in the table below, and demonstrates the significant levels of convenience and comparison expenditure leakage which adversely affects the local economy.

Borough/District	% Convenience Expenditure Leakage	% Comparison Expenditure Leakage	% of Convenience Stores Floorspace Collectively overtrading above benchmark
Christchurch	**54%**	**82%**	**14%**
East Dorset	**45%**	**84%**	**39%**

Table 3.4

3.17 The results of the Householder survey, carried out by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners indicate that for Christchurch and Wimborne the outflow of non-food shopping trips to larger centres is relatively significant to i.e. Poole, Bournemouth, New Milton, Castlepoint and Southampton. The Core Strategy needs to consider the issue of increased leakage of comparison expenditure to bigger centres.

3.18 Provision of new floorspace to meet projected housing growth identified in the towns

3.19 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners considered the potential population growth in Christchurch and East Dorset over a period of 20 years. The convenience and comparison floorspace projections in the tables below demonstrate a range of floorspace requirements based on a lower and an upper threshold. The higher end ranges would be required if higher housing completion rates and urban extension areas are completed as envisaged in the draft RSS incorporating the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes. However if the lower draft RSS completion rates are implemented then the lower floorspace projections may be more appropriate. If urban extensions are implemented in Christchurch and East Dorset, then it is likely these new residential areas will require neighbourhood and shopping facilities to support them. Detailed requirements for the urban extensions will be examined through the master planning process.

Local Authority	Additional Convenience Goods Floorspace Sq m Net			
	2007 to 2011	**2007 - 2016**	**2007 - 2021**	**2007 2026**
East Dorset	4,994 to 5,464	5,431 to 6,344	6,014 to 7,147	6,748 to 8,004
Christchurch	-1,390 to -1,233	-1,032 to -778	-694 to -364	-323 to 74

Table 3.5

3.20 Source: Joint Retail Assessment, Volume I: Capacity Analysis

3.21 Christchurch has a very high provision of convenience floorspace, and will require very little additional floorspace even if the higher housing targets are reached. In East Dorset, however, it is projected that between 6,630 and 7,886 sq m of additional convenience floorspace will be required in the plan period. The new Waitrose store In Wimborne will provide 1,834 sq m of convenience floorspace, leaving a shortfall of between 4,796 to 6,052 sqm.

Local Authority	Additional Comparison Goods Sales Floorspace Sq m Net			
	2007-2011	**2007-2016**	**2007-2021**	**2007-2026**
East Dorset	2,000 to 2,606	4,237 to 5,514	7,651 to 9,480	11,710 to 13,028

Christchurch	1,698 to 2,076	3,678 to 4,402	6,456 to 7,571	9,685 to 11,200

Table 3.6

3.22 Source: Joint Retail Assessment, Volume I: Capacity Analysis

3.23 The study indicates that both Christchurch and East Dorset will be required to accommodate increased levels of comparison floorspace in the plan period.

3.24 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners also carried out a further study to consider the potential retail capacity requirements of the urban extensions in East Dorset. The key findings are given in the table below:

East Dorset Urban Extensions Retail Assessment (November 2008)
• The study highlights the potential capacity for a new food store in Corfe Mullen of about 1,400 sq m (2,000 sq m gross). • West Parley also has the potential to accommodate a food store of between 1,500 – 2,000 sq m (3,000 sq m gross). These proposals could be incorporated into the master planning process.
Core Strategic Messages
The urban extensions could support two new supermarkets one at Corfe Mullen and West Parley and should be promoted in the Core Strategy.

Table 3.7

3.25 **East Dorset Pedestrian Footfall Counts 2007 onwards**

3.26 Footfall counts are carried out annually in the four East Dorset towns to consider the vitality and viability of the towns, and to consider trends. This offers a local insight into the health of the towns, and will help to identify possible trading problems in a town, or increased trade and the impacts on traffic and parking provision.

3.27 The graphs below show the trends for footfall in East Dorset since 2007. The trends from this evidence show the local towns have healthy town centres, with footfall remaining relatively constant over the time period. Throughout all towns there is more activity on Fridays. West Moors and Ferndown have seen greater activity in the last count period than others. This is in contrast to the other towns where there has been a slight drop in activity in 2009. The Wimborne Minster graph has data for an extra count undertaken in September 2008 to illustrate the effects of the closure of Canford Bridge – this shows the closure of the bridge did not have a significant impact on pedestrian activity on the town centre of Wimborne. In spite of the current economic recession, the general health of the town centres is good. As future counts take place, the trends will become evident and will offer a clearer picture of the vitality of the towns.

3.28 **Conclusions**

3.29 The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study highlighted the need for further convenience and comparison floorspace in the centres over the plan period, and in the potential urban extensions. The local town centres are healthy but the evidence suggests they need to adapt to changes in the market and the demands of shoppers and visitors. This will be by making themselves more environmentally attractive as a shopping destination as well as offering high quality products and services.

3.30 **Cross Border Issues**

3.31 In Christchurch the major issue relates to the loss of comparison shopping to the nearby shopping malls at Castlepoint, and to Bournemouth town centre shops. There is less of an issue with the leakage of convenience shopping. In East Dorset however, there are high levels of expenditure leakage in both convenience and comparison shopping to other destinations, most notably in Poole for convenience shopping, and to Bournemouth for comparison goods. These shopping destinations have larger stores with a higher number of national retailers to attract shoppers than the East Dorset towns, and are major centres in the local retail hierarchy being within 5 miles of both Wimborne Minster and Ferndown.

3.32 **Summary of Identified Critical Issues**

3.33 The analysis of policy, evidence studies and consultation responses indicates that in order to improve the vitality and viability of the town/district/local centres the following issues need to be addressed:

- Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured? (PPS4, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Report).

3.34 This issue will be addressed by Issues 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

- How do we attract more visitors to the centres to encourage spending in the local economy? (Issues and Options Consultation response.)

3.35 This issue will be addressed by Issues 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

- How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer? (PPS4, South West Tourism Report 2005 and emphasised in the consultation response).

3.36 This issue will be addressed by Issues 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

- How can we ensure that members of the community continue to have access to local services and facilities? (PPS4, Issues and Options Consultation response).

3.37 This issue will be addressed by Issues 1, 2, 8. 9. 10. 11. 12 and 13.

- How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses? (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Report, PPS4).

3.38 This will be considered under Issues 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

- What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres? (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Report, Issues and Options Consultation response).

3.39 This issue will be addressed by consolidated issues pTC8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

- Should we enhance the evening economy in Christchurch, Verwood and West Moors to improve the vitality of the town centres?

3.40 This issue will be addressed by Issues 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

- Should we review town centre car parks, manage and monitor their use, and in relation to changes in car use reduce the number or size of car parks freeing up town centre sites for other uses?

3.41 This issue will be addressed by Issues 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

- How can we retain important local community facilities in settlements, such as village/community shops and pubs, which may be economically unviable?

3.42 This issue will be addressed by Issue 16

3.43 The consolidated issues set out below have been identified from the stakeholder engagement undertaken at Issues and Options and from the baseline information, evidence, consideration of other plans and strategies. Relevant sub issues are also set out below the consolidated issues.

3.44 **Strategic Issue 1: How can the vitality and viability of the town centres be enhanced?**

3.45 **Issue 1: Is the existing Christchurch town centre hierarchy appropriate?**

- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**
- **How can we ensure that members of the community continue to have access to local services and facilities?**

3.46 **Issue 2: Is the existing East Dorset town centre hierarchy appropriate?**

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3.47 **Issue 3: What should be the extent of ChristchurchTown Centre boundary?**

- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**

3.48 **Issue 4: What should be the extent of the WimborneTown Centre boundary?**

- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**

3.49 **Issue 5: What should be the extent of the Ferndown Town Centre boundary?**

- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**

3.50 **Issue 6: Should a town centre boundary be designated for Verwood?**

- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**

3.51 **Issue 7: Should a town centre boundary be designated for West Moors?**

- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**

3.52 **Issue 8: What should the vision be for Christchurch Town Centre?**

- **What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their viability?** (Issue TC1 asked at Issues and Options)

3.53 This section will discuss how to achieve a balanced mix of uses, which would encourage people to visit the centres and shop locally. The need to expand evening economy uses will be considered here, as well as the issue of access to local services and facilities. PPS4 supports the provision of higher density development in the town centres where there is likely to be good accessibility to public transport and services.

- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**
- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages?** (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)

- **What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?** ((Issue TC3 asked at Issues and Options)
- **How can we resist the leakage of expenditure from our towns to the wider sub region?**
- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**

3.54 This is a crucial issue because an attractive shopping and cultural environment that emphasises the historic setting of the centre will draw in more visitors and contribute to the increased viability of the centre and the local economy. The issue of improved sustainable access to the town centres/provision of adequate parking levels will also be discussed under this heading.

- **How do we address the need for sustainable modes of transport, efficient public transport and the management of public car parks in the town centre?**

3.55 In addressing the strategic issue of town centre vitality and viability section 4 will also develop options for approaches to development management to guide the location, scale and type of retail development

- **How can town centre public assets be optimised to reinvigorate and sustain the town centres?**

3.56 A Total Place Review of publicly owned premises, land and assets is proposed for Ferndown and Wimborne Minster. This will provide a rational basis for delivering better public services and optimising use of land.

- **How do we attract more visitors to the centres to encourage spending in the local economy?**
- **How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer?How can we ensure that members of the community continue to have access to local services and facilities?**
- **How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses?**
- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**
- **Should we enhance the evening economy in Christchurch, Verwood and West Moors to improve the vitality of the town centres?**

3.57 **Should we review town centre car parks, manage and monitor their use, and in relation to changes in car use reduce the number or size of car parks freeing up town centre sites for other uses?**

3.58 **Issue 9: What should the vision be for Highcliffe Town Centre?**

- **What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their viability? (Issue TC1 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres? (Issue TC3 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we resist the leakage of expenditure from our towns to the wider sub region?**

- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**
- **How do we address the need for sustainable modes of transport, efficient public transport and the management of public car parks in the town centre?**
- **How can town centre public assets be optimised to reinvigorate and sustain the town centres?**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**
- **How do we attract more visitors to the centres to encourage spending in the local economy?**
- **How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer?**
- **How can we ensure that members of the community continue to have access to local services and facilities?**
- **How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses?**
- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**
- **Should we enhance the evening economy in Christchurch, Verwood and West Moors to improve the vitality of the town centres?**
- **Should we review town centre car parks, manage and monitor their use, and in relation to changes in car use reduce the number or size of car parks freeing up town centre sites for other uses?**

3.59 **Issue 10: What should the vision be for Ferndown Town Centre**

- **What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their viability? (Issue TC1 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres? (Issue TC3 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we resist the leakage of expenditure from our towns to the wider sub region?**
- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**
- **How do we address the need for sustainable modes of transport, efficient public transport and the management of public car parks in the town centre?**
- **How can town centre public assets be optimised to reinvigorate and sustain the town centres?**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**
- **How do we attract more visitors to the centres to encourage spending in the local economy?**
- **How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer?**
- **How can we ensure that members of the community continue to have access to local services and facilities?**
- **How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses?**
- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**

- **Should we enhance the evening economy in Christchurch, Verwood and West Moors to improve the vitality of the town centres?**
- **Should we review town centre car parks, manage and monitor their use, and in relation to changes in car use reduce the number or size of car parks freeing up town centre sites for other uses?**

3.60 **Issue 11: What should the vision be for Verwood Town Centre?**

- **What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their viability? (Issue TC1 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres? (Issue TC3 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we resist the leakage of expenditure from our towns to the wider sub region?**
- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**
- **How do we address the need for sustainable modes of transport, efficient public transport and the management of public car parks in the town centre?**
- **How can town centre public assets be optimised to reinvigorate and sustain the town centres?**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**
- **How do we attract more visitors to the centres to encourage spending in the local economy?**
- **How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer?**
- **How can we ensure that members of the community continue to have access to local services and facilities?**
- **How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses?**
- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**
- **Should we enhance the evening economy in Christchurch, Verwood and West Moors to improve the vitality of the town centres?**

3.61 **Should we review town centre car parks, manage and monitor their use, and in relation to changes in car use reduce the number or size of car parks freeing up town centre sites for other uses?**

3.62 **Issue 12: What should the vision be for West Moors Town Centre?**

- **What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their viability? (Issue TC1 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres? (Issue TC3 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we resist the leakage of expenditure from our towns to the wider sub region?**
- **What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?**

- How do we address the need for sustainable modes of transport, efficient public transport and the management of public car parks in the town centre?
- How can town centre public assets be optimised to reinvigorate and sustain the town centres?
- Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?
- How do we attract more visitors to the centres to encourage spending in the local economy?
- How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer?
- How can we ensure that members of the community continue to have access to local services and facilities?
- How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses?
- What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?
- Should we enhance the evening economy in Christchurch, Verwood and West Moors to improve the vitality of the town centres?
- Should we review town centre car parks, manage and monitor their use, and in relation to changes in car use reduce the number or size of car parks freeing up town centre sites for other uses?

3.63 **Issue 13: What should the vision be for Wimborne Minster Town Centre?**

- What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their viability? (Issue TC1 asked at Issues and Options)
- How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)
- What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres? (Issue TC3 asked at Issues and Options)
- How can we resist the leakage of expenditure from our towns to the wider sub region?
- What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?
- How do we address the need for sustainable modes of transport, efficient public transport and the management of public car parks in the town centre?
- How can town centre public assets be optimised to reinvigorate and sustain the town centres?
- Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?
- How do we attract more visitors to the centres to encourage spending in the local economy?
- How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer?
- How can we ensure that members of the community continue to have access to local services and facilities?
- How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses?
- What townscape improvements are required to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres?

- **Should we enhance the evening economy in Christchurch, Verwood and West Moors to improve the vitality of the town centres?**
- **Should we review town centre car parks, manage and monitor their use, and in relation to changes in car use reduce the number or size of car parks freeing up town centre sites for other uses?**

3.64 **Issue 14: What approach should be adopted to guide the location, scale and type of retail development in Christchurch?**

- **Are the existing development management policies relating to the shopping areas frontage policies and car parking provision robust?**

3.65 This issue is critical to ensure the towns have appropriate shopping area boundaries, up to date primary and secondary shopping frontage designations, and enough car parks to support the future shopping requirements in the towns

- **What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their viability? (Issue TC1 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**
- **How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer?**
- **How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses?**

3.66 **Issue15: What approach should be adopted to guide the location, scale and type of retail development in East Dorset?**

- **Are the existing development management policies relating to the shopping areas frontage policies and car parking provision robust?**
- **What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their viability? (Issue TC1 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages? (Issue TC2 asked at Issues and Options)**
- **Given the increasing leakage of expenditure to bigger retail centres in Castle Point, Bournemouth and Poole, how can the viability and vitality of our town centres be ensured?**
- **How can we balance the development of retail uses with the need to protect and enhance the historic environment, tourist economy and differential/ specialist retail offer?**
- **How can we secure a balanced mix of uses in the primary/secondary frontages, including the potential to expand evening economy uses?**

3.67 **Issue 16: How can we retain important local community facilities in settlements, such as village shops and pubs, which may be economically unviable?**

3.68 Smaller settlements and outlying parts of the urban areas rely on the provision of convenience goods and newspapers from small, often independent shops, which are threatened by the cheaper town centre supermarkets. These services also have a wider community function to play in villages where they are most vulnerable.

