

EAST DORSET HOUSING OPTIONS MASTERPLAN REPORT

NOVEMBER 2010





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HOUSING OPTIONS**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Proposals for new housing in East Dorset District up to 2027 are to be delivered through a Core Strategy, which is being prepared jointly by East Dorset District Council and Christchurch Borough Council. Despite the revocation of the South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) by the Secretary of State (SoS) in July 2010, East Dorset District Council are committed to progressing the Core Strategy and planning for much needed new housing in the District that will support the local economy and provide new affordable accommodation for local people. Whilst much of the new housing could be located within the urban area, there is a need to consider housing in a number of areas of search around some of the key towns in the District, thus preventing “town cramming” particularly in historic towns and villages such as Wimborne Minster.

The brief

In order to investigate this, East Dorset District Council appointed a consultant team, led by planning and design practice Broadway Malyan, to prepare masterplans for a number of residential led new neighbourhoods to three settlements within the District. The masterplans, for sites in and around the settlements of Wimborne Minster, Corfe Mullen and Ferndown and West Parley will help support and provide an evidence base for the emerging Core Strategy.

Without a “top-down” RSS generated figure, East Dorset District Council are keen to explore what the potential capacity of these locations is and how they can help create high quality, sustainable developments that are fully integrated into the local character and townscape pattern without having a detrimental impact on the surrounding countryside.

This document

This document, entitled the “East Dorset Housing Options Masterplan Report” is the first of three distinct parts of the project. The other stages comprise:

- Stage 2:** Masterplanning Report
- Stage 3:** Implementation Plan

This Stage 1 report provides an evidence base for the “Options for Consideration” consultation stage of the Core Strategy, which will be consulted on in the autumn of 2010. It also comprises the baseline for the masterplanning report in stage 2.

It should be noted that a separate study, also produced by Broadway Malyan, has also been prepared covering residential led new neighbourhood in areas of search around the town of Verwood.

The study areas

East Dorset District Council has identified a number of areas of search and potential locations for development around the three main settlements. Some of these areas of search locations were originally identified in background work that was undertaken at a local level to support the now revoked RSS. Others are new locations identified by the Council for further examination.

The areas of search comprise:

- Land to the north and west of Wimborne Minster
- Land to the east of Wimborne Minster
- Land to the north and west of Corfe Mullen
- Land to the south and south west of Ferndown and West Parley

The settlements

The three settlements that are the subject of this study all lie within the district of East Dorset and all differ in nature.

Wimborne Minster, located at the centre of the district, is a historic market town with impressive architecture and attracts large number of tourists. It also has a number of amenities and services supporting its population.

Corfe Mullen is a village located in the west of the district, but is actually larger than Wimborne Minster in terms of population. However, unlike Wimborne Minster it is poorly catered for in terms of amenities and essentially acts as a residential suburb of Poole.

Ferndown and West Parley is located in the east of the district, close to the boundary with the Borough of Christchurch, West Parley is largely a residential suburb of the town of Ferndown (the District’s largest town). Whilst Ferndown has a range of retail, employment and community facilities, West Parley predominantly comprises housing with a small shopping parade on its southern edge.

All three settlements are the subject of development interest, including land outside the urban areas and within the areas of search for this study. A number of landowners and developers have suggested their sites to the Council as part of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

Constraints and opportunities

In order to assess suitable areas for development consideration, an analysis of the constraints and opportunities within each of the areas of search was undertaken. The one commonality between all of the areas of search is that they almost entirely fall within land that is designated as Green Belt.

Large parts of East Dorset District are rich in terms of ecology and landscape. The Wimborne Minster North area of search covers a wide area to the north and west of the town, part of which is constrained by environmental and landscape designations such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and areas of floodplain.

The Wimborne Minster East area of search is less constrained, but does contain an SNCI. However, the main issue here relates to the key gaps and key urban edges as defined in the Dorset Green Belt Review. The gap provided by this area of search is seen as critical in maintaining the separate identities of Wimborne Minster and Colehill.

Corfe Mullen's area of search is heavily constrained in the south due to the existing, SNCIs, AGLV and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and heathland. Ferndown and West Parley's area of search is bounded by heathland to the north east.

The heathland, known as the Dorset Heaths, are a particular issue for the area and are designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), both of which are statutory designations of European importance. The Dorset Heaths are vulnerable to the effects that result from urban development in the vicinity. As a result, no residential development can take place within 400m of the edges of the Dorset Heaths and any residential development within 5km should provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) in accordance with Natural England's requirements. SANGs will be required for development at all four areas of search. Indeed, part of the Wimborne Minster East area of search has already been identified as a location for SANGs in relation to a proposed development at the former Flight Refuelling site.

Other features within the areas of search include constraints such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) and Conservation Areas. Other notable constraints comprise:

- Development noise restrictions relating to land close to Bournemouth Airport
- Sewage works odour contours relating to land to the east of Wimborne Minster

Proximity to local services and facilities is also a key factor. Parts of the Wimborne Minster North area of search (in the south west) are close to the town centre, whilst other parts are fairly remote. Most of the Wimborne Minster East area of search is fairly remote from the town centre, but on a good public transport route in.

The northern parts of the area of search in Corfe Mullen are close to local facilities, but overall the level of provision in the village is limited. Furthermore, the southern areas are remote and access to such services is constrained as a result of topography (steep gradients) and poor connections. Ferndown and West Parley has the benefit (in the east of the area of search) of being close to a parade of shops near Parley Cross. The western area has access to the limited facilities in Longham.

All three locations have transport constraints on the highway network and none of the settlements are served by rail. However, there are opportunities to connect into existing public transport networks, particularly at Ferndown and West Parley and encourage walking and cycling. Ferndown and West Parley is also the subject of a potential highways scheme at the Parley Crossroads

The Ferndown and West Parley area of search is the only area of search to have major infrastructure running across it (overhead power cables) which would incur abnormal costs to mitigate. The Wimborne Minster East area of search has a lower level of infrastructure running across it including lower level power cables, rising mains and intermediate gas mains.

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Urban Character

In order to understand the settlements further and, in particular, their urban character in terms of local vernacular, density and townscape, a character study has been undertaken. This also helps inform potential density and design characteristics for the future developments in the stage 2 report. In each settlement, areas of different character were examined which reflect different densities, typologies and, importantly urban edge conditions.

In terms of character, Wimborne Minster is a historic settlement with a high quality vernacular. The Georgian buildings give the town a strong sense of place. Corfe Mullen also has historic buildings, but much of the settlement is 20th century. However, Corfe Mullen benefits from a strong and fairly dramatