CHRISTCHURCH & EAST DORSET

CORE STRATEGY AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS
ISSUES AND OPTIONS INTERIM SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

October 2008

Christchurch ...where time is pleasant

East Dorset District Council
So much to offer

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

Contents

Introduction and Background

This Interim Sustainability Statement provides an assessment of the Issues and Options papers for the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy and Affordable Housing Development Plan Documents. The statement is designed to support the debate on the key sustainability issues facing the area. It forms an early stage of the overall Sustainability Appraisal process for the emerging Local Development Framework. This statement should also be read in conjunction with the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report that has been produced to underpin the appraisal of the Local Development Framework. It applies the objectives identified in that document to the Issues and Options papers.

The preparation of this Interim Sustainability Statement at this stage is not a formal requirement. However, the guidance in Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents from central government recommends that each stage of the preparation of Development Plan Documents is complimented by a sustainability appraisal. This will ensure that the final sustainability appraisal for each Development Plan Document is comprehensive and robust enough for consultation and examination.

The Interim Sustainability Statement tests each option against the sustainability objectives and will ensure that the policies within the documents reflect the principles of sustainable development.

The Sustainability Appraisal must also meet the requirements of the European Union's Strategic Environmental Assessment

Directive 2001/42/EC. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires authorities to look at the likely significant effects that plans and programmes, if implemented, will have on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects and secondary, cumulative and combined effects of issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape.

Sustainable Development and Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainable development is at the heart of the planning system. Central to sustainable development is the need to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. In order to achieve this, a balance between environmental, social and economic considerations needs to be struck.

Under the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, Regional Planning Bodies and Local Planning Authorities are required to develop policies and plans which contribute to the objective of achieving sustainable development. To do this a Sustainability Appraisal is used in order to assess the likely social, economic and environmental impacts of particular plans and policies.

A Sustainability Appraisal of the plans and policies at both the regional and local level is mandatory under the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*. Each document within the Local Development Framework will therefore be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal. This will be used as a way to

predict whether the outcome of any given policy is consistent with the overall aim of delivering sustainable development.

The Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy and Affordable Housing Development Plan Documents

The Local Development Framework will replace the existing Local Plans adopted in Christchurch in 2001 and East Dorset in 2002. The Local Development Framework will be used as the mechanism for guiding the location, type and scale of new development within the area over the next 20 years. The Core Strategy is a key Development Plan Document within the Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy will set out the overarching strategy that development will conform to. The Core Strategy will also identify broadly where new development will be directed and will reinforce the message of sustainable communities. Other documents produced as part of the Local Development Framework, such as area action plans and site specific allocations, must be in accordance with the policies within the Core Strategy.

An Issues and Options Paper specifically considering the provision of Affordable Housing has also been published and the policy options it considers are also considered within this report.

The Issues and Options Papers are the first stage in the production of the two documents. They identify issues facing the area and options that could be put forward to tackle these issues.

The information gathered from the consultation exercise on the Issues and Options Papers will be used to underpin the

Preferred Options, which is the next stage in the preparation of the documents.

Assessment Methodology

There are many stages to the production of a final Sustainability Appraisal. These stages are summarised below.

- **Stage A**- involves gathering information on the environmental, social and economic aspects of the district, identifying the main 'sustainability issues' and developing 'sustainability objectives' to deal with them.

- **Stage B**- involves comparing the options of plans developed as part of the LDF with the sustainability objectives developed as part of the sustainability appraisal. Alternatives and options to the plan are also developed at this stage.

- **Stage C**- involves identifying the effects of the plan; measures to make the most of benefits and reduce negative effects; and proposals for monitoring the plan. All work carried out up to this point is then set out in the sustainability appraisal report.

- **Stage D**- gives you (the public) an opportunity to tell us what you think about the report. We will give you six weeks to do this.

- **Stage E**- is an ongoing process and involves assessing the performance of the plan and responding appropriately to any negative effects.

The first stage of the process has been completed and a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report has been produced. Baseline information has been collected from a range of

sources to provide a picture of the district and to provide the basis for monitoring the performance of future plans and policies.

From the baseline data, the Scoping Report provides a snap shot of the economic, social and environmental characteristics of the area. Using this information, the Scoping Report identifies a number of key sustainability issues which face the district and 24 sustainability objectives. These objectives will be used to assess the sustainability of future plans and policies and are contained within table 1.

A draft Sustainability Appraisal will be published alongside the Preferred Options. A full sustainability appraisal will accompany the final Development Plan Documents.

Sustainability Appraisal and the Core Strategy and Affordable Housing Issues and Options

On the 25th March the Councils started a consultation exercise on its Core Strategy and Affordable Housing Issues and Options papers. The consultation documents set out the evidence surrounding particular topics and a resultant set of issues along with a range of options to tackle these issues. Each of these options has been assessed against the 24 sustainability criteria which are identified in the scoping report. The options have been rated using the scoring method shown in table 2 below. This has provided an opportunity to see whether a particular option has a positive, negative or natural effect on the achievement of the sustainability criteria.