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 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal. The process includes a critical assessment of the options put forward to address issues identified in the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper. In some instances additional issues have been identified as a result of the evidence gathering process which is also examined here. For ease of use, this section has been divided into two comprising Christchurch (Part 1) and East Dorset (Part 2). Each section discusses Issues TC1 and TC3 (raised at Issues and Options) jointly as both issues look towards promoting vital and viable town centres. It then considers the proposed Vision for each town centre and discusses preferred options based on the critical issue identified in Section 3.

4.2 The original Issue TC2 is discussed separately towards the generation of preferred options that provide development management policies to support the implementation of the town centre visions emerging from the original TC1 and TC3 issues. Policies emerging from the original TC2 address the extent of the town centre development area, the hierarchy of centres and the scale of development permitted in the centres within the hierarchy.

PART I. BOROUGH OF CHRISTCHURCH

Christchurch Town Centre

4.3 **Issue identified at issues and options**

4.4 **Issue TC1: What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their vitality?**

4.5 **Issues and Options Consultation Response**

	Employment	Retailing	Recreation/open space	Residential	Café/theatre	Tourism	Evening Economy
Christchurch	49 (61%)	62 (78%)	50 (63%)	78 (60%)	49 (61%)	57 (71%)	41 (52%)

Table 4.1

4.6 Whilst the factors given showed a range of potential uses in the town centres, preference was made for the traditional use of the town centre for retailing and specifically for improving the range of uses within the existing retail offer, increasing the number of national multiples and encouraging tourism. Overall the current retail offer was perceived to be too ‘down market’.

4.7 Preference for uses identified in the consultation exercise is in line with national guidance, which promotes a balanced mix of uses in the town centres. Growth of comparison retail is a vital element in ensuring the vitality and attractiveness of the town. The levels of growth will be determined through the analysis of the evidence base. Consideration also needs to be given to the appropriate mix of specialist retail units and multiples, to ensure distinctiveness and competitiveness of the centre.

4.8 Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.9 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment March 2008.

4.10 Retail provision

- **Convenience**

4.11 It is estimated that Christchurch Borough as a whole will have a negative convenience floorspace capacity in the plan period. The retail study indicates that the requirement for additional convenience floorspace will amount to -323 to 74 Sq M Net between 2007 and 2026.

- **Comparison**

4.12 Christchurch is the largest centre in terms of comparison floorspace in the plan area although the Town Centre has a relatively low percentage of comparison retail units compared to the national average. Out of centre retail parks, including Somerford, Stony Lane and Bailey Drive Retail Park contain a significant proportion of the comparison retail floorspace within the Borough.

4.13 The quantitative and qualitative assessment of the potential capacity of new retail floorspace suggests that there is scope for new retail development within Christchurch. In the long term the retail study broadly estimates that Christchurch Borough as a whole will need an additional 9,685 to 11,200 Sq M net comparison floorspace between 2007and 2026. A detailed analysis of projected floorspace requirements can be found in the table below.

Christchurch Comparison Floorspace Projections- Baseline Population		
	Short term projections 2007-2011	Long term projections 2007-2026
Christchurch	1,210 Sq M	6,899 Sq M
Christchurch retail warehouses	348 Sq M	2,016 Sq M

Table 4.2

Christchurch Comparison Floorspace Projections- High Population Growth		
	Short term projections 2007-2011	Long term projections 2007-2026
Christchurch	1,210 Sq M	6,899 Sq M
Christchurch retail warehouses	348 Sq M	2,016 Sq M

Table 4.3

4.14 Source: Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment Vol 1: Appendices

4.15 As part of the retail study, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners rated the primary shopping area in terms of the proportion and quality of national multiple operators, specialist independent traders and uses associated with the evening economy (public houses, bars, restaurants and entertainment uses). The quality and proportion of special independent traders within the primary area was rated positively, although with scope for improvement. However the quality and proportion of multiple retailers was rated as average, with the majority of units housing 'low order' national retailers as New Look and Shoe Express.

4.16 The Town Centre Strategy (2003) recommended small scale improvements to the town centre's shopping provision to promote Christchurch as a specialist retail destination, which would help to differentiate it from the more mainstream multiple offer in Bournemouth, Poole and Southampton. It also recommended that, this needs to be balanced by the retention and improvement of its multiple retailing, with the redevelopment of Saxon Square providing an opportunity for new and larger units which better suit the requirements of national retailers.

4.17 Based on the evidence, **the priorities for the town centre in terms of retail provision should be to provide** a mix of unit sizes to attract both national multiples and small independent shops and services.

4.18 **Leisure /Evening Economy**

4.19 PPS 4 (para EC4.2) states that '*Local planning authorities should manage the evening and night time economy in centres…..Policies should, 'encourage a diverse range of complementary evening and night time uses which appeal to a wide range of age and social groups, making provision, where appropriate, for leisure, cultural and tourism activities such as cinemas, theatres, restaurants, public houses, bars, nightclubs and cafes'*

4.20 Christchurch has a limited, but adequate selection of commercial, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities, but this reflects the relatively small catchment population. There is the Regent Centre that serves as a cinema and theatre. Bearing in mind that the residents have relatively good access to leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities outside the Borough particularly in Bournemouth and Poole, Christchurch's location within the catchment area of those larger centres will limit the potential for commercial leisure and entertainment facilities. Nonetheless, the retail study concluded that there is scope to improve health and fitness facilities as well as provide for more restaurants and bars, suggesting that an allowance of 10% to 15% of new floorspace for Class A3 to A5 uses may be appropriate. Also the Town Centre Strategy recommended that the priorities for the Town Centre should be the expansion of leisure uses such as health club, café/bar and restaurant type of uses.

4.21 Future town centre development should therefore accommodate these uses in addition to the provision of further A1 floorspace. Non retail uses (Class A3, A4), which have a bearing on tourist facilities could be predominantly encouraged in secondary cores whilst A1 retail expansion will be concentrated in the primary shopping areas.

4.22 **Open Space**

4.23 The 2007 Open Space Audit stated that there is sufficient open space provision in the town centre. However, the report recommended making improvements to Druitt Gardens, a formally designated open space. The gardens at present are perceived to be a threatening place to walk through and are not often frequented by the residents.

4.24 The refurbishment of the Gardens formed part of the Town Strategy vision for the area and the subsequent Druitt Gardens Planning, Design and Development Framework (2005). The framework seeks to create a new woodland garden and centre piece for the town's cultural centre.

4.25 This represents an opportunity to upgrade and manage the garden and provide for frequented recreation grounds within the centre a 'green lung' which would benefit tourism and attract visitors to the centre. The improved Gardens create a new setting for future development at the Lanes, as well as connect the three public facilities Druitt Hall, the Library and the Regent Centre. It is recommended that improvement works should form a part of the centre vision.

4.26 **Tourism**

4.27 The consultation exercise highlighted the important role tourism plays in attracting visitors to the town centre. Christchurch has a historical town centre, most of which lies in the Central Conservation Area. The issues of promoting tourism and protecting the historic built environment are addressed within the Tourism Key Issue Paper and the Historic Built Environment Key Issue Papers respectively. The planned refurbishment and the enhanced environmental features and retail offer of Druitt Gardens will make the centre a popular destination for tourists.

4.28 **Employment**

4.29 Office occupancy level in Christchurch is currently good, although the majority of offices in the town centre comprise business activities that are normally incidental to a town centre, including mainly local and small organisations, such as solicitors and accountants. Much of the office floorspace in the town is small suites above ground floor retail premises. The Christchurch and East Dorset Employment Land Review Study indicated that there is not a strong market for offices in the town centre. The main market for office development is located in Bournemouth and Poole. However, the town centre might accommodate some small scale office development. The Airport North West Business Park is likely to accommodate a significant element of Christchurch's future office provision and is able to accommodate smaller scale high quality office development. .

4.30 **Residential**

4.31 PPS 1 advocates the creation of mixed use development, containing a 'healthy' mix of uses including retail and residential, to create sustainable communities. The provision of residential units should from part of a town centre vision. The town centre's potential for developing residential units is set out in the Christchurch Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment., which is updated annually. Due to a high level of accessibility higher densities will be sought in the town centre. The Delivering Suitable and Sufficient Housing Key Issue Paper will set out density ranges for the town centres. The Key Strategy Key Issue Paper addresses the broad locations for development in the Borough, including the Town Centre.

4.32 PPS4 clearly states that a wide range of complimentary and diverse uses should be encouraged in town centres. PPS4 states that primary and secondary frontages should be realistically defined in designated centres and policies should be set which make it clear which uses will be permitted in these locations. PPS4 requires the assessment of need for 'economic development' including for all main town centre uses.

4.33 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.34 The range of town centre uses have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. In sustainability terms, the uses set out for this issue have uncertain effects on reducing the need for travel (Objective 7) as the number of trips generated by a single use will vary between occupiers. There is the potential of significant positive benefits for town centre viability (Objective 23) and the economy more generally (Objective 24) if the options chosen provide a diverse range of shopping, leisure and employment opportunities. Potential risk of flooding (Objective 10) for residential and commercial development has significant implications for future development in the town centre which will be further considered in the Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal in relation to the outputs of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 assessment.

4.35 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.36 National policy encourages a diversity of uses in the town centres, emphasising the importance of adequate retail provision. In Christchurch town centre retail uses will be supported, expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre in line with requirements established through the evidence base (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study, particularly the need to provide sufficient A1 comparison floorspace to meet projected requirements). This will seek to enhance Christchurch's niche retail offer and improve the presence of national multiples. There is no requirement for additional convenience floorspace provision as determined by the evidence. However, there could be scope for further qualitative improvements within the main centres.

4.37 Recreation and open space for the town centre should be provided in line with the requirements set out in the evidence (PPG17 study). Important town centre uses to be retained include the Regent Centre as cinema / theatre and the presence of cafés / (particularly along Church Street) which enhance the evening economy.

4.38 The town centre will also be a focus for residential development and limited office development which can be provided alongside the projected requirements for retail. The Key Strategy will set out the broad location and scale of residential development to be accommodated in the centre. The strategy will take into account the outputs of the Councils' Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 and incorporate the principles of efficient use of land and accessibility to basic services.

4.39 The next part of the paper will discuss specific environmental improvements to Christchurch Town Centre, identified by the consultation response to Key Issue TC3 and the evidence base. The outputs will then be merged with the conclusions presented above, to inform a comprehensive vision for the town centre.

4.40 Preferred options to address this issue are set out under Issue 8: What should the vision be for Christchurch Town Centre?

4.41 Issue identified at issues and options

4.42 Issue TC3: What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?

4.43 Issues and Options Consultation Response

What issues/improvements need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?

Town	Town Centre Manager	Tidy streets	Clearer Signage	Design guidance	Better security	Reduce anti-social behaviour	more seating	Improve public transport/car parking	Pedestrianisation
Christchurch	32	41	30	43	35	40	39	36	28

Table 4.4

4.44 All these improvements were perceived to be important to consider, although the design of new development was seen as most important to ensure continued investment in the centres. This was followed by cleanliness of the environment, better seating and better security/lighting respectively.

4.45 Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.46 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment (2008)

4.47 As part of the retail study the town was audited in terms of trade mix; anti-social behaviour and security; accessibility and movement; cleaning and maintenance; quality of streetscape and environment.

4.48 The main issues that emerged from the audit were:

- The lack of sufficient lighting in the town centre.
- Impaired movement in and around the town centre due to a strong vehicular/pedestrian conflict.
- Low frequency of pedestrian crossings
- The quality of the streetscape was rated as being of a reasonably low standard within the primary shopping area.
- The presence of public art was rated as poor

4.49 Christchurch Town Centre Strategy (2003)

4.50 The Town Centre Strategy vision identified the need to ensure that the town centre is accessible by well signed and located car parks and appropriate bus routes and an easy place to walk or cycle in. It recommended environmental enhancements to create pedestrian friendly places at Fountains Way Roundabout to create a better link between the shopping areas in the High Street and Bargates; around the junction of the High Street located at the heart of the historic core and Bridge Street. It was recommended to improve the environment of the town centre by sensitive development and heritage improvements and make the centre a safer place, by improving its appearance, having well lit streets, active throughout the day and into the evening and over looked by housing.

4.51 The Strategy also recommended upgrading Saxon Square and the precinct so they relate appropriately to the historic core on High Street. Also redevelopment of Saxon Square would help to improve the vitality and viability of the town centre as a whole by providing the type of larger shop units that modern multiple retailers require, as many of the shops in the centre are too small to satisfy occupier demands.

4.52 **Christchurch Parking, Access and Signing Strategy (2006)**

4.53 Christchurch Borough Council commissioned Colin Buchanan to undertake a Parking, Access and Signage Strategy in June 2005.

4.54 The report makes the following overall conclusions:

- There is presently sufficient car parking capacity in the town centres, however better use of underused car parks is required to satisfy the demand in some of the other car parks
- Shortages in demand are predicted by 2016 in Quayside car parks and by 2021 in core town centre car parks
- Future capacity can be gained by reduction in demand in general, or increasing prices to reduce demand, or by increasing supply.
- Changes are recommended to the hierarchy of the car parks, together with re-designations and a comprehensive parking and tourist signing strategy to compliment these changes
- The present relatively poor retail offer suggests that increases in tariffs above inflation levels would impact on the vitality of the town centres
- Potential exists to promote bus services following the introduction of the free national concessionary fare scheme.

4.55 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.56 The different options would each have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Potential key benefits however could relate to providing access to basic services (Objective 16), reduction in the fear of crime, by providing better security / lighting, a tidier and well kept environment and an aim to reduce anti-social behaviour (Objective 15), creation of conditions to improve health, promoting healthy lifestyles, (Objective 12), maintenance and enhancement of local distinctiveness (Objective 19). All the improvements suggested would have the potential to enhance town centre viability and vitality (Objective 23).

4.57 **Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options**

4.58 The analysis of the evidence base and consultation response indicates that Christchurch Town Centre has a relatively attractive urban environment conducive to retail growth, however there is room for improvement. It is therefore recommended that the Core Strategy addresses the following key elements in its vision for the centre to address the overall strategic issue of town centre vitality.

- The formation of design standards / guidance to improve the streetscape and heritage improvement
- Transport infrastructure improvements that will benefit the town centre identified in the South East Dorset Multi Modal Study
- Enhancements to public spaces in the centre such as Druitt Gardens and Saxon Square.

4.59 **Preferred options to address this issue are set out under Issue 8: What should the vision be for Christchurch Town Centre?**

Highcliffe District Centre

4.60 **Issue Identified at Issues and Options**

4.61 **Issue TC1: What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their vitality?**

4.62 **Issues and Options Consultation Response**

	Employment	Retailing	Recreation/open space	Residential	Café/theatre	Tourism	Evening Economy
Highcliffe	36 (59%)	49 (80%)	38 (62%)	36 (59%)	27 (45%)	36 (59%)	38 (39%)

Table 4.5

4.63 In Highcliffe most support was expressed for the promotion of retailing, recreation and residential uses and tourism. The consultation responses suggested that more youth facilities are needed. Deficiencies of provision of specific uses will be considered below.

4.64 **Consideration of Evidence and Policy**

4.65 **Retail provision**

- **Convenience**

4.66 Highcliffe does not have a high proportion of convenience outlets but is served by a Tesco Express, Somerfield, as well as a newsagent, greengrocer and several butchers providing some degree of choice. Residents in Highcliffe also have access to a large Tesco superstore in New Milton and the Sainsbury's at Lyndhurst Road also forms part of the retail catchment area.

4.67 Christchurch Borough as a whole has a negative convenience floorspace requirement for the plan period. The retail study indicates that the requirement for additional convenience floorspace for Christchurch Borough as a whole will amount to -323 to 74 Sq M Net between 2007-2026 (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2008).

- **Comparison**

4.68 There are 48 comparison retail units within the centre. The shopping units are occupied by a mixture of independent traders of differing quality. There is minimal representation from national multiples (Lloyd's Pharmacy being the only one). Most of the main goods categories are represented. The centre suffers from a prevalence of charity shops and an overall limited range / choice of shops.

4.69 The 2008 retail study identifies a need for an additional 9,685 to 11,200 Sq M net comparison floorspace between 2007-2026 (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2008).

Highcliffe Comparison Floorspace Projections- Baseline Population

	Short term projections 2007-2011	Long term projections 2007-2026
Highcliffe	139 Sq M	770 Sq M

Table 4.6

Highcliffe Comparison Floorspace Projections- High Population Growth		
	Short term projections 2007-2011	Long term projections 2007-2026
Highcliffe	139 Sq M	770 Sq M

Table 4.7

4.70 Source: Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment Vol 1: Appendices

4.71 Based on the evidence, the priorities for the town centre, in terms of retail provision, should be limited growth in predominantly small to medium sized units (200 sq m gross or below) suitable for small independent shops and services.

4.72 **Open Space**

4.73 There are no parks or open spaces within the centre although the seafront is a short walk away and there is a large public park to the west and east, so open space is quite easily accessible. Taking into account the nature of the centre's tightly knit urban form, no real opportunities for provision of sites are apparent.

4.74 **Leisure**

4.75 The residents have relatively good access to leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities outside the Borough particularly in Bournemouth and Poole. Its location within the catchment area of larger centres will limit the potential for commercial, leisure and entertainment facilities as it is unlikely that such facilities would compete successfully with the larger surrounding towns.

4.76 However, general evening economy uses are scarce within the centre, with only a few restaurants and one public house. The consultation responses revealed relatively low support for the expansion of such uses, amounting to 39%. Taking into account the apparent deficiency of A4/ A5 uses in the centre, it is uncertain, whether this is a result of a possible incorrect interpretation of the definition of 'evening economy uses' or whether there is no need for such uses. Based on the evidence, it appears that expansion of evening economy uses, especially restaurants in the secondary core would benefit the centre and improve its vitality in the afternoon hours and should therefore be supported.

4.77 **Residential**

4.78 PPS 1 advocates the creation of mixed use development, containing a 'healthy' mix of uses including retail and residential, to create sustainable communities. The provision of residential units should form part of town centre vision. The spatial strategy will set out the broad location and scale of residential development to be accommodated in the centre. The strategy will take into account the outputs of the Councils' Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 and incorporate the principles of efficient use of land and accessibility to basic services.

4.79 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**:

4.80 The different uses set out above have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. In sustainability terms, these uses would have uncertain effects on the need for travel (Objective 7) as the number of trips generated by a single use will vary between occupiers. There is the potential of significant positive benefits for town centre viability (Objective 23) and the economy more generally through an appropriate balance of the uses identified to provide a diverse range of shopping, leisure and employment opportunities (Objective 24).

4.81 **Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options:**

4.82 National policy encourages a diversity of uses in the town centres, emphasising the importance of adequate retail provision. In Highcliffe, retail uses will be supported, expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre in line with requirements established through the evidence base (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study, particularly A1 comparison floorspace). This will seek to enhance Highcliffe's niche retail offer. There is no requirement for additional convenience floorspace provision as determined by the evidence.

4.83 Recreation and open space for the town centre should be provided in line with the requirements set out in the evidence (PPG17 study). The presence of cafés/restaurants, which enhance the evening economy should be promoted to ensure vitality in the afternoon and evening hours.

4.84 The centre will also be a focus for residential development and limited office development which can be provided alongside the projected requirements for retail.

4.85 **Preferred options to address this issue are set out under Issue 9: What should the vision be for Highcliffe Town Centre?**

4.86 **Issue identified at issues and options**

4.87 **Issue TC3: What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?**

4.88 **Issues and options consultation response**

What issues/improvements need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?									
Town	**Town Centre Manager**	**Tidy streets**	**Clearer Signage**	**Design guidance**	**Better security**	**Reduce anti-social behaviour**	**More seating**	**Improve public transport/car parking**	**Pedestrianisation**

Highcliffe	8	43	19	38	26	41	32	40	13

Table 4.8

4.89 The main areas for improvement, as identified in the Issues and Options consultation was the provision of tidier streets and pavements, followed by reduction of anti-social behaviour, adoption of design guidance for new development and provision of more and better seating. Pedestrianisation and provision of a town centre manager were given relatively the least support.

4.90 Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.91 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Joint Retail Assessment

4.92 The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study identified the quality of the streetscape as being of a reasonably low standard with the quality and quantity of the street furniture and planting being quite poor. Traffic congestion was perceived to be an increasingly important issue, as the main shopping area runs along the A337 which acts as a physical barrier to pedestrians and separates the shops on either side of the road. Also the quality of public art was rated as poor.

4.93 Christchurch Borough Council PPG17 Open Space Study (May 2007)

4.94 Highcliffe (comprising the wards of Highcliffe, West Highcliffe, North Highcliffe and Walkford) has a good provision of natural green space and wooded areas and plenty of tree cover. However, an undersupply of amenity green space, activity sports space, space for children and young people; and allotments has been identified in the study.

4.95 Christchurch Parking, Access and Signing Strategy (2006)

4.96 The study concluded that existing off street car parking provision in Highcliffe appears adequate to cater for current demand. However, the document recommended introducing short stay parking at Wortley Road to cater for specific demand there.

4.97 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.98 The different options would each have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Potential key benefits however could relate to provision of access to basic services (Objective 16), reduction in the fear of crime, by providing better security / lighting, a tidier and well kept environment and an aim to reduce anti-social behaviour (Objective 15), creation of conditions to improve health, promoting healthy lifestyles, (Objective 7), maintenance and enhancement of local distinctiveness (Objective 19). All the improvements suggested would have the potential to enhance town centre viability and vitality (Objective 23).

4.99 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.100 The centre can make a contribution to meeting projected requirements for increased retail floorspace (A1 comparison) as identified in the 2008 Retail Study. As with Christchurch town centre, the objective is to seek to enhance Highcliffe's niche retail offer which is aimed toward the tourist market whilst improving the presence of national multiples. In order to improve the street scene and public open space, development proposals should enhance townscape quality, character and vitality of the centre by contributing to the delivery of:

- high quality street furniture, planting and lighting along the High Street.
- a reduction in the severance caused by roads by sensitive design of road crossings and traffic management measures.
- high quality shop fronts, signs and building frontages.

4.101 Highcliffe's open space and recreational requirements will be determined in line with the PPG17 study; it will be a priority to provide more amenity green space; activity sports space, space for children and young people; and allotments.

4.102 Requirements for retail provision will be balanced against residential development and office requirements. In terms of retail floorspace projections for Highcliffe, the retail study indicates that in the period between 2007 and 2026, the centre will have a negative convenience retail floorspace requirement (-256 to -240). However, an additional 770-835 sq m of comparison floorspace will need to be provided.

4.103 The town centre will also be a focus for residential development. The key strategy will set out the broad location and scale of residential development to be accommodated in the centre. The strategy will take into account the outputs of the Councils' Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 and incorporate the principles of efficient use of land and accessibility to basic services.

4.104 Provision of community facilities within the centre will be addressed by the Community Issues KIP, where the need for new facilities will be assessed. In line with the sequential approach advocated in PPS4 such facilities should be provided in first instance in the town centre to serve the need of the community.

4.105 **Preferred options to address this issue are set out under Issue 9: What should the vision be for Highcliffe Town Centre?**

4.106 **Issue identified at issues and options**

4.107 **Issue TC2: How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages?**

4.108 **Issues and Options Consultation Response**

4.109 **OPTION A: Designate a town centre boundary within which commercial development will be encouraged.**

Agree	Disagree	No opinion
37	28	19

Table 4.9

4.110 The response suggests that respondents were uncertain of the impacts of such a designation on the vitality of the town centre.

4.111 **Consideration of Evidence and Policy**

4.112 PPS4 states that the extent of town centres and the primary shopping areas should be established in the Local Development Framework. It explains that the centre for a 'retail' development constitutes the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses the 'centre' should be regarded as an area embraced by the town centre boundary. The extent of primary and secondary shopping cores for the town centres is currently defined on the Local Plan proposals map. The Town Centre Strategy (2003) sets out a boundary for Christchurch Town Centre, however this is not defined on the Local Plan proposals map.

4.113 Christchurch does not have a formally designated town centre boundary in its Local Plan. The Primary Shopping Area, which consists of Shopping Cores and Secondary Shopping Cores, is the centre of retail development. Taking into account the benefits, associated with designating a town centre boundary, as set out in PPS4, it is proposed to define a boundary, where commercial, leisure and residential development would be encouraged. This would ensure appropriate development of the centre in the future.

4.114 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.115 The Sustainability Appraisal does not highlight any clear significant adverse impacts on objectives but recognises that an appropriate policy would make a significant positive impact on the vitality and viability of the town centres (Objective 23).

4.116 **Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options**

4.117 As supported by PPS4 it is appropriate to identify options for the formal identification of a boundary for Christchurch Town Centre. This will help to more clearly define the centre for retail, leisure and residential development. This has potential to provide more scope to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre through more clearly defined development opportunities within a boundary. This approach was also supported from the responses to the issues and options consultation.

4.118 **Preferred options to address this issue are set out under Issue 3: What should be the extent of Christchurch Town Centre boundary?**

4.119 **Issues and options consultation response**

4.120 **Option B: Designate core retail areas in town centres where non retail uses will be restricted.**

Agree	Disagree	No opinion
56	16	16

Table 4.10

4.121 63% or respondents supported the designation of core retail areas in town centres where non-retail uses would be restricted. A majority of respondents recognised the important role core retail frontage policies play in securing adequate provision of retail units within the centre. This is welcome, as national guidance is clear that strong retail presence in the town centres is an important factor in maintaining their vitality and viability. Core retail frontage designations with associated policies are part of the local plan policy framework aimed at safeguarding A1 uses. In this section it will be determined whether the current policies need to be revised.

4.122 **Consideration of evidence and policy**

4.123 **Core retail frontages**

4.124 The Christchurch Local Plan designates Christchurch town centre / Highcliffe High Street, Saxon Square, Church Street, parts of Bargates as primary shopping core.

4.125 Policy ES2 of the Plan stipulates that within the above named areas planning permission for the change of use of existing ground floor retail (A1) to non-retail uses will be permitted provided that:

1. *The proposed use is for a financial or professional service; food or drink or non-residential institutions falling with use class D1 and leisure and entertainment uses falling within D2*

4.126 *2) Non-retail uses (other than A1) will not cumulatively amount to more than 20% of all ground floor units in each of the identified areas;*

1. *Proposal will not result in more than three continuous frontages in non-retail use (other than A1)*
2. A shop front appearance will be retained.

4.127 In addition, Policy ES3 contains provisions pertaining to the permissible change of use of existing non-residential premises located in the secondary cores. Accordingly, change of use will be permitted provided that:

4.128 *1) The proposed use is for a financial or professional service use (Class A2) or for food and drink use (Class A3) or for non-residential institutions falling within class D1 and leisure and entertainment uses falling within class D2, and*

4.129 *2) The amenities of the local residents are not adversely affected by noise and disturbance, or by loss of light and privacy.*

4.130 Secondary shopping core is designated for parts of Bargates, Castle Street, Bridge Street, Barrack Road and Purewell and in Highcliffe town centre.

4.131 **Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Retail Study (2008)**

4.132 The retail study concluded that the retail policies of the Local Plan for Christchurch Town Centre 'appear to be sound' given that they were largely in line with PPS6 and the frontage policies are effective at safeguarding the predominance of A1 use within the core shopping area. PPS4 advises that primary and secondary frontages should be realistically defined and policies should be set making clear which uses should be permitted in these locations. Therefore, it is consistent to determine a policy approach based on evidence to determine the appropriate extent of the primary and secondary shopping cores and the uses permitted in each.

4.133 A crucial issue relating to this option is to determine whether the current policy restricting non-retail in the primary shopping area uses should be retained at the current level or whether a higher percentage of non-retail uses should be permitted. National and regional policy, our evidence base and consultation responses suggest that one of the main functions of the cores should be that of providing a range of retail outlets; however other uses contribute to diverse centres offering visitors a range of services associated with shopping cores. The Christchurch Shopping Survey indicates that the number of non-retail units in the centres has been growing steadily in the last couple of years. However it is worth noting that the threshold was breached at the point of adopting the Local Plan in 2001, as the percentage of non A1 units in the Core exceeded 20%. Policy ES2 has been put in place to try to address the loss of A1 units from the shopping cores. The retail study indicates that 9,685 to 11,200 Sq M of additional comparison floorspace needs to be provided in the plan period. The existing stock of premises may have a role to play in accommodating projected growth (there may be scope to accommodate 900 sq m gross if the vacancy rate can be reduced to 5%). Therefore the retention of A1 uses in the centre at the current level should be seen as vital in ensuring development and growth of the centres. However, the possibility of increasing the allowance for non retail uses on the ground floor to 30% to allow for more non A1 units should be considered as a potential alternative option.

4.134 Percentage of non A1 uses in the primary shopping cores

Primary Shopping Core	2005	2006	2007	2008
ChristchurchTown Centre	22%	23%	24%	25%
Bargates	28%	28%	28%	No data available
Highcliffe	28%	30%	29%	29%

Table 4.11

4.135 Source: Christchurch Shopping Survey

4.136 An option not to adopt a policy aimed at the protection of A1 uses in the primary shopping cores should be discounted due to the fact that the number of non-retail units in the Primary Shopping Areas is steadily growing. Without policies setting out a maximum threshold for non-A1 uses

4.137 it will be difficult to meet projected requirements for A1 floorspace over the plan period and this will adversely affect town centre vitality and viability.

