



Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy Examination

MATTER 8: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT / EMPLOYMENT

Statement by Christchurch and East Dorset Councils



Prepared by Christchurch Borough Council and
East Dorset District Council

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1 Issue 1: Employment Land Hierarchy Evidence

Response to Issue

Issue 1: Is the employment land hierarchy soundly based on robust evidence?

1.1 The employment land hierarchy for Christchurch and East Dorset has been informed by the Christchurch and East Dorset Employment Land Review and the 'key site' delivery plan within the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy (2008).

1.2 The sites identified in the hierarchy include those that are required to contribute toward the employment land requirements identified in Policy KS5 of the Core Strategy which has been informed by the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study (2012).

1.3 As part of the preparation of the Christchurch and East Dorset Employment Land Review an assessment was undertaken concerning the locational characteristics and employment market segments represented across employment sites in the Borough and District. This has informed an assessment of opportunities for inward investment and the status of sites within the employment land hierarchy.

1.4 Employment sites in Christchurch and East Dorset have been categorised according to the following criteria:

1.5 Strategic Higher Quality Sites

1.6 Sites within this category perform a strategic function in contributing towards the employment land requirements for the Bournemouth and Poole Strategically Significant City and Town identified in the Workspace Study (2012). The employment land review and Bournemouth Airport Economic Study (2008) identify the potential for growth from a range of growth sectors which could offer high quality and skilled employment opportunities at Bournemouth Airport Business Park.

1.7 Other Higher Quality Sites

1.8 Through the employment land review work these sites have been assessed as providing the locational characteristics to attract a range of high quality and skilled employment opportunities. They are also key sites in meeting the projected employment land requirements identified in Policy KS5.

1.9 Bournemouth Airport Business Park and the former BAE site are also identified as 'Key Sites' in the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy (2008).

1.10 A further category is included within the hierarchy where more flexibility is proposed in addition to contributing towards employment land requirements identified in Policy KS5. This categorisation is primarily based on the more diverse range of uses present on these sites and non B employment uses identified through the employment land review work.

1.11 Sites Identified for Upgrading

1.12 Bournemouth Airport Business Park is classified as a Strategic Higher Quality Site but is also identified as a site identified for upgrading. The need to upgrade infrastructure to enhance opportunities for inward investment has been identified through the Employment Land Review, the Bournemouth Airport Economic Study (2008), the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy (2008) and through master planning work undertaken by Manchester Airports Group. The need for strategic transport infrastructure improvements is also identified in Local Transport Plan 3 and informed by transport assessments undertaken by MAG and Dorset County Council.

1.13 The need to upgrade further sites has been identified through survey work undertaken as part of the employment land review.

1.14 Remaining Sites

1.15 Policy PC1 identifies a range of employment sites where a flexible approach is proposed to meet requirements for B1 (Office and Light Industrial uses) B2 (General Industry) and B8 (Warehousing and Distribution), as well as other diverse non B Class employment uses. These do not require a specific approach as they presently offer this general range of employment premises already and do not have specific issues requiring change.

2 Issue 2: Designation of land East of Ferndown Industrial Estate and Little Canford Depot

Response to Issue

Issue 2: Are the following sites correctly designated:

- Land east of Ferndown Industrial estate
- Little Canford Depot

2.1 The Christchurch and East Dorset employment sites identify land supply to contribute to the wider strategic requirement across the Bournemouth and Poole Strategically Significant City and Town (SSCT) as identified in the 2012 Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study (ED42, ED43) (See Matter 1, Issue 9). The preferred sites are deliverable, justified and appropriate for the Plan period and meet the requirements of the NPPF. On the basis of available supply it is necessary for in the region of 80ha to come forward in Christchurch and East Dorset over the plan period to address future requirements identified in the Workspace Study. The level of employment land provision identified in Policy KS5 is necessary to address projected requirements across the Bournemouth and Poole SSCT and reflects the availability of employment land across the area and shortages of supply in Bournemouth.

2.2 Land east of Ferndown Industrial Estate

2.3 The proposed site is close to European designated wet heathlands and the Council is concerned that development on this site would impact on the hydrology of the area with implications for Slop Bog. The proposal would result in the closing of the very narrow Green Belt gap between the Industrial Estate and Ferndown. It could also possibly result in conflict between employment and residential uses, dependent on the nature of development. For these reasons this site should not be allocated as an employment site.