The tables in Appendix 1 show the assessment of each of the options that have been brought forward in the consultation

paper. These tables show the rating of each of these options against the 24 sustainability criteria. These options will be the subject of a full and rigorous Sustainability Appraisal and SEA at the preferred options stage.

As mentioned previously, the preparation of the Interim Sustainability Statement is not a formal requirement in the overall Sustainability Appraisal process. This Interim Sustainability Statement is therefore only intended to provide a brief overview of the implications of the options and their relationship to sustainable development. The early assessment of each option has enabled attention to be draw to possible conflicts between a particular option and sustainability criteria. The Interim Sustainability Statement has also acted as a crude filter of the options but has not gone so far as to make comparisons between each of the options. The Interim Sustainability Statement has not been designed to provide a definitive indication as to which option is good or bad. However, this comparison will be made in the draft Sustainability Appraisal which will accompany the preferred options. The main purpose of this Interim Sustainability Statement is to inform the next stage of preparation of the core strategy and the final sustainability appraisal. The matters raised in the Interim Sustainability Statement should be taken into account in moving forward with the preparation of the Local Development Framework and the consideration of the issues and options of the core strategy.

Table 1   Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

1	Protect, enhance and expand habitats and protected species (taking account of climate change), avoiding damage to designated wildlife and geological sites and protected species on which they depend.
2	Promote the conservation and wise use of land.
3	Reduce contamination, and safeguard soil quality and quantity.
4	Minimize consumption and extraction of minerals.
5	Minimize waste, then re-use or recover it through recycling, composting or energy recovery.
6	Limit air, noise and light pollution to levels that do not damage natural systems.
7	Reduce the need/desire to travel by car, lorry, or air by making public transport, cycling and walking easier and more attractive.
8	Maintain water consumption within local carrying capacity limits (taking account of climate change).
9	Limit water pollution to levels that do not damage natural systems, maintain and enhance the quality of water.
10	Reduce vulnerability to flooding and, sea level rise (taking account of climate change).
11	Reduce non-renewable energy consumption and greenhouse emissions.
12	Create conditions to improve health, promoting healthy lifestyles, especially routine daily exercise and reducing health inequalities.
13	Help make suitable housing available and affordable for everybody.
14	Give everyone access to learning, training, skills and knowledge.
15	Reduce crime and fear of crime.
16	Help communities maintain facilities to support social cohesion and to enable everyone access to basic services easily, safely and affordably.
17	Increase access to and participation in cultural activities.
18	Protect and enhance historic buildings, archaeological sites and other culturally important features.
19	Maintain and enhance diversity and local distinctiveness.
20	Create places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look well.
21	Improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space.
22	Protect and enhance landscape.
23	Ensure adequate shopping provision and vitality and viability of town centres.
24	Facilitate a sustainable and growing economy for the District that creates economic and employment opportunity.

APPENDIX 1

Written Assessment of Policy Options that can not be assessed using a matrix system

Theme 2: Protecting the Natural Environment

NE2:   Where should Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces be located?

The need to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces is likely to be necessary to mitigate the indirect negative impacts of new residential development on heathland Special Protection Areas. Without such provision new housing is likely to be unacceptable within the majority of SE Dorset. The provision of such areas in principal is therefore seen as positive in relation to the provision of housing (Objective 13) and the protection of protected species (Objective 1). Other positive benefits are the provision of publicly accessible open space (Objective 21), the protection and enhancement of landscape (Objective 22) and the promotion of healthy lifestyles (Objective 12).

A direct assessment of this Key Issue is not possible as there are no clear options to consider. These will appear if Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces are identified.

Theme 4: Settlement Strategy

SS3:   In the light of the Regional Spatial Strategy policies which if any policy should apply?

This Issue relates to the settlement categorisation of the villages within the area. The implication is that settlements subject to RSS Development Policy B will be the focal point for locally significant development to enhance their self containment and roles as service centres. In relation to all of the villages listed in Issue SS3 this would result in a change to the past policy of restraint. It would have a detrimental impact in relation to reducing the need to travel by car and therefore be negative in relation to Objective 7. A significant number of these settlements are in areas of high landscape value, so increased development would potentially be negative in relation to Objective 22.

If the settlements were to be subject to RSS Development Policy C future development in the villages would be constrained. However, the provision of housing to meet local needs is beneficial in relation to Objective 13. The increase in the provision of local facilities and services is positive in relation to Objectives 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21 and 24. However, increased development in rural locations is likely to be negative in relation to reducing the need/desire to travel by car (Objective 7).

Theme 6: Urban Extensions

UE5:   What additional facilities and transport improvements does Corfe Mullen need to support the new development?