4.138 **Defining Retail Frontages**

4.139 The proposals maps in the Christchurch Local Plan (2001) indicate both primary and secondary retail frontages in Christchurch Town Centre and Highcliffe District Centre. By definition, primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses.

4.140 **Christchurch Town Centre**

4.141 The analysis carried out by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners recommended that Church Street be re-designated as a secondary shopping area and Town Bridge (along Castle Street) be deleted as a Secondary Retail Frontage.

4.142 Church Street is a peripheral area of the centre, dominated by independent rather than multiple retailers and pedestrian flows appear much lower. There is a diversity of non A1 uses e.g. numerous restaurants, estate agents and hairdressers. This area of town is more secondary in nature as per definition provided by PPS4. Designating Church Street as a secondary frontage would allow for more flexibility in an area that has effectively become an evening economy hub. This would have a positive impact on the economy as a whole, ensuring the centre remains vibrant in the afternoon and evening.

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

4.144 **HighcliffeTown Centre**

4.145 The distinction between primary and secondary shopping areas in Highcliffe, in practice is not reflective of the way the centre functions. The secondary area is located to the east of the crossroads with Waterford Road and can be perceived as a continuation of the linear primary area.

4.146 The Retail Study did not make any recommendations to reclassify the frontages in the centre.

4.147 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.148 The Sustainability Appraisal does not highlight any clear significant adverse impacts on objectives but recognises that an appropriate policy would make a significant positive impact on the vitality and viability of the town centres (Objective 23).

4.149 **Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options**

4.150 National policy within PPS4 states that primary and secondary frontages should be clearly defined and policies set to determine the uses permitted within them. Therefore, it is appropriate for the Core Strategy to put forward options in this respect. The joint retail study makes clear recommendations for amendments to the ChristchurchTown Centre shopping core boundaries which will enhance the evening economy and in combination with maintaining sufficient A1 in the primary shopping core will promote town centre vitality and viability.

4.151 The joint retail study identifies a need to provide significant additional comparison floorspace within use class A1 during the plan period. The primary shopping cores have seen a loss of A1 units and in this respect it is appropriate to put forward an A1 threshold policy to help ensure that sufficient A1 floorspace is provided in the centres to meet need identified from the evidence base. This approach is also consistent with the Sustainability Appraisal analysis in promoting town centre vitality and viability (objective 23).

4.152 Preferred options to address this issue are set out under Issue 14: What approach should be adopted to guide the scale and type of retail development in Christchurch?

4.153 Issues and Options Consultation Response

4.154 Option C: 'Designate local shopping areas where local shops and services will be encouraged and protected' with the issue of reclassifying the network of centres within the Borough, which emerged from the evidence study]

4.155 Consultation response to Option C 'Designate local shopping areas where local shops and services will be encouraged and protected?'

Agree	Disagree	No opinion
81	3	1

Table 4.12

4.156 The Issues and options consultation identified very strong support towards protecting local services. 87% of respondents were keen to see these services and facilities designated and protected. Supporting local businesses is a sustainable option, reducing the need to travel and supporting community cohesion.

4.157 Consideration of evidence and policy

4.158 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Retail Study 2008

4.159 The retail study put forward the option of a retail hierarchy to guide the scale of retail development to be permitted within retail centres in the Borough according to their role and function. The designation of a retail hierarchy presents a more comprehensive option than the original Option C which only looked at retail development in local shopping areas.

4.160 Analysis carried out by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners indicates that there is potential to reclassify Barrack Road Local Centre to a District Centre. Barrack Road has a relatively high proportion of commercial units including a Tesco Express Store, such that it could be considered to perform the role of a district centre. The centre would encompass the existing local centre boundaries and in addition include the commercial premises located at Bailey Drive. The analysis also recommended that there is potential to reclassify Highcliffe District Centre into a town centre; the centre has a large number of commercial units (120 outlets, 48 of which are comparison shops) which would potentially elevate it above the status of a District Centre, when compared with other town and local centres in the other authority areas in Dorset. However, taking into account the constrained development opportunities in the centre and it's current status/shopping patterns consideration needs to be given whether elevation of the centre would reflect national guidance.

4.161 The report concluded that Purewell is correctly designated as a local centre.

4.162 All other small clusters of shops in the Borough come under the status of parades or village shops. The study recommends these should be protected by policy because they fulfil an important role.

4.163 Christchurch has a good range of local shopping parades that provide for basic needs of the community (see list in section 1). National and regional policy, our evidence base and consultation responses show clear support towards protecting the existing services in the settlements in the Borough (significantly, the Issues and Options consultation identified that 87% of respondents support the protection of local shops and services).The emerging Core Strategy should maintain the thrust of the current Local Plan policies, restricting the loss of A1 units in such areas. Retention of local shopping facilities will help reduce the need for travel, promote a sense of community identity, and are convenient for the less mobile members of the community. It will also contribute to achieving the set sustainability objectives.

4.164 PPS 4 provides guidance on the designation and role of centres

- A City Centre constitutes the highest level of centre and will often be a regional centre and will serve a wide catchment.
- Town Centres are usually the second level of centre after city centres and, in many cases, they will be the principal centre (centres) in a local authority's area.
- District centres will usually comprise a group of shops often containing at least one supermarket or a superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities.
- Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. PPS 6 does not provide a definition of centres below local centres. It is appropriate to assume that small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as centres for the purposes of PPS4.

4.165 PPS4 recommends town centres should be strengthened and developed into a hierarchy within the locality.

4.166 PPS4 recognises that small parades of shops are important to local communities. However, they are considered to have a purely neighbourhood significance, and are not regarded as centres for the purposes of PPS4. It is important to appreciate the significance attached to these shop units, and to promote further parades of shops in future major development proposals, such as the urban extensions. However, it is also important to understand the different uses at the parades, and to acknowledge the difficulty in conversion of A1 uses. This use class allows such an enormous range of potential uses, that is it impossible to prevent the loss of convenience stores to comparison or niche ranges of goods with a local policy. When the number of shop units are limited in a parade, this can be to the detriment of the local community who require daily grocery shopping, rather than specialist double glazing shops for example.

4.167 The changing nature of retailing and the economy has shown that freestanding petrol filling stations now provide a comprehensive range of groceries and newspapers. These have taken on the role of convenience stores to local and passing trade and operate lengthy opening hours. However, they are generally located in the urban or edge of urban centres, rather than in the larger village settlements.

4.168 Policy ES4 of the Local Plan supports local shopping areas and states that any reduction in the centre's size might jeopardise their economic well-being. This policy should continue to be supported to promote sustainability and community cohesion.

4.169 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.170 The Sustainability Appraisal does not highlight any clear significant adverse impacts on objectives but recognises that an appropriate policy would make a significant positive impact on the vitality and viability of the local shopping areas Potential key benefits could relate to supporting social cohesion and enabling access to basic services (Objective 16) and facilitating a sustainable and growing economy (Objective 24).

4.171 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options:

4.172 Setting out the hierarchy of centres will have a bearing on their growth; the sequential approach advocated in PPS 6 suggests that town and district centre sites should be the first choice for retail and commercial leisure development. To ensure appropriate development, it is recommended that the centre hierarchy in the Borough is to be amended to reflect the recommendations of the evidence. Barrack Road should be elevated to a district centre, to reflect the number of retail units and wide spectrum of goods sold. It is judged that Highcliffe should continue to be designated as a district centre to reflect its current status and relatively constrained opportunities for future development.

4.173 Preferred options to address this issue are set out under Issue 1: Is the existing Christchurch Town Centre hierarchy appropriate?

4.174 Issues and Options Consultation Response

4.175 Option D: Prevent the loss of village shops, pubs and services.

4.176 This option should be read in conjunction with Issue CI4 A (Community Issues)

4.177 Consultation responses identified a high level of support for this option, 86% of respondents agreed with this option suggesting that rural communities greatly value these vital services and facilities.

4.178 Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.179 The rural settlements and villages are vulnerable to the loss of non profitable village shops and post offices, pubs and garages. These services are seen as vital components of community life, often acting as a meeting place for residents who are spread out across a wide rural area; yet they are vulnerable to the cheaper prices and convenience of supermarkets in the towns, and rely heavily on the support of the community. Village shops in particular are vulnerable. This gradual erosion of shops has left gaps in provision for a number of services in the rural area.

4.180 PPS4 States that local authorities should seek to remedy any identified deficiencies in local shopping and other facilities to serve people's day to day needs and help address social exclusion.

4.181 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.182 The Sustainability Appraisal assessment does not highlight any clear significant adverse impacts on objectives but recognises that an appropriate policy would make a significant positive impact on the vitality and viability of the rural areas. It would have a positive effect on Sustainability Appraisal Objective 16 which seeks to ensure that everyone has access to basic services easily, safely and affordably. Maintaining local services also has a positive impact on reducing the need to travel (Objective 7) and limiting air and noise pollution (Objective 6) and harmful emissions (Objective 11). Protecting the provision of local amenities also has a positive local economic impact which is consistent with Objective 24).

4.183 **Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options**

4.184 The provision of local community shops and services should be supported for community well being and sustainable communities which is supported by national policy and the issues and options sustainability appraisal.

4.185 **Preferred options to address this issue are set out under Issue 16: How can we retain local community facilities in settlements, such as village shops and pubs, which may be economically unviable?**

PART II - EAST DORSET DISTRICT

4.186 This section discusses Issues TC1 and TC3 jointly as both issues look towards promoting vital and viable town centres. It then considers the proposed Vision for each town centre and discusses specific policy options based on the critical issues identified in Part 3, and the results of the Issues and Options consultation.

4.187 The paper will also discuss TC2 separately, looking towards the generation of preferred options that provide development management policies to support the implementation of the town centre visions emerging from the original TC1 and TC3 issues. Policies emerging from the original TC2 address the extent of the town centre development area, the hierarchy of centres and the scale of development permitted in the centres within the hierarchy.

Ferndown Town Centre

4.188 **Issue identified at issues and options**

4.189 **Issue TC1: What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their vitality?**

4.190 **Consultation response**

4.191 A total of 293 responses were received for this question in the consultation, referring to all 6 towns in Christchurch and East Dorset.

4.192 **The table below sets out the support for the different types of uses in the town centres with the following level of responses:**

	Employment	Retailing	Recreation/open space	Residential	Café/theatre	Tourism	Evening Economy	Other
Ferndown	23	26	23	16	17	11	17	Farmers Market

Table 4.13

4.193 Whilst the factors given showed a range of potential uses in the town centre, from the consultation, preference was made for the traditional use of the town centre for retailing, although employment and recreation uses also featured highly in the responses. In relation to the comment relating to a farmers market, there have been farmers markets in Penny's Walk, but they do not currently attend regularly.

4.194 **Evidence base study - analysis of the need for specific uses**

4.195 **Retail provision**

4.196 **Convenience**

4.197 There are currently 9 convenience retailers in the town centre with a total of 4,039 sq m of space Tesco's supermarket is a key store in the town and draws pedestrian customers through from Victoria Road and Penny's Walk. Aside from Iceland, there are also a number of independent convenience shops including a greengrocers and a bakers. These convenience shops represent 7.9% of the shops, which is just below the national average of 9.4%.

4.198 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners predict that Ferndown will require an additional 1,259 sq m (net) of convenience sales retail space up to 2,026 sq m (net) if the town continues to grow at its current rate. However, with a higher level of population growth, they predict that 2,064 sq m of convenience floor space will be required in Ferndown up to 2026.

4.199 The proposed Urban Extension at West Parley could accommodate a convenience store supermarket and absorb the aforementioned predicted growth for Ferndown. In their report in November 2008, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners recommend that West Parley has the potential to accommodate a food store of between 1,500 – 2,000 sq m (3,000 sq m gross).

4.200 **Comparison**

4.201 There are 41 comparison retail units, within the town centre of Ferndown. The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Report suggests this is a relatively low number of comparison retail units (36.3%) compared to the GB average (48.3%).The shopping units are generally modern and quite large. Whilst there are a number of independent specialist traders, their retail offer is limited and generally of average quality according to the Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners report. There is minimal representation from national multiples in the town (Boots, Blockbusters Video and Superdrug), which is something the Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Report suggested could be improved upon. Whilst most of the main goods categories are represented, the range of comparison shops is low for a town of this size. The biggest weakness of the centre in terms of retail provision is seen to be too few clothing, footwear, booksellers, arts, crafts, stationary shops and jewellers.

4.202 In the Retail Study prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, between 2011 and 2026, it is suggested that 3,497 sq m of additional comparison floorspace will be required in Ferndown. In a higher growth rate scenario, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners estimate that 4,239 sq m of additional comparison floorspace will be required.

4.203 Ferndown has the highest level of qualitative need for retail development in the district as identified by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners. It may require up to 2,064 sq m of additional convenience floorspace and over 4,000 sq m of comparison floorspace in the higher growth rate scenarios. There is the potential for significant growth in both sectors with a higher quality range of retail provision.

4.204 Service Uses

4.205 Ferndown has 60 service based units within the town centre. This represents 53.1% of all units, (the GB average is just 31.6%) significantly higher than would normally be expected for a town of its size - in particular estate agents and banks. These represent a mix of national representation and independent specialists.

4.206 Based on the evidence, there is an over supply of service sector (A2) units, so the priority for future retail provision in Ferndown town centre should be to provide a comprehensive mix of unit sizes to attract a range of retail chain stores and small independent shops

4.207 Open Space

4.208 This was highlighted by residents as being an important use for the town centre, along with recreation. The main area of open space is within the pedestrian shopping precinct of Penny's Walk, which has open planters and wide paved streets and benches. The streetscape is now dated and uninspiring and in need of an update according to the Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners report and comments made at the Business Stakeholder Evening in December 2007. This could help to lift the vitality of the town centre and improve investment potential for new businesses.

4.209 Leisure

4.210 Ferndown has a limited selection of commercial leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities, but this reflects the age profile of the catchment population and the close proximity to the facilities in Bournemouth and Poole, and also in Hampshire. Its location within the catchment area of larger centres will to some degree limit the potential for commercial leisure and entertainment facilities. The general evening economy uses are limited in the centre, with the Barrington Theatre, a few restaurants and two public houses, although there is scope to improve on this range.

4.211 Employment

4.212 This option was strongly supported in the I&O responses as a preferred use for the town centre. Ferndown does not traditionally have a high employment base to the town centre other than the retailing units, of which Tesco's is the largest. Most businesses are located in the industrial estates, however the health authority has a large office in the town centre in Princes Road, and Dorset County Council also has social services offices in Penny's Walk. According to evidence provided by Dorset Property Pilot (DCC), there has been most interest in small unserviced office space in Ferndown, although it is not clear where this is required – the town centre or the Industrial Estate. This is presented in the table below. In 2009, there have been far fewer enquiries than two years earlier in 2007, reflecting the slow down in the national economy.