2.4 Little Canford Depot

2.5 The Wessex Water site is previously developed land which should be considered within the context of the NPPF, paragraph 89, bullet 6. It would therefore be appropriate to allow redevelopment of the built area of the site. This does not require the land to be removed from the Green Belt. However, the landowner has promoted forms of development that are larger than presently exists and this could have a detrimental impact on the Green Belt.

2.6 The adjacent land at Stourbank Nurseries is agricultural, so is excluded from the definition of previously developed land in the NPPF and is therefore Green Belt where only appropriate forms of development are acceptable without the need for justification by very special circumstances, as set out by the NPPF. The potential use of this site for employment is part of a wider proposal for 50-100 units of residential development, fishing lakes and amenity land.

2.7 The site is rural in character, lying within the open countryside distant and inaccessible from existing services and facilities. Development here would not support a sustainable pattern of development as sought by paragraph 84 of the NPPF. In relation to the housing proposals, the site does not lie within an Area of Search as defined through work undertaken for the Regional Spatial Strategy and Masterplanning (ED62-64, OD23).

2.8 The Core Strategy identifies a sufficient and appropriate allocation of employment land to meet the demonstrable needs, so these sites are not required.

3 Issue 3: Lack of Market demand Evidence

Response to Issue

Issue 3: Does the CS provide clear guidance regarding the evidence required to demonstrate lack of market demand to justify alternative uses? (Policy PC2)

3.1 The policy refers to the need to provide evidence to demonstrate that the site is not required to meet projected employment land requirements over the plan period to 2028. This will need to demonstrate that a change of use will not prejudice the Councils' ability to meet employment land requirements identified in Policy KS5 of the Core Strategy which has been informed by the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Study (2012) (ED43). This will apply to proposals for existing employment sites in B1/B2/B8 use, involving a change of use that would erode the existing stock of employment land and in relation to proposals for a change of use on sites identified as part of the employment land supply in KS5.

3.2 Extensive marketing of a site would also need to be undertaken to demonstrate lack of market demand in addition to the assessment of impact on employment land supply. Typically, extensive marketing will have been undertaken over a 12 month period.

4 Issue 4: Business Development Outside Major Villages

Response to Issue

Issue 4: Is the restrictive approach to business development outside major villages justified and appropriate (PC3)?

4.1 The desire for economic development has to be weighed against the obligations to protect the landscape quality and scenic beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which covers over 45% of East Dorset, and which constitutes the majority of the rural area. A further 47% of East Dorset (some of which is also designated as AONB as well), and all of the rural part of Christchurch, is covered by the Green Belt designation where national policy seeks to maintain the openness of the area by preventing inappropriate development within it. New buildings, unless for a small group of appropriate uses, are by their very nature inappropriate development in the Green Belt and not permitted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated to outweigh national policy.

4.2 The re-use of existing buildings for alternative uses, or the re-construction of buildings, again for alternative uses, either within the Green Belt or the AONB may be acceptable, subject to the requirements of national guidance on ensuring that any such development does not harm the integrity of the feature of acknowledged importance and are sustainable. The Councils therefore have to balance the needs of the rural communities against the limitations on development imposed by the presence of nationally important land use designations on all but a very small proportion of the area

4.3 The role of the economy and landscape quality are central to maintaining the character of the rural areas and the Councils wish to assist in promoting developments which will achieve this aim. A new policy PC6 is proposed to address the needs of electronic communications networks. Policy PC3 is clarified to ensure that it is clear to which settlements and types of settlements it applies, and more emphasis is placed on the role of agriculture and farm diversification and tourism in supporting the rural economy. The importance of the AONB to the character of the area is also reinforced.

4.4 A more general focus to the location of economic development is not consistent with sustainable development and the Core Strategy Settlement Hierarchy. For these reasons, it is considered that the restrictive approach to business development outside major villages is both justified and appropriate.

5 Issue 5: Residential Re-use of Buildings in the Countryside

Response to Issue

Issue 5: Should the CS make provision for residential re use of redundant / disused buildings in the countryside?

5.1 Policy PC3 deals with the rural economy and the location of 'economic development' and not residential development. Policy KS1 sets out the settlement hierarchy for Christchurch and East Dorset which directs the location, scale and distribution of development, including residential development. The Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government is currently undertaking a consultation on a relaxation to permitted development rights for underused buildings in towns and rural areas. The package would allow shops and existing buildings used for agricultural purposes of up to 150 sq m to change to residential use. It is not considered necessary for the Core Strategy to repeat national policy in terms of paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