A direct assessment of this Key Issue is not possible as there are no clear options to consider.

UE7 and UE11:   How much housing should there be at Wimborne, or Ferndown/West Parley?

The draft Regional Spatial Strategy proposes that 1,700 dwellings should be shared between two urban extensions at land to the north and west of Wimborne and to the south and east of Ferndown/West Parley. There is no current further guidance as to how this should be distributed. Three general scenarios can be considered as follows:

> *i)   Larger proportion of dwellings at Wimborne*

Wimborne is more distant from the heathland Special Protection Areas, so reducing the number of dwellings at Ferndown/West Parley would be beneficial in relation to Objective 1.

Wimborne is more distant from Bournemouth and Poole and has poor public transport links to these centres. More development here would therefore potentially result in longer distances travelled by car. It would also have a negative impact on the A31 Trunk Road. However, Wimborne does have a good town centre with a range of facilities and employment which could reduce this impact by minimising the need to travel.

Wimborne is an important historical centre. Large scale development could directly harm its character through visual impact and landscape context and indirectly through traffic impact. This would be negative in terms of Objective 18.

Large scale development at Wimborne could help to support the vitality and viability of Wimborne town centre, but would reduce the support of Ferndown town centre. The impact is therefore neutral in relation to Objective 23.

> *ii)   Larger proportion of dwellings at Ferndown/West Parley*

Ferndown/West Parley is very closely related to heathland Special Protection Areas. The more housing in this area, the greater the likely impact on the heathlands. This is negative in relation to Objective 1.

The area of search at Ferndown/West Parley is closer to major facilities in Bournemouth and Poole and does have good access to large employment centres and the town centre of Ferndown. There are major congestion problems in the area. Public transport is limited with potential for improvement. The impact on Objective 7 is slightly positive.

More development in Ferndown/West Parley would reduce the potential harm on the historic character of Wimborne. This is beneficial in relation to Objective 18.

> *iii)   Even split of dwellings between the two areas of search.*

In relation to the points made above this would result in less harm to those Objectives identifies as being negatively affected and less benefit to those Objectives which are positively affected.

UE8:   What additional facilities and transport improvements would be most needed to support this development?

A direct assessment of this Key Issue is not possible as there are no clear options to consider.

UE9:   If the allotments at Cuthbury need to be replaced where might this be?

A direct assessment of this Key Issue is not possible as there are no clear options to consider.

UE12:   What additional facilities and transport improvements would be most needed to support this development?

A direct assessment of this Key Issue is not possible as there are no clear options to consider.

UE17:   Do you have any suggestions for where this development could go?

A direct assessment of this Key Issue is not possible as there are no clear options to consider.

Theme 8: Town Centre Vitality

TC1:   What range of uses could be promoted in town centres to enhance their vitality?

The increased provision of any of the suggested uses within the town centres is considered to be positive in relation to Objectives 7, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23 and 24.

Increased development in Christchurch and Wimborne Town Centres could be negative in relation to the need to reduce vulnerability to flooding (Objective 10).

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

The provision of any of the suggested improvements within the town centres is considered to be positive in relation to Objectives 7, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23 and 24.

Theme 9: Sustainable Economic Growth

EG3:   Apart from the area 'west of Ferndown', are there any places where you think more employment land should be provided in East Dorset?

A direct assessment of this Key Issue is not possible as there are no clear options to consider.

EG4:   What sort of new employment premises do you think are required in Christchurch and where?

Theme 10 – Bournemouth International Airport

BA6:   What type of business activity should we be promoting at the airport?

Theme 16: Developing the Vision

VN1:   What major themes should the Core Strategy Vision have?

	Options for inclusion	Objectives with possible positive impact	Objectives with possible negative impact
A	Protecting the natural environment	1	
B	Protecting the built environment and heritage	18, 19, 20, 22	
C	Addressing climate change as it might affect Christchurch and East Dorset	4, 7, 8, 10, 11	
D	Creating sustainable economic growth	16, 19, 23, 24	1, 24
E	Improving transport	7, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24	1
F	Providing appropriate homes for all	12, 13, 24	1, 2, 4, 10
G	Supporting our communities	12, 14, 15, 16	
H	Providing for the needs of children and young people	12, 14, 15, 16	
I	Making our communities safer	15, 21, 23, 24	
J	Tackling deprivation and social exclusion	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 24	
K	Improving the health of our communities	12	

VN2:   If you could only select 3 of the above options to be included in the vision, which would they be?

A direct assessment of this Key Issue is not possible as there are no clear options to consider.

APPENDIX 2

Scoring Notation for matrix

+	Supports the sustainability objective
+++	Strongly supports the sustainability objective
=	Has no impact on the sustainability objective
-	Works against the sustainability objective
---	Works strongly against the sustainability objective
X	Has an uncertain effect or there is insufficient information on which to determine an assessment