Ferndown Enquiries (Jan – June 2007)	Office Space	Serviced Offices
0 – 999 sq ft	16	5
1000 – 1499	1	0
1500 - 1999	0	0
2000 - 4999	6	0
5000 - 24999	1	0
Ferndown Enquiries (Jan – June 2009)	**Office Space**	**Serviced Offices**
0 – 999 sq ft	12	4
1000 – 1499	0	0
1500 - 1999	0	0
2000 - 4999	1	0
5000 - 24999	1	0

Table 4.14

4.213 Further employment is likely to come in the form of retailing opportunities, rather than office or other service jobs, as there is a lack of suitable sites for such uses in the town centre and ample provision in the industrial estates.

4.214 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.215 The range of town centre uses proposed will have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. In sustainability terms, the uses set out for this issue have uncertain effects on the need for travel (Objective 7) as the number of trips generated by a single use will vary between occupiers. There is the potential of significant positive benefits for town centre viability (Objective 23) and the economy (Objective 24) more generally if the options chosen provide a diverse range of shopping, leisure and employment opportunities.

4.216 **Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options**

4.217 In order to remain an economically attractive and viable town centre, the following uses need to be accommodated in Ferndown:

- Between 1,259 – 2,064 sq m convenience floorspace
- Between 3,497 and 4,239 sq m of comparison floorspace units of mixed sizes, suitable for chain stores or quality independent outlets
- Fewer service or professional class A2 units at ground floor level
- Office space over shop units on first and second floors to provide vitality in the town centre
- Improvements to the public spaces by street enhancements, planting, street furniture and signage to offer improved recreational use
- Uses which encourage the evening economy in the centre

4.218 **TC3: What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?**

4.219 **Consultation response**

4.220 **A total of 537 comments were made for Christchurch and East Dorset and those relevant here are set out in the table below:**

What issues/improvements need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?									
Town	**Town Centre Manager**	**Tidy streets**	**Clearer Signage**	**Design guidance**	**Better security**	**Reduce anti-social behaviour**	**more seating**	**Improve public transport/car parking**	**Pedestrianisation**
Ferndown	8	23	9	15	12	20	12	21	6

Table 4.15

4.221 The key areas to be addressed are tidier streets, the provision of improved public transport and car parking facilities, and the reduction of anti-social behaviour in Ferndown. Whilst the Core Strategy cannot influence the first and last issues identified, it will be able to consider the transport issues raised.

4.222 In relation to Ferndown, the following comments were also made:

- The Highways Agency recommends reference is made to improved public transport interchanges as an option for this issue. Improved car parking should also be listed as a separate option to improved public transport.
- Cycle routes along pedestrian walkways
- Lower rates for shops

4.223 These comments have a common theme, supporting alternative means of travel to the car and making the town centre accessible to all users. A coordinated transport interchange is unlikely to be provided in a small town, although services should themselves be coordinated. The Core Strategy cannot influence the cost of business rates for shops.

4.224 Based on the comments received, the key elements to be considered for inclusion within the town centre vision of an appropriate strategic nature for the Core Strategy include:

- The formation of design standards / guidance to improve the streetscape of the town centre streets.
- A package of highway improvements to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve highway safety and the quality of the shopping environment in Ringwood Road and Victoria Road.
- Enhancements to public space in the town centre.
- The possible provision of a Town Centre Manager

4.225 Taking into account the level of detail of the options, these issues will be considered in conjunction with the remaining Key Issues, in a bid to establish a vision for Ferndown Town Centre.

4.226 The analysis and evidence indicates that a balanced mixed of uses is favoured. To ensure the centre remains vital, retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre in line with the requirement established through the evidence base.

4.227 **Evidence**:

4.228 The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study revealed that the quality of the streetscape and general shopping environment rated as being of a ‘reasonably low standard’, with the quality and quantity of the street furniture, planting, public spaces and general liveliness being ‘quite poor’. Movement in and around the centre of Ferndown is considered difficult due to the volume of traffic passing along Victoria Road and particularly Ringwood Road (A358). Both roads are heavily trafficked while providing few pedestrian crossings which is leading to a high pedestrian/vehicular conflict and is clearly something in need of improvement.

4.229 Overall the shopping area within Ferndown town centre is considered reasonable, the main issue being the streetscape which is currently uninspiring, coupled with the low number of national multiples and number of independents; these are not drawing enough people into the town centre, other than to Tesco.

4.230 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.231 The range of improvements proposed would have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Potential key benefits however could relate to the provision of access to meet people’s needs (Objective 16); reduction in the fear of crime, by providing better security / lighting, a tidier and well kept environment and an aim to reduce anti-social behaviour (Objective 15); creation of conditions to improve health, promoting healthy lifestyles, (Objective 12); and the maintenance and enhancement of local distinctiveness (Objective 19). All the improvements suggested would have the potential to enhance town centre viability and vitality (Objective 23).

4.232 **Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options**

4.233 In order to remain an attractive and viable town centre environment, the following issues and improvements need to be addressed in Ferndown :

- Design standards and guidance for town centre streets
- A package of highway improvements to address pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve pedestrian safety
- Enhancement to public space and streetscape

Verwood Town Centre

4.234 **Issue TC1: What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their vitality?**

4.235 **Consultation response**

4.236 There were a total of 293 responses to this question which referred to all 6 towns in Christchurch and East Dorset.

4.237 The table below sets out the support for the different types of uses in the town centres with the following level of responses:

	Employment	Retailing	Recreation/open space	Residential	Café/theatre	Tourism	Evening Economy	Other
Verwood	21	21	19	15	13	8	15	Farmers Market, Upper School, Sports Facilities, improved paths

Table 4.16

4.238 Whilst the factors given showed a range of potential uses in the town centre from the consultation, preference was made for strongest support for employment and retail purposes. Recreation uses also featured highly in the responses, although all potential uses offered as options were supported within the town centre. Additional comments received related to a Farmers Market – there is already one in Verwood; an upper school – this will be subject to the demands identified by the County Council; sports facilities – there are various sports facilities around Verwood, including a park and sports field adjoining the town centre – it is not clear what type of sports facilities are required in this comment; and improved paths – this is a highways matter, and it is not clear where there is a problem in the town.

4.239 Evidence base study - analysis of the need for specific uses

4.240 Retail provision

4.241 Convenience

4.242 There are 3 convenience retailers in the town centre with a total floor area of 420 sq m. This is a very low number of the total proportion of shops representing 7.1%, less than the expected national average rate of 9.4%. However, it should be noted that Verwood effectively has 2 centres, with Morrisons supermarket (2,001 sq m) located approximately 1m away.

4.243 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners predict that Verwood will require an additional 287 sq m (net) of convenience sales retail space up to 2026 if the town continues to grow at its current rate. However, with a higher level of population growth, they predict that 489 sq m (net) of convenience floor space will be required in Verwood up to 2026.

4.244 Comparison

4.245 There are 11 comparison retail units, within the town centre of Verwood, with a total floor area of 563 sq m (net). The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Report suggested this is a relatively low number of comparison retail units (26.7%) compared to the GB average (48.3%). The shopping units are generally modern and quite small purpose built units. Five new units have recently been built beside Ferrett Green in the town centre. There is under provision in most comparison shopping areas, clothing, furniture, textiles, booksellers, DIY, hardware, jewellers and motor spares. Given its size however, there are likely to be discrepancies in provision when compared nationally. However, there are very few vacant units, suggesting the local economy is buoyant.

4.246 In the Retail Study prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, between 2011 and 2026, it is suggested that 769 sq m (net) of additional comparison floorspace will be required in Verwood. In a higher growth rate scenario, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners estimate that 1,092 sq m (net) of additional comparison floorspace will be required.

4.247 Service Uses

4.248 There is a very high level of service (A2) units, 25 out of 37 units, representing 67.6% of the total, more than twice the average norm nationally. There is a predominance of beauty salons, hairdressers and estate agents. There are no restaurants or pubs in the town.

4.249 Open Space

4.250 Verwood town centre is fortunate in having a newly created green at Ferrett Green and the Recreation Ground on the edge of the shopping area. These contribute greatly to the diversity of the town centre and add to its pleasant ambience. Opportunities to enhance the Recreation Ground exist.

4.251 **Leisure**

4.252 The Library, The Hub and the Memorial Hall are located in the town centre, and the latter provide venues for meetings and exhibitions. The newly opened Hub also has a cinema screen and stage suitable for theatrical productions and bands to perform on.

4.253 **Employment**

4.254 This use was highly supported by the public in response to the Issues and Options consultation. Currently, the town centre already provides a high number of service based shop units, and the potential exists to continue to provide upper floor and some ground floor service users. A large employer is more likely to locate on the Ebblake Industrial Estate to the east of the town centre, rather than in the town centre itself. The table below shows that demand has remained constant for office space in Verwood since 2007, according to Dorset Property Pilot (DCC), although it is not clear from the evidence if the offices were required in the town centre or in the industrial estate. Smaller units less than 999 sq ft were the preferred size for smaller businesses.

Verwood Enquiries (Jan – June 2007)	**Office Space**	**Serviced Offices**
0 – 999 sq ft	8	3
1000 – 1499	0	0
1500 - 1999	0	0
2000 - 4999	5	0
5000 - 24999	0	0
Verwood Enquiries (Jan – June 2009)	**Office Space**	**Serviced Offices**
0 – 999 sq ft	8	3
1000 – 1499	0	0
1500 - 1999	0	0
2000 - 4999	2	0

5000 - 24999	0	0

Table 4.17

4.255 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.256 The range of town centre uses proposed will have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. In sustainability terms, the uses set out for this issue have uncertain effects on the need for travel (Objective 7) as the number of trips generated by a single use will vary between occupiers. There is the potential of significant positive benefits for town centre viability (Objective 23) and the economy (Objective 24) more generally if the options chosen provide a diverse range of shopping, leisure and employment opportunities.

4.257 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.258 In order to remain an economically attractive and viable town centre, the following uses need to be accommodated in Verwood:

- Between 287 – 489 sq m convenience floorspace
- Between 769 and 1,092 sq m of comparison floorspace units
- Fewer service or professional class A2 units at ground floor level
- Office space over shop units on first and second floors to provide vitality in the town centre
- Improvements to the recreation ground and other public spaces by street enhancements, planting, street furniture and signage to offer improved recreational use
- Uses which encourage the evening economy in the centre

4.259 Issue TC3: What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?

4.260 Consultation response

4.261 A total of 537 comments were made covering Christchurch and East Dorset, and those relevant here are set out in the table below:

What issues/improvements need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?									
Town	**Town Centre Manager**	**Tidy streets**	**Clearer Signage**	**Design guidance**	**Better security**	**Reduce anti-social behaviour**	**more seating**	**Improve public transport/car parking**	**Pedestrianisation**
Verwood	2	22	6	14	8	16	8	13	4

Table 4.18

4.262 The key areas for concern are tidier streets, the reduction of anti-social behaviour and better design guidance in Verwood. Whilst the Core Strategy cannot influence the first two issues, design guidance will be developed for the town through the Design and Landscape Key Issues Paper and in the Vision of Verwood.

4.263 In relation to Verwood, the following comments were also made:

- The Highways Agency recommends reference is made to improved public transport interchanges as an option for this issue. Improved car parking should also be listed as a separate option to improved public transport.
- Cycle routes along pedestrian walkways
- Lower rates for shops

4.264 These comments have a common theme, supporting alternative means of travel to the car and making the town centre accessible to all users. A coordinated transport interchange is unlikely to be provided in a small town of this size, although services should themselves be coordinated. The Core Strategy cannot influence the cost of business rates for shops.

4.265 Based on the comments received in the consultation, the key elements to be considered for inclusion within the town centre vision of an appropriate strategic nature for the Core Strategy include:

- The formation of design standards / guidance to continue to improve the streetscape of the town centre streets.
- A package of highway improvements to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve highway safety in Station Road.

4.266 Taking into account the level of detail of the options, this issue will be considered in conjunction with the remaining Key Issues, in a bid to establish a vision for Verwood Town Centre.

4.267 The analysis and evidence indicates that a balanced mix of uses is favoured. To ensure the centre remains vital, retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre in line with the requirement established through the evidence base.

4.268 **Evidence**:

4.269 The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study revealed that the quality of the streetscape and general shopping environment rated as being 'neither good nor bad', with the quality and quantity of the street furniture, trees and planting, public spaces and signage, all highly rated. Movement in and around the centre of Verwood is considered relatively easy, although pedestrian/vehicular conflict was noted in Station Road (B3081) which runs through the centre.

4.270 Overall the shopping area within Verwood town centre is considered to be quite good. The evidence suggests the main issue is the low number of national multiples, high number of service units and the absence of restaurants and cafes which would contribute to the evening economy.

4.271 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.272 The range of improvements proposed would have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Potential key benefits however could relate to the provision of access to meet people's needs (Objective 16); reduction in the fear of crime, by providing better security / lighting, a tidier and well kept environment and an aim to reduce anti-social behaviour (Objective 15); creation of conditions to improve health, promoting healthy lifestyles, (Objective 12); and the maintenance and enhancement of local distinctiveness (Objective 19). All the improvements suggested would have the potential to enhance town centre viability and vitality (Objective 23).

4.273 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.274 In order to remain an attractive and viable town centre environment, the following issues and improvements need to be addressed in Verwood:

- Design standards and guidance for town centre streets
- A package of highway improvements to address pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve pedestrian safety
- Enhancement to public space and streetscape

4.275 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options for Verwood Town Centre

4.276 Being such a small town with two distinct centres, the Core Strategy will need to follow national policy closely, which encourages a range of uses in the town centre, particularly in retail provision. Based on the evidence study by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, further convenience and comparison retail provision will be encouraged in the form of national multiples in Verwood, helping to create a balanced trade mix in the town centre. Residential accommodation, small scale office space and public open space in line with the PPG17 survey will all be enhanced or provided to offer an attractive and healthy town centre.

West Moors Town Centre

4.277 Issue TC1: What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their vitality?

4.278 Consultation response

4.279 The table below sets out the support for the different types of uses in the town centres with the following level of responses:

	Employment	Retailing	Recreation/open space	Residential	Café/theatre	Tourism	Evening Economy	Other
West Moors	17	11	19	19	12	13	7	Farmers Market

Table 4.19

4.280 Whilst the factors given showed a range of potential uses in the town centre from the consultation, preference was made for greater use of the town centre for recreation, retailing and employment purposes. All uses featured in the responses, and were supported within the town centre, including the provision of a farmers market. There is not currently one in West Moors and this could help to increase the vitality and attractiveness of the centre.

4.281 **Evidence base study - analysis of the need for specific uses**

4.282 **Retail provision**

4.283 **Convenience**

4.284 There are 4 convenience retailers in the town centre making 666 sq m (net) in total. This represents 9.1% and is in line with the expected national average rate of 9.4% for a town of this size.

4.285 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners predict that West Moors will require an additional 59 sq m (net) of convenience sales retail space up to 2026 if the town continues to grow at its current rate. However, with a higher level of population growth, they predict that 99 sq m (net) of convenience floor space will be required in West Moors up to 2026.

