

3 Challenges, Vision and Strategic Objectives

The Challenges We Need to Deal With

3.1 Throughout the development of the Core Strategy, people have been asked to respond on the key issues which they feel the Strategy needs to tackle. These issues have broadly remained the same throughout the process, although some more detail has emerged as to the range of concerns people have.

We need to plan for:

- A significant housing waiting list, with annual housing need identified through the 2012 Strategic Housing Market Assessment, far exceeding even total housing supply.
- House price to income ratios among the highest in the country.
- Almost limitless housing demand, given the popularity of the area to live in.
- Significant constraints which limit potential land for development, such as Green Belt, flood zones, nature conservation and landscape designations.
- Delivering development in sustainable locations whilst protecting the character of our towns and villages.
- The sensitive Dorset Heathlands which are already under considerable pressure from surrounding residential development.
- An increasingly congested transport network, and the need to provide better and more sustainable travel choice for residents, businesses and visitors.
- The need to adapt to the challenges of climate change, particularly the increased risk of flooding, as well as measures to reduce the impact of new development on climate change.
- The need for economic growth including developing new sectors of the economy, and improving knowledge and skills.
- Providing adequate land for employment growth, including major sites such as Bournemouth Airport and Ferndown Industrial Estate.
- Supporting our communities in urban and rural areas, including ensuring that community facilities support community development, and that the specific needs of older residents and young people are met.
- Tackling inequalities, such as pockets of deprivation and high levels of young people not in education, employment or training, which are often hidden in a relatively affluent area.

A Vision for Christchurch and East Dorset

3.2 Although national planning policy is changing, there is still an expectation that planning should be genuinely plan-led, with succinct Local Plans setting out a positive long term vision for an area. The strategic priorities for Local Plans defined in national policy and set out below are taken forward in the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy.

3.3 In the context of Local Plans, the policy framework encourages them to be aspirational, but realistic. Strategic priorities should be set out for:

- Housing and economic development requirements.

- The provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development.
- The provision of infrastructure for transport, minerals, waste, energy, telecoms, water supply and water quality.
- The provision of health, education, security, community infrastructure and other local facilities; and
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation.

3.4 The framework also notes that Local Plans are the key to delivering development that reflects the vision and aspiration of local communities.

3.5 The proposed Core Strategy Vision and Objectives aim to set the appropriate balance between aspiration and realism, and therefore to set the appropriate context for the Core Strategy policies. To deliver the Vision will be a significant challenge and will take considerable time, but it is considered to be positive and achievable.

The Core Strategy Vision

The natural environment of Christchurch and East Dorset and their historic and thriving towns and villages are, and will continue to be, the most important assets for the area. This special environment will be used to sustain the growth of the local economy, and the welfare of its local communities, rather than being used as a reason to turn our back on growth which can be achieved sustainably.

The Dorset Heathlands, the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Christchurch Harbour, the coast, beaches and rivers will be protected and enhanced for their intrinsic value and to ensure that recreation and commercial activity sustains these areas.

The area will adapt to the emerging demands of climate change through clear strategies to reduce risk of flooding, and through encouraging high standards of building design and construction.

The unmet housing needs of the area will be reduced, with housing delivered of a type and tenure which meets the aspirations of those wishing to buy or rent. An element of this housing will be in the form of new, well planned, sustainable residential areas in both Christchurch and East Dorset. These will be attractive new areas, including high quality and sustainable homes, areas of open space, new community facilities, and improved transport links to the surrounding area.

Housing will also continue to be delivered from redevelopment within the existing towns, but developments will now better reflect the character and type of housing found in each local area, and will make appropriate contributions to infrastructure. Almost all new housing development will contribute to the provision of affordable housing, creating a step change in delivery of affordable dwellings and a significant reduction in waiting lists.

The Green Belt policy will be kept in place to protect the character of the area, subject to limited alterations of boundaries to enable its extension and elsewhere to allow for some housing and employment growth to help meet the needs of the local communities.

Historic towns such as Christchurch and Wimborne will be vibrant centres of commercial and cultural activity, with niche shopping, and varied attractions and facilities for residents and visitors alike. Other key local centres in Ferndown, Verwood, West Moors and Highcliffe will support shops and services for their local communities, with villages and smaller neighbourhood centres providing basic services. New ways of delivering services and facilities in rural areas will be developed.

The economy of the area will grow, both by sustaining its traditional sectors such as tourism, health and education, but also by creating a mixed economy with emphasis on growth in new knowledge based sectors including engineering, creative and technical industries and the green knowledge economy. Economic growth will be sustained by the creation of major high quality employment sites in East Dorset and at Bournemouth Airport, and by the protection of other well located sites for key employment uses. These will have an important role in sustaining the economy of South East Dorset.

The area will be easier to get around, not just for those who have a car, but for those who wish to use public transport, to walk or to cycle, with major development focused in locations accessible by different means of transport. In Christchurch, development will be focused on the existing public transport corridors on the A35 and A337 and better links will be made to Christchurch and Hinton Admiral stations, with the urban extension also linked to the transport network. Christchurch Borough Council will continue to press for the development of a Christchurch Bypass as a long term solution to the town's traffic problems.

The Airport will grow sustainably into a significant regional transport hub, providing scheduled and charter flights to a wide range of business and tourist destinations. Both the airport and its business parks will be linked to the surrounding conurbation by public transport services.

In East Dorset, transport corridors will be developed to help to promote a wider choice of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport. These corridors will include linking the towns and villages of Ferndown, West Moors, Three Legged Cross and Verwood, and improving links from Christchurch to Wimborne and Corfe Mullen and to Wimborne from Poole. Improvements to Canford Bottom Roundabout and dualling the A31 from Ferndown to Merley will reduce congestion and improve connectivity with the rest of Dorset and Hampshire.