4.286 **Comparison**

4.287 There are 14 comparison retail units, within the town centre of West Moors, which together with comparison floorspace in convenience stores totals 846 sq m (net). The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Report suggested that this is a relatively low number of comparison retail units (31.8%) compared to the GB average (48.3%). The shopping units are generally modern purpose built units. There is under provision in most comparison shopping areas, clothing, booksellers, jewellers, variety stores and motor spares. Given its size however, there are likely to be discrepancies in provision when compared nationally. However, there are very few vacant units, suggesting the local economy is buoyant.

4.288 In the Retail Study prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, between 2011 and 2026, it is suggested that 372 sq m (net) of additional comparison floorspace will be required in West Moors. In a higher growth rate scenario, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners estimate that 437 sq m (net) of additional comparison floorspace will be required.

4.289 **Service Uses**

4.290 Over half the units are service based (A2) units, representing 52.3% of the total, more than normally expected nationally. However, bearing in mind the size of West Moors as a centre, it is difficult to relate national trends to such a small settlement.

4.291 Based on the evidence, the priorities for retail provision in the town centre, should be to allow limited growth in predominantly small to medium sized units (200 sq m gross or below), suitable for small independent shops and services.

4.292 **Open Space**

4.293 The nearest open space is the green at The Petwyn to the immediate south west of the town centre. This breaks up the built environment of Station Road and opportunities exist to enhance it. In the Issues & Options consultation, the use of open space was highlighted to help enhance the town's vitality.

4.294 Leisure

4.295 West Moors has a Library, two pubs and a Memorial Hall located in the town centre, which greatly contribute to the vitality and mix of uses in the centre.

4.296 Employment

4.297 This use was highly supported by the public in response to the Issues & Options consultation. Currently, the town centre already provides a high number of service based units, and the potential exists to continue to provide upper floor and some ground floor service users. A large employer is more likely to locate on the Industrial estates in Ferndown and at Woolsbridge, rather than in the town centre itself.

4.298 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.299 The range of town centre uses proposed will have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. In sustainability terms, the uses set out for this issue have uncertain effects on the need for travel (Objective 7) as the number of trips generated by a single use will vary between occupiers. There is the potential of significant positive benefits for town centre viability (Objective 23) and the economy (Objective 24) more generally if the options chosen provide a diverse range of shopping, leisure and employment opportunities.

4.300 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.301 In order to remain an economically attractive and viable centre, the following uses need to be accommodated in West Moors:

- Between 59 – 99 sq m convenience floorspace
- Between 372 and 437 sq m of comparison floorspace units
- Fewer service or professional class A2 units at ground floor level
- Office space over shop units on first and second floors to provide vitality in the town centre
- Improvements to the recreation ground and other public spaces by street enhancements, planting, street furniture and signage to offer improved recreational use
- Uses which encourage the evening economy in the centre

4.302 Issue TC3: What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?

4.303 Consultation response

4.304 A total of 537 comments were made for Christchurch and East Dorset and those relevant here are set out in the table below:

What issues/improvements need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?									
Town	**Town Centre Manager**	**Tidy streets**	**Clearer Signage**	**Design guidance**	**Better security**	**Reduce anti-social behaviour**	**more seating**	**Improve public transport/car parking**	**Pedestrianisation**
West Moors	2	18	4	12	6	14	7	13	4

Table 4.20

4.305 The key issues emerging relate to tidier streets, the reduction of anti-social behaviour and improving public transport and car parking provision in West Moors. The Core Strategy cannot directly influence the first two issues, but can support improvements to public transport and car parking provision.

4.306 In relation to West Moors, the following comments were also made:

- The Highways Agency recommends reference is made to improved public transport interchanges as an option for this issue. Improved car parking should also be listed as a separate option to improved public transport.
- Cycle routes along pedestrian walkways
- Lower rates for shops

4.307 These comments have a common theme, supporting alternative means of travel to the car and making the town centre accessible to all users. A coordinated transport interchange is unlikely to be provided in a small town, although services should themselves be coordinated. The Core Strategy cannot influence the cost of business rates for shops.

4.308 Based on the comments received in the consultation, the key elements to be considered for inclusion within the town centre vision of an appropriate strategic nature for the Core Strategy include:

- The formation of design standards / guidance to continue to improve the streetscape of the town centre streets.
- A package of highway improvements to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve highway safety in Station Road.

4.309 Taking into account the level of detail of the options, this issue will be considered in conjunction with the remaining Key Issues, in a bid to establish a vision for West Moors Town Centre.

4.310 The analysis and evidence indicates that a balanced mix of uses is favoured. To ensure the centre remains vital, retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre in line with the requirement established through the evidence base

4.311 **Evidence**:

4.312 The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study revealed that the quality of the streetscape and general shopping environment rated as being 'average', with the quality and attractiveness of commercial buildings highly rated. However, most factors assessed received an 'average' or 'quite poor' rating. Movement in and around the centre of West Moors is constrained by the busy B3072, which cuts the main centre in half. Though crossing points are provided, the level of traffic can cause pedestrian/vehicular conflict.

4.313 Overall the quality of the shopping area within West Moors town centre is considered to be average, with a key issue identified of low numbers of national multiples, a poor trade mix, high number of service units and the quality of the streetscape.

4.314 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.315 The range of improvements proposed would have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Potential key benefits however could relate to the provision of access to meet people's needs (Objective 16); reduction in the fear of crime, by providing better security / lighting, a tidier and well kept environment and an aim to reduce anti-social behaviour (Objective 15); creation of conditions to improve health, promoting healthy lifestyles, (Objective 12); and the maintenance and enhancement of local distinctiveness (Objective 19). All the improvements suggested would have the potential to enhance town centre viability and vitality (Objective 23).

4.316 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.317 In order to remain an attractive and viable district centre environment, the following issues and improvements need to be addressed in West Moors:

- Design standards and guidance for town centre streets
- A package of highway improvements to address pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve pedestrian safety along Station Road
- Enhancement to public space and streetscape

4.318 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options for West Moors Town Centre

4.319 West Moors is a small linear town and polices will need to follow national policy closely, which encourages a range of uses in the town centre, particularly in retail provision. Based on the evidence study by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, further convenience and comparison retail provision will be encouraged in the form of national multiples in West Moors, helping to create a balanced trade mix in the town centre. Residential accommodation, small scale office space and public open space in line with the PPG17 survey will all be enhanced or provided to offer an attractive and healthy town centre.

Wimborne Minster Town Centre

4.320 Issue TC1: What range of uses should be promoted in the town centres to enhance their vitality?

4.321 Consultation response

4.322 The table below sets out the support for the different types of uses in the town centres with the following level of responses:

	Employment	Retailing	Recreation/open space	Residential	Café/theatre	Tourism	Evening Economy	Other
Wimborne Minster	**28**	**32**	**39**	**33**	**29**	**26**	**30**	**Farmers Market,** **Youth Centre, and the** **removal of traffic from The Square**

Table 4.21

4.323 Whilst the factors given showed a range of potential uses in the town centre, from the consultation preference was made for increased use of the town centre for recreation, residential and retailing uses. All uses featured in the responses, and were supported within the town centre. Additionally comments relating to a farmers market were made – this meets weekly at the market, and monthly in Mill Lane already; a youth centre – a drop in coffee shop already exists in Church Street; and the removal of traffic from The Square – plans have been prepared for a quality enhancement scheme to improve pedestrian safety in The Square and reduce traffic and parking, and are awaiting funding agreement.

4.324 Evidence base study - analysis of the need for specific uses

4.325 Retail provision

4.326 The retail analysis carried out by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners predates the approval for a Waitrose Supermarket in Wimborne, and a proposed store of 1,834 sq m (net) on 29th September 2008. It has therefore not been included in the following calculations.

4.327 Convenience

4.328 There are 9 convenience retailers in the town centre totalling 2,075 sq m (net) (this does not include Waitrose). This represents 5.6% of the total shops, and is far below the expected national average rate of 9.4% for a town of this size.

4.329 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners predict that Wimborne Minster will require an additional 217 sq m (net) of convenience sales retail space up to 2026 if the town continues to grow at its current rate. However, with a higher level of population growth, they predict that 344 sq m (net) of convenience floor space will be required in Wimborne up to 2026. The provision of a new Waitrose supermarket will more than meet this requirement.

4.330 Comparison

4.331 There are 76 comparison retail units, within the town centre of Wimborne with a total floor area of 6,752 sq m (net). The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners Report suggested that this is exactly in line with the national expectation for a town centre of 48.3% of units. The shopping units are for the most part attractive historic buildings of varying size, with high quality outlets. There are also some modern purpose built units. Whilst there is a wide variety of comparison goods shops in Wimborne, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners noted that some sectors are under represented – such as electrical, games, music, chemist and car and motor accessories suppliers. There is a high provision of furniture, china and gift shops. There are very few vacant units – just 7 in May 2008, representing 4.3% of the total stock – nationally 10.7% would be expected to allow for movement in the market place.

4.332 In the Retail Study prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, between 2011 and 2026, it is suggested that 4,690 sq m (net) of additional comparison floorspace will be required in Wimborne. In a higher growth rate scenario, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners estimate that 5,411 sq m (net) of additional comparison floorspace will be required in the town centre. This is a large increase of retail units, but this growth could be accommodated if new sites Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners identified come forward for development.

4.333 **Service Uses**

4.334 There are 70 service based (A2) units in the town centre, representing 43.2% of the total stock, which is more than would normally be expected nationally (31.6%). These consist of banks, building societies, financial services and estate agents of which most are located in the secondary shopping streets.

4.335 Based on the evidence, the priorities for retail provision in the town centre should be to support growth in all sectors in a mix of unit sizes to attract both chain stores and small independent shops and services and a new large food store (for which permission has been granted.)

4.336 **Open Space**

4.337 Minster Green provides a valuable area of open space in the heart of the town under the delightful setting of The Minster. The Square provides a large area of space dominated by traffic circulation. Plans are underway to reclaim The Square for visitors to the town and to restrict traffic movements here. The Cornmarket is an attractive square with limited vehicular access. Crown Mead also has a naturalistic open space with picnic tables. The banks of the River Allen provide an opportunity for movement and fluidity within the town, but access is limited for pedestrians. The open space of the cricket ground provides relief but has no public access, and has consent for the new supermarket and park. Opportunities exist to enhance these locations, and the benefit of providing open space in the town centre was highlighted in the Issues & Options consultation to help enhance its vitality and viability.

4.338 **Leisure**

4.339 Wimborne has a large Library, numerous centrally located pubs, cafes and restaurants, a nightclub and the Tivoli Theatre (and cinema), as well as various function halls for public use. These all contribute greatly to the economic and social vitality of the town centre in the daytime and the evenings.

4.340 **Tourism**

4.341 The local economies rely heavily on tourism, particularly to the historic town centre of Wimborne and the three day weekly market in Wimborne. The twin issues of meeting the demands of visitors and protecting the historic environment are also discussed in the Tourism Key Issues Paper and the Historic Built Environment Key Issues Paper respectively. The proposed enhancements to The Square will also add to the attractiveness of the town for visitors and shoppers.

4.342 **Employment**

4.343 The town already has a high level of service sector uses in the centre generally in small offices above shops, and some purpose built units such as Savills Land Agents and Teachers Building Society. The table below demonstrates the demand for office units in Wimborne over the last two years, and it suggests that demand remains strong for office space in the town (Dorset Property Pilot (DCC). Employment opportunities will continue to be encouraged in future mixed use development opportunities in the town centre.

Wimborne Enquiries (Jan – June 2007)	**Office Space**	**Serviced Offices**
0 – 999 sq ft	18	3
1000 – 1499	2	1
1500 - 1999	0	0
2000 - 4999	8	0
5000 - 24999	0	0
Wimborne Enquiries (Jan – June 2009)	**Office Space**	**Serviced Offices**
0 – 999 sq ft	15	5
1000 – 1499	0	0
1500 - 1999	0	0
2000 - 4999	3	0

5000 - 24999	0	0

Table 4.22

4.344 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.345 The range of improvements proposed would have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Potential key benefits however could relate to the provision of access to meet people's needs (Objective 16); reduction in the fear of crime, by providing better security / lighting, a tidier and well kept environment and an aim to reduce anti-social behaviour (Objective 15); creation of conditions to improve health, promoting healthy lifestyles, (Objective 12); and the maintenance and enhancement of local distinctiveness (Objective 19). All the improvements suggested would have the potential to enhance town centre viability and vitality (Objective 23).

4.346 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.347 In order to remain an attractive and viable town centre environment, the following issues and improvements need to be addressed in Wimborne Minster:

- Limited further convenience floorspace provision due to the new development of Waitrose supermarket in the centre
- Between 4,690 sq m – 5,411 sq m of comparison floorspace units of mixed sizes, suitable for chain stores or quality independent outlets
- Fewer service or professional class A2 units at ground floor level
- Office space over shop units on first and second floors to provide vitality in the town centre
- Improvements to the public spaces by street enhancements, planting, street furniture and signage to offer improved recreational use
- Design standards and guidance for town centre streets
- A package of highway improvements to address pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve pedestrian safety.

4.348 Enhancements to public space and streetscape

4.349 TC3: What issues or improvements do you consider need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?

4.350 Consultation response

4.351 A total of 537 comments were made for Christchurch and East Dorset and those relevant here are set out in the table below:

What issues/improvements need to be addressed to ensure continued investment in the town centres?									
Town	**Town Centre Manager**	**Tidy streets**	**Clearer Signage**	**Design guidance**	**Better security**	**Reduce anti-social behaviour**	**more seating**	**Improve public transport/car parking**	**Pedestrianisation**

Wimborne	12	24	12	17	13	25	16	21	14

Table 4.23

4.352 The main issues for improvement relate to anti-social behaviour and tidy streets, which cannot be addressed in the Core Strategy. However improvements to public transport and car parking are also identified as a key concern.

4.353 In relation to Wimborne Minster, the following comments were also made:

- Identify Wimborne cricket pitch as a location to provide for a new full-line foodstore and open space facility. This will meet identified retail need and add to the vitality and viability of the town centre
- The Highways Agency recommends reference is made to improved public transport interchanges as an option for this issue. Improved car parking should also be listed as a separate option to improved public transport.
- Cycle routes along pedestrian walkways
- Lower rates for shops

4.354 The cricket pitch and provision of a new foodstore and open space has been covered in TC1 above as this is now being provided for development. The remaining comments have a common theme, supporting alternative means of travel to the car and making the town centre accessible to all users. A coordinated transport interchange is unlikely to be provided in a small town, although services should themselves be coordinated. The Core Strategy cannot influence the cost of business rates for shops.

4.355 Based on the comments received in the consultation, the key elements to be considered for inclusion within the town centre vision of an appropriate strategic nature for the Core Strategy include:

- The formation of design standards / guidance to improve the streetscape of the town centre streets.
- A package of highway improvements to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve highway safety.
- Enhancements to public space in the town centre.
- The possible provision of a Town Centre Manager.

4.356 Taking into account the level of detail of the options, this issue will be considered in conjunction with the remaining Key Issues, in a bid to establish a vision for Wimborne Minster Town Centre.

4.357 The analysis and evidence indicates that a balanced mix of uses is favoured. To ensure the centre remains vital, retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre in line with the requirement established through the evidence base.

4.358 **Evidence**:

4.359 The Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners study revealed that the quality of the streetscape and general shopping environment rated as being 'neither good nor bad', with the quality and attractiveness of commercial properties, quality of planting and trees and town centre open space all rated very highly. Areas identified for improvement include amongst others, the quality of paving materials, street furniture and signage which are 'neither good nor bad'. Public art rated poorly overall. Movement in and around the centre of Wimborne causes concern with relatively few pedestrian crossings and high number of vehicles driving through leading to a large amount of pedestrian/vehicular conflict.

4.360 Overall the shopping area within Wimborne town centre is considered to be an attractive shopping environment with high quality comparison shops and a good mix of units. Issues regarding street enhancements and pedestrian/vehicular conflict are recognised, as being important in increasing the vitality and viability of the centre.

4.361 Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.362 The range of improvements proposed would have different impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Potential key benefits however could relate to the provision of access to meet people's needs (Objective 16); reduction in the fear of crime, by providing better security / lighting, a tidier and well kept environment and an aim to reduce anti-social behaviour (Objective 15); creation of conditions to improve health, promoting healthy lifestyles, (Objective 12); and the maintenance and enhancement of local distinctiveness (Objective 19). All the improvements suggested would have the potential to enhance town centre viability and vitality (Objective 23).

4.363 Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.364 National policy encourages a range of uses in the town centre, particularly in the provision of retail provision. Based on the evidence study by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, further convenience and comparison retail provision will be encouraged in Wimborne, helping to create a balanced trade mix in the town centre. Highway management measures will be undertaken to improve pedestrian safety particularly in The Square and the High Street, to improve the ambience of the centre. Residential accommodation, small scale office space and public open space in line with the PPG17 survey will all be enhanced or provided to offer an attractive and healthy town centre, creating a vibrant economic hub to the District.

4.365 In order to remain an attractive and viable town centre environment, the following issues and improvements need to be addressed in Wimborne Minster:

- Design standards and guidance for town centre streets
- A package of highway improvements to address pedestrian/vehicular conflict and improve pedestrian safety along Station Road
- Enhancement to public space and streetscape, particularly in The Square and Crown Mead

4.366 Issue TC2: How can we improve the vitality and viability of our towns and villages?

4.367 OPTION A: Designate a town centre boundary within which commercial development will be encouraged.

4.368 Issues and Options Consultation response

Option	In favour	Against	No opinion
A	44%	33%	22%

Table 4.24

4.369 **Evidence**:

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

4.371 Ferndown and Wimborne Minster currently have a Town Centre boundary as shown on the Local Plan Maps (2002). It is recommended that Town Centre boundaries should be drawn for other town centres, or updated to reflect the extent of retail and commercial development.

4.372 **Policy Review:**

4.373 PPS4 indicates that local authorities should define the boundary of town centres. The defined area should include the Primary Shopping Area and other key town centre uses predominantly; leisure, business and adjacent to the Primary Shopping Area. Smaller centres may not have an extensive town centre, so the boundary of the town centre will not extend beyond the Primary Shopping Area. The Town Centre boundary should be defined on the Proposals Maps. PPS4 (Draft consultation) supports the principle of a commercial core for employment and economic growth.

4.374 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.375 The Sustainability Appraisal does not highlight any clear significant adverse impacts on objectives but recognises that an appropriate policy would make a significant positive impact on the vitality and viability of the town centres. (Sustainability Appraisal Objectives 16 and 23)

4.376 **Conclusions and Implications for the Preferred Options**

4.377 It is important that the Core Strategy identifies town centre boundaries.

4.378 **Option B: Designate core retail areas in town centres, where non-retail uses will be restricted.**

4.379 **Issues and Options Consultation response:** A large majority of respondents (64%) recognised the important role in protecting the retail function of the town centres.

Option	In favour	Against	No opinion

B	64%	18%	18%

Table 4.25

4.380 **Evidence:**

4.381 Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners identify the need to designate core retail areas or a Primary Shopping Area, to define the principal retail core.

4.382 **Policy Review:**

4.383 PPS4 states that the Primary Shopping Area should be the defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are contiguous and closely related to the primary shopping frontage.) The extent of the Primary Shopping Area should also be defined on the Proposals Maps.

4.384 **Defining Retail Frontages**

4.385 The Proposals Maps in the East Dorset Local Plan (2002) indicate primary retail frontages in Ferndown and Wimborne Minster Town Centre. By definition, primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses, in use classes A2 to A5, (Financial and professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3), drinking establishments (A4) and hot food takeaways (A5). The designation of Secondary Shopping frontages will help to protect the loss of shops from the Primary retail heart of the town where most A1 shops (comparison shops, post offices, hairdressers etc) are located.

4.386 Policy SHDEV5 of the Local Plan states that in district shopping centres and town centres permissions will be granted for restaurants and takeaways where flues associated with the use can be provided without detriment to the appearance of the building. Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners suggest this policy does not appear to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres in terms of retaining units for A1 use.

4.387 Policy WIMCO5 of the Local Plan, states that the development for uses falling within use classes A1, A2, A3 and B1 will be permitted within the commercial area of Wimborne, where it will not result in the loss of a dwelling. However, Policy WIMCO6 states that within the primary retail frontage (as defined on the proposals map) only A1 shop uses will be allowed at ground floor level. The existing primary shopping frontages could be extended and secondary frontages introduced.

4.388 In Ferndown, Policy FWP5 states that use classes A1, A2, A3 and B1 will be permitted in the commercial centre of Ferndown. However, within the primary retail frontage (as defined on the proposals map) only A1 shop uses will be allowed at ground floor level. The current primary retail frontage covers a small area only, thereby leaving the remainder of the town vulnerable to loss of A1 units. Therefore, it is considered that the frontage designations should be reassessed and re-designated as primary and secondary frontages as per PPS4. This would enable the secondary frontages to also be protected from a high concentration of non A1 use classes where appropriate.

4.389 There are no frontage designations within Verwood Town Centre or in West Moors which is expected given their restricted sizes and it is not considered necessary to change this.

4.390 This assessment suggests there should be some changes to the current retail policies in order to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres. The analysis carried out by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners suggests that the Primary Shopping frontages in Ferndown should remain the same. (Plan E) The Primary Shopping frontages in Wimborne Minster should however be extended to include Crown Mead. (Plan H) Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners recommend that Secondary Shopping frontages should be designated in both principal towns. In Ferndown, the extent of this designation includes most of Victoria Road and Ringwood Road (Plan E). In Wimborne Minster, the Secondary frontages are recommended to be in West Borough, East Street, West Street, King Street, Cooks Row, Leigh Road, Crown Mead, Church Street, West Row, Mill Lane, Eastbrook Row, Poole Road, Crown Court and Park Lane (Plan H).

4.391 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.392 The introduction of Primary and Secondary shopping frontages will support Sustainability Appraisal Objective 7 (access to meet people's needs), Sustainability Appraisal Objective 16 (help communities support social cohesion through the provision of basic services) and Sustainability Appraisal Objective 23 (supporting vital and viable town centres).

4.393 **Conclusions and Implications for the Preferred Options**

4.394 The Core Strategy should identify Primary and Secondary shopping frontages in town centres as recommended in PPS4.

4.395 **Option C: 'Designate local shopping areas where local shops and services will be encouraged and protected' with the issue of reclassifying the network of centres within the Borough, which emerged from the evidence study]**

4.396 The retail study put forward the option of a retail hierarchy to guide the scale of retail development to be permitted within retail centres in the District according to their role and function. The designation of a retail hierarchy presents a more comprehensive option than the original Option C which only looked at retail development in local shopping areas.

4.397 **Issues and Options Consultation response**

4.398 The Issues and Options consultation uncovered very strong support towards protecting local services. 87% of respondents were keen to see these services and facilities designated and protected. Residents value the opportunity to visit local parades of shops for convenience shopping, the launderette or hairdressers. Supporting local businesses is a sustainable option, reducing the need to travel and supporting community cohesion.

Option	In favour	Against	No opinion
C	87%	3%	10%

Table 4.26

4.399 **Evidence:**

4.400 Analysis carried out by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners indicated that there is potential to reclassify Verwood and West Moors to District Centres, rather than town centres. Whilst it is felt that West Moors suits and meets the District Centre criteria, it is considered that Verwood should perhaps retain its status as a town centre in East Dorset. This is because it has a much larger population of 14,000 residents and 42 shop units, and could be expanded over time.

4.401 Corfe Mullen and West Parley are recommended to become Local Centres. All other small clusters of shops come under the status of parades or villages shops. It recommends these should be protected by policy because they fulfil an important role of providing locally accessible goods. Corfe Mullen may be reconsidered if proposals for the urban extension are accepted; however this depends on the scale of development – significant levels of housing will need to be delivered through a master plan which will consider the needs of the settlement as a whole.

4.402 East Dorset has a number of local shopping parades across the district that provide for the basic needs of the community (see list in section 1 above), most of which are within the built up area.

4.403 **Policy Review:**

4.404 Setting out the hierarchy of centres will have a bearing on their growth; the sequential approach advocated in PPS 4 suggests that town and district centre sites should be the first choice for retail and commercial leisure development.

4.405 PPS 6 provides guidance on the designation and role of centres

- A City Centre constitutes the highest level of centre and will often be a regional centre and will serve a wide catchment.
- Town Centres are usually the second level of centre after city centres and, in many cases, they will be the principal centre (centres) in a local authority's area.
- District centres will usually comprise of a group of shops often containing at least one supermarket or a superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public facilities.
- Local centres include a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. PPS4 does not provide a definition of centres below local centres. It is appropriate to assume that small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance are not regarded as centres for the purposes of PPS4.

4.406 PPS4 recommends town centres should be strengthened and developed into a hierarchy within the locality.

4.407 Small parades of shops are important to local communities. However, they are considered to have a purely neighbourhood significance, and are not regarded as centres for the purposes of PPS4. It is important to appreciate the significance attached to these shop units, and to promote further parades of shops in future major development proposals, such as urban extensions.

4.408 However, it is also important to understand the different uses at the parades, and to acknowledge the difficulty in preventing conversion of uses within the A1 use class. This use class allows such an enormous range of potential uses, that is it impossible to prevent the loss of convenience stores to comparison or niche ranges of goods with a local policy. When the number of shop units are limited in a parade, this can be to the detriment of the local community who require daily grocery shopping, rather than specialist double glazing shops, or insurance brokers for example.

4.409 The changing nature of retailing and the economy has shown that freestanding petrol filling stations now provide a comprehensive range of groceries and newspapers. These have taken on the role of convenience stores to local and passing trade and operate lengthy opening hours. However, they are generally located in the urban or edge of urban centres, rather than in the larger village settlements.

4.410 Policy SHDEV6 of the Local Plan supports proposals for small scale shopping facilities, designed to meet the needs of the immediate locality, in residential areas within the urban areas and in rural village policy envelopes. This policy should continue to be supported to promote sustainability and community cohesion.

4.411 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.412 The Sustainability Appraisal does not highlight any clear significant adverse impacts on objectives but recognises that an appropriate policy would make a significant positive impact on the vitality and viability of the local shopping areas (Objective 23). Potential key benefits could relate to minimising pollution (Objectives 3 and 4), provision of access to meet people's needs and support social cohesion within communities (Objective 16), and facilitate a sustainable and growing economy (Objective 24).

4.413 **Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options**

4.414 Setting out the hierarchy of centres will have a bearing on their growth; the sequential approach advocated in PPS4 suggests that town and district centre sites should be the first choice for retail and commercial development. To ensure appropriate development, it is recommended the hierarchy in the District is amended to reflect the recommendations of the evidence. West Moors should become a District centre to reflect its size as a centre and limited growth potential into a town centre. In addition, retail facilities in local shopping parades will continue to be protected.

4.415 **Option D: Prevent the loss of village shops, pubs and services.**

4.416 **This option should be read in conjunction with Issue CI4 A (Community Issues)**

4.417 **Issues and Options Consultation Response**

Option	In favour	Against	No opinion
D	86%	4%	10%

Table 4.27

4.418 **Evidence**

4.419 The rural settlements and villages are vulnerable to the loss of non profitable village shops and post offices, pubs and garages. These services are seen as vital components of community life, often acting as a meeting place for residents who are spread out across a wide rural area; yet they are vulnerable to the cheaper prices and convenience of supermarkets in the towns, and rely heavily on the support of the community. Village shops are very vulnerable: Five villages shops have closed since the review of the last Local Plan (Edmondsham, Holt, Horton, Witchampton and Woodlands – all but Witchampton being the village Post Office too, although one re-opened in 2009 in another location in the village as a community enterprise (Witchampton), and another village has gained a pharmacy (Sturminster Marshall). Four post offices closed under the national review in 2008 (Holt, Longham, Stapehill and Wimborne Road West, Ferndown). This gradual erosion of shops has left gaps in provision for a number of services in the rural area.

4.420 **Policy Review**

4.421 PPS7 supports the provision of village shops and services, such as pubs, petrol stations and post offices. It recommends development proposals should be considered flexibly in order to promote sustainability and community cohesion.

4.422 PPS4 supports the rural economies and sustainability objectives.

4.423 Policy SHDEV8 of the Local Plan supports the retention of village shops, public houses and community facilities unless there is clear evidence the business is unviable or there are adequate alternative local facilities available locally.

4.424 **Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal**

4.425 The Sustainability Appraisal assessment does not highlight any clear significant adverse impacts on objectives but recognises that an appropriate policy would make a significant positive impact on the vitality and viability of the rural areas. . Potential key benefits could relate to provision of access to meet people's needs (Objective 16), and to create vital and viable town centres and communities (Objective 23).

4.426 **Conclusions/Implications for the Preferred Options**

4.427 The provision of local community shops and services should be supported for community well being and sustainable communities in line with guidance in PPS4 and PPS7.

Options

4.428 The following Options can be found in the Key Strategy chapter of the Core Strategy

Issue 1:Is the Christchurch town centre hierarchy appropriate?

Preferred Option KS14

4.429 **The Christchurch town centre hierarchy should be as follows:**

- **Town Centres: Christchurch**
- **District Centres: Highcliffe and Barrack Road**
- **Local Centres: Purewell**
- **Parades: All other clusters of shops.**

4.430 **The proposed hierarchy elevates Barrack Road from a local centre to a district centre.**

Non Preferred Option KS15

- **Town Centres: Christchurch and Highcliffe**
- **District Centres: Barrack Road**
- **Local Centres: Purewell**
- **Parades: All other clusters of shops.**

4.431 The proposed hierarchy elevates Highcliffe from a district centre to a town centre and Barrack Road from a local centre to a district centre.

Issue 2: Is the existing East Dorset town centre hierarchy appropriate?