Perhaps most important of all, our communities will thrive. There will be targeted regeneration to provide improved housing facilities and services in the Somerford, Leigh Park and Heatherlands Estates. Community facilities will be safeguarded and support will be given to the community groups and organisations to develop volunteering, and to obtain premises from which to deliver services. The provision of a new community facility in Christchurch town centre will be supported.

Strategic Objectives

3.6 The Core Strategy Vision will continue to be supported by 7 Strategic Objectives. These aim to set the aspirations of the Vision into a series of more practical long term objectives, which are closely linked to the policies which will help achieve them.

Objective 1

To manage and safeguard the natural environment of Christchurch and East Dorset.

The **Green Belt** will be retained and protected, except for strategic release of land to provide new housing, and for employment development in East Dorset and at Bournemouth Airport. Impact on **designated sites** will be avoided, and residential development will contribute to mitigation of development on Heathland habitats. New **greenspace** will be provided as part of major housing proposals. Important **natural features** such as Christchurch Harbour, the coast, rivers and beaches and the Wiltshire Downs and Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected and enhanced.

Objective 2

To maintain and improve the character of the towns and villages, and to create vibrant local centres.

A clear **hierarchy of centres** will be developed, with a clear strategy for the major centres. Town and district centre boundaries will be created in Christchurch, Wimborne, Ferndown, Verwood and West Moors to help create a vibrant centre with a range of services and facilities. **Locally listed buildings** will now form part of the heritage protection strategy, and a local list will be created in East Dorset, and the Christchurch Local List updated. The Christchurch Borough Character Assessment and design standards in East Dorset will be used to guide design of new development.

Article 4(1) and 4(2) Directions will be considered to control small scale works which might damage the character of **Conservation Areas** as part of Conservation Area Management Plans. **Open space** will be provided alongside new residential development. **Special Character Areas** and **Areas of Great Landscape Value** will be reviewed and possibly expanded in East Dorset. **Rural Design Guides** will be produced.

Objective 3

To adapt to the challenges of climate change.

The impact of **carbon emissions from transport** will be reduced by more sustainable patterns of development in accessible locations, and by encouraging travel by bike, on foot, or by public transport. Developments will be expected to incorporate **carbon reduction, water and energy efficiency measures** as part of measures to reduce impact on climate change. At least 15% of total energy used on developments of 10 or more dwellings or 1,000m² of non-residential floorspace will come from decentralised, renewable or low carbon sources. Development will be located in areas at lowest **risk of flooding**. A Supplementary Planning Document for Flood Risk will be produced on how the sequential and exception tests will apply locally.

Objective 4

To enable the mixed economy of Christchurch and East Dorset to grow, and to develop new employment sectors.

Significant **new zones of employment development** will be located at Bournemouth Airport (15-30ha) and on key sites in East Dorset to serve the local and sub-regional economy. **A range of employment sites** will be provided across the area meeting the needs of the local economy, and a hierarchy of sites will be developed so that certain sites can be reserved for higher order development in key employment sectors. Agriculture and horticulture will be supported and rural **farm diversification** will be encouraged in appropriate locations near key settlements such as Alderholt, Cranborne, Sixpenny Handley, Sturminster Marshall, Burton, Winkton and Hurn. The key environmental features which attract **tourism** will be protected, including Christchurch Harbour, rivers and beaches and the Dorset Heathlands. Opportunities will be taken to create new features and habitats where possible.

Objective 5

To deliver a suitable, affordable and sustainable range of housing to provide for local needs.

Sufficient housing will be provided in Christchurch and East Dorset to reduce local needs, whilst maintaining the character of local communities. This housing will include well planned sustainable new communities in appropriate locations. The **size and type of dwellings** (both open market and affordable) will reflect current and projected local need through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. All residential development resulting in a net increase in dwellings will contribute towards **provision of affordable housing**, at a rate of 35% of total units being developed. Development of 100% **affordable housing schemes may be considered exceptionally** in land adjoining rural and urban settlements. Criteria for the provision of **Gypsy and Traveller** sites will be established.

Objective 6

To reduce the need for our communities to travel, and to do so more easily by a range of travel choices.

The overall aim will be to reduce congestion in key locations, by reducing the need to travel and encouraging public transport use, walking and cycling as alternatives to the car. Development will be located in **the most accessible locations**, focused on prime transport corridors and town centres. New residential development will be located either close to existing facilities, or where good transport links exist to such facilities.

Prime transport corridors will be developed in the short term on the A35 and A337 in Christchurch, the A348 in East Dorset, and the B3073 between the two areas. In the medium term, further prime transport corridors will be developed in East Dorset on parts of the A347, A349, B3074 and B3072, and corridors north of the A31(T).

Key transport schemes proposed to support the Core Strategy will be developed:

- A35 Fountains Roundabout, Stony Lane Roundabout, Staple Cross (Salisbury Road), Somerford Roundabout - junction improvements.

- B3073 junction improvements from Parley Cross to A338 Blackwater Junction and road widening from Chapel Gate roundabout to Blackwater Junction and along the A338 to the Cooper Dean Roundabout.
- A31(T) dualling between Merley and Ameysford.

The development of new Green Infrastructure including footpaths, bridleways and cycleways, will also encourage people to enjoy recreation without the need to travel by car.

Objective 7

To help our communities to thrive and to help people support each other.

The main town centres of Christchurch, Wimborne, Ferndown and Verwood will be **the focus for commercial, retail and community facilities**, with district centres and villages playing a supporting role. **New facilities and services** will be developed alongside the new neighbourhoods, and associated facilities will be provided as part of new employment development at Ferndown and Bournemouth Airport.