Preferred Option KS16

4.432 **The East Dorset town centre hierarchy should be amended to reflect the recommendations of the evidence as follows:**

- **Town Centres: Ferndown, Verwood and Wimborne Minster**
- **District Centres: West Moors**
- **Local Centres: Corfe Mullen and West Parley (NB. Could be subject to change if new neighbourhoods are created at these localities).**
- **Parades: All other clusters of shops.**

Non Preferred Option KS17

4.433 **No change to the current hierarchy of town centres**

- **Town centres Ferndown, Verwood, West Moors and Wimborne Minster**
- **Local centres Corfe Mullen and West Parley**

Issue 14: What approach should be adopted to guide the location, scale and type of retail development in Christchurch?

Issue 15 What approach should be adopted to guide the location, scale and type of retail development in East Dorset?

Preferred Option KS18

4.434 **Where and how much retail development should there be in Christchurch and East Dorset?**

4.435 In order for key retail centres in Christchurch and East Dorset to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability, it is important that provision is made for additional retail floorspace to meet projected requirements to 2027. Further retail floorspace is necessary to meet the needs of a growing population with associated increasing levels of available retail expenditure. It is also important for our retail centres to maintain their market share of retail expenditure within the South East Dorset sub region and provide the opportunity to increase this market share. This option sets out the broad locations and level of additional retail floorspace that could be accommodated across the retail centres of Christchurch and East Dorset to 2027, informed by the Joint Retail Assessment (2008) which are set out below. For most centres, floorspace figures are set out as ranges to reflect requirements of lower and higher population growth scenarios which will be determined by the level of new housing to be delivered in Christchurch and East Dorset to 2027. The Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Document will determine specific sites within the centres where retail development can take place.

4.436 Christchurch:

4.437 Christchurch Town Centre:

- Comparison Retail Floorspace: 6,900 - 8,000sqm
- Convenience Floorspace: No additional requirement to 2027

4.438 Highcliffe Centre:

- Comparison Floorspace: 800sqm
- Convenience Floorspace: No additional requirement to 2027

4.439 East Dorset:

4.440 Ferndown

- Comparison Floorspace: 750 - 5,200 sqm
- Convenience Floorspace: 3700 - 5,600 sqm

4.441 Verwood

- Comparison Floorspace: 160 - 1,150 sqm
- Convenience Floorspace: 200 - 700 sqm

4.442 West Moors

- Comparison Floorspace: 80 - 550 sqm
- Convenience Floorspace: 0 - 110 sqm

4.443 **Wimborne Minster:**

- **Comparison Floorspace: 950 - 6,650 sqm**
- **Convenience Floorspace: 700 - 1,030 sqm**

4.444 The following Options can be found in the Christchurch and Highcliffe Centres chapter of the Core Strategy

Issue 8:What should the vision be for Christchurch Town Centre?

Preferred Option CH1 What should the vision be for Christchurch Town Centre?

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

4.446 **To achieve this vision:**

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

1. **The Magistrates Court Site**
2. **Saxon Square**
3. **The Lanes**
4. **The former Gasworks Site**
5. **Stony Lane**

- 4. Druitt Gardens will be enhanced to provide for an attractive area of open space within the town centre. This will benefit tourism and contribute to the promotion of healthy lifestyles by providing high quality open space.
- 5. High density residential development will take place alongside the projected requirement for retail to provide for a balanced, mixed use environment in areas outside those affected by high flood risk.
- 6: The town centre will accommodate limited office development that doesn't adversely affect the vitality and viability of office development in Bournemouth and Poole town centres.
- 7. Townscape quality will be enhanced by sensitive development and improvements incorporating the built form and the spaces between, including streets, squares, parks, waterfront and car parks. Only high quality development proposals that respect and enhance the historic character of the centre, and improve ease of movement and legibility will be permitted.
- Saxon Square will be refurbished so it relates more appropriately with the historic core of the High Street and provides for a more attractive shopping environment.
- The redevelopment of the Lanes, comprising the area between Sopers Lane and Wick Lane will provide an opportunity for environmental enhancements by encouraging mixed used development, including residential, retail and community uses.
- The linkage between the High Street and Bargates will be improved in an effort to increase the flow of pedestrians between the shopping areas.

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

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

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

Preferred Option CH2 What should be the extent of the Christchurch Town Centre boundary?

- To designate a Town Centre Boundary to include the Stony Lane industrial estate and land north-east of the railway station.

Non Preferred Option CH3

- To adopt a town centre boundary in line with the boundary identified in the Town Centre Strategy (2003)

Preferred Option CH4

- The determination of A1 thresholds for the Christchurch shopping cores

Non Preferred Option CH5

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

Preferred Option CH6 Christchurch Town Centre Shopping Frontages

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

Non Preferred Option CH7

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

Non Preferred Option CH8

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

Non Preferred Option CH9

4.451 **To keep the current Shopping Frontage Designations**

Issue 9:What should the vision be for Highcliffe Town Centre?

Preferred Option CH10 Highcliffe Centre Vision

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

4.453 **To achieve this vision:**

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

- **4. The townscape quality of the centre will be improved: the objective is to secure a high quality environment that will give the centre a distinct character and enhance its sense of identity.**
- **This will be achieved by providing new street furniture and planting in an effort to create an attractive, welcoming and pedestrian friendly environment. The pedestrian-vehicular conflict, apparent on the A337 Lymington Road will be minimised by the introduction of appropriate traffic calming measures and provision of more frequent pedestrian crossings.**
- **5. High density residential development will take place alongside the projected requirement for retail to provide for a balanced, mixed use environment.**
- **6. To minimise congestion and air pollution, the use of sustainable modes of transport will be encouraged. Public transport will be promoted as the primary means of travelling into the centre.**
- **7. The Council will ensure that adequate parking levels are maintained within the centre to ensure its vitality and viability.**

Preferred Option CH11

- **In Highcliffe to retain the existing retail frontages**

4.454 The following Options can be found in the Wimborne and Colehill Housing and Town Centre Chapter of the Core Strategy.

Issue 5: What should be the extent of the Wimborne Town Centre boundary?

Preferred Option WMC6

4.455 **The proposed Town Centre boundary for Wimborne as shown on the following plan:**

4.456 [redacted]

Non Preferred Option WMC7

4.457 **Retain the existing Town Centre boundary for Wimborne as shown on the plan.**

4.458 [redacted]

Issue 13: What should be the vision for Wimborne Minster Town Centre?

Preferred Option WMC8

4.459 **It is proposed that Wimborne Minster will continue to act as a key town centre in the District and together with Ferndown will be the main focus for retail development. This is because it is well served by public transport and there are more development opportunities within the centre. The shopping environment will be improved to provide a more pleasant pedestrian townscape, public transport routes will be supported, and facilities and services will continue to be located in this central location for residents and visitors to the town.**

4.460 **To achieve this vision:**

1. **The range of retail uses will be supported and improved, to continue to provide a niche range of quality comparison goods shops to appeal to the residents and large number of visitors to the town.**
2. **Residents will continue to have access to a variety of community services and cultural facilities in the town centre, such as the Tivoli Theatre, Walford Mill, the Allendale Centre and the Library. These will be retained, supported and where possible enhanced to support the vitality of the town centre.**
3. **The evening economy uses such as restaurants, cafés and pubs will be supported in the secondary shopping locations to enhance the vibrancy of the afternoon and evening economy of the town.**
4. **The townscape quality of the town centre will be enhanced; only high quality development proposals that respect and enhance the local character of the centre, and improve ease of movement and legibility will be permitted.**
5. **Higher density residential and commercial development will take place alongside the projected requirement for retail to provide for a balanced, mixed use environment.**
6. **In order to improve pedestrian safety, traffic movement and improve the ambiance of the public realm, the proposed enhancements to Wimborne Square will be introduced in a phased programme.**
7. **The townscape quality in and around Crown Mead will be improved, and the opportunity for redevelopment to improve links through the town will be promoted.**
8. **In order to improve the vitality of the town centre and improved pedestrian safety around the town, traffic management and calming measures will be considered to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict.**
9. **New development, shopfronts and advertisements in the town centre will be of the highest standard of design and in good quality materials, to reflect the architectural and historic significance of the town centre.**
10. **To minimise congestion and air pollution, the use of sustainable modes of transport will be supported.**

4.461 The following options can be found in the Ferndown and West Parley Housing and Town Centre Chapter of the Core Strategy.

Issue 5: What should be the extent of the Ferndown Town Centre boundary?

Preferred Option FWP6

4.462 **The proposed town Centre boundary for Ferndown is as follows:**

4.463 [redacted]

Non Preferred Option FWP7

4.464 **Retain the existing Town Centre boundary for Ferndown**

Issue 10: What should be the vision for Ferndown Town Centre?

Preferred Option FWP8

4.465 **Our vision is that Ferndown will continue to act as a key town centre in the District and will remain a key focus for retail development. The comparison and convenience retail offer will be enhanced and the shopping environment improved to provide a more pleasant and pedestrian friendly townscape, public transport routes will be supported, and facilities and services will continue to be located in this central location for residents and visitors to the town.**

4.466 **To achieve this vision:**

- **Retail uses will be expanded and enhanced to promote the vitality and viability of the centre. The strategy will seek to enhance the niche retail offer and with a mix of unit sizes to improve the presence of national multiples, to provide for better choice in comparison shopping. An enhanced pedestrianised Penny's Walk will help to attract national multiple chains whilst niche retail shops will continue to thrive on Victoria Road.**
- **Residents of the town will continue to have access to a variety of important community services and cultural facilities located in the town centre, such as the Barrington Theatre and the Library. These will be retained, supported and where possible enhanced to support the vitality of the town centre.**
- **The evening economy uses such as restaurants, cafés and pubs will be supported in the secondary shopping locations to enhance the vibrancy of the afternoon and evening economy of the town.. The townscape quality of the centre will be improved to achieve a safe, high quality and attractive environment that will give the centre a distinct character and enhance its sense of identity. This will benefit residents, visitors and businesses, improving ease of movement around the town for pedestrians and offer better legibility.**
- **5. Higher density residential and commercial development will take place alongside the projected requirement for retail growth to provide for a balanced, mixed use environment.**
- **6. In order to improve the vitality of the town centre and improved pedestrian safety around the town, traffic management and calming measures will be considered to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict in Victoria and Ringwood Roads. Public transport will be promoted as the primary means of travelling into the town centre.**
- **7. To minimise congestion and air pollution, the use of sustainable modes of transport will be encouraged. Ferndown benefits from a comprehensive public transport network providing links both within the town and its surrounding areas via bus services. Public transport will be promoted as the primary means of travelling into town.**
- **8. The Council will ensure that appropriate public parking levels and accessibility are maintained within the town to maintain the vitality and viability of the centre, with an appropriate signage strategy.**

4.467 The following options can be found in the Verwood and West Moors Housing and Centre Chapter of the Core Strategy

Issue 6: Should a town centre boundary be designated for Verwood?

Preferred Option VWM 5

4.468 **Designate a Town Centre boundary for Verwood as shown below:**

4.469 [redacted]

Preferred Option VWM6

4.470 **pTC11a Our vision is that Verwood Town Centre will as a key town centre in East Dorset, providing a thriving busy centre to the local population and visitors. The town centre will continue to provide an attractive townscape, public transport routes will be supported, and facilities and services will continue to be located in this central location.**

4.471 **To achieve this vision:**

1. **The range of retail uses will be supported and improved to provide more comparison and convenience goods shops, in small to medium size units to appeal to small independent shops.**
2. **Residents will continue to have access to a variety of community services and cultural facilities in the town centre, such as the Hub, the Memorial Hall and the Library. These will be retained, supported and where possible enhanced.**
3. **Evening economy uses such as restaurants, cafés and pubs will be supported in the town centre to enhance the vibrancy of the afternoon and evening economy of the town.**
4. **The townscape quality of the town centre will continue to be enhanced; only high quality development proposals that respect and enhance the local character of the centre, and improve ease of movement and legibility will be permitted.**
5. **Residential and commercial development will take place alongside the projected requirement for retail to provide for a balanced, mixed use environment.**
6. **In order to improve the vitality of the town centre and improved pedestrian safety around the town, traffic management and calming measures will be provided to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict.**
7. **To minimise congestion and air pollution, the use of sustainable modes of transport will be supported.**

Issue should a town centre boundary be designated for West Moors?

Preferred Option VWM8

4.472 **Designate a District Centre boundary for West Moors as shown.**

4.473 [redacted]

Issue 10: What should the Vision be for West Moors Town Centre?

Preferred Option VWM9

4.474 **Our vision for West Moors District Centre is that it will continue to act as a key District Centre in East Dorset, providing a central focus to the local population. The District Centre will be supported to provide an attractive townscape, public transport routes sustained, and facilities and services will continue to be located in this central location.**

4.475 **To achieve this vision:**

1. **The range of retail uses will be supported and improved to provide more comparison goods shops, in small to medium sizes to appeal to small independent shops**
2. **Residents will continue to have access to a variety of community services and cultural facilities in the district centre, such as the doctors' surgeries and the Library. These will be retained, supported and where possible enhanced.**
3. **The promotion of evening economy uses such as restaurants, cafés and pubs will be supported in the district centre to enhance the vibrancy of the afternoon and evening economy of the town.**
4. **The townscape quality of the district centre will continue to be enhanced; only high quality development proposals that respect and enhance the local character of the centre, and improve ease of movement and legibility will be permitted.**
5. **In order to improve the vitality of the district centre and improved pedestrian safety around the town, traffic management and calming measures will be considered in Station Road to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflict.**
6. **Residential and commercial development will take place alongside the projected requirement for retail to provide for a balance, mixed use environment.**
7. **To minimise congestion and air pollution, the use of sustainable modes of transport will be supported.**

5 Implementation

5.1 This section identifies an infrastructure delivery plan for infrastructure improvements for Christchurch and East Dorset town centres which incorporates partners involved in delivery and appropriate timescales for implementation.

5.2 Delivery Timetable for Town Centre Vitality

Policy Proposal	Infrastructure Requirements	Partners	Constraints	Delivery Timescale
Wimborne Square Enhancement	Quality paving scheme and landscaping; relocation of on street parking and bus stops	EDDC, DCC, Wimborne Minster Town Council, Wimborne Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Bus companies, Taxi Drivers	Funding currently partially committed – may be withdrawn due to current economic constraints	2 – 5 years
Druitt Gardens, Christchurch	Restore boundary and other selected areas of scrub and woodland edge plants; provide a safe public access.	CBC, DCC	No funding secured at present	1 – 7 years
Wimborne Town Centre Manager	None	EDDC, Wimborne Minster Town Council & Wimborne Chamber of Trade and Commerce	Funding for post	1 – 3 years
Ferndown Town Centre Manager	None	EDDC, Ferndown Town Council & Ferndown Chamber of Trade and Commerce	Funding for post	1 – 3 years
Park and Ride facility for Wimborne (under consideration in the Transport and Access Key Issue Paper)	Large car park outside the town centre	EDDC, Wimborne Minster Town Council &Wimborne Chamber of Trade and Commerce & Tourism Board	Temporary site availability for Christmas and summer for key tourist events.	1 – 7 years

Promote sustainable tourist related development at key locations in the town centres	Public transport, cycle routes, linked footpaths	Tourism board	Landowners	1 – 7 years

Table 5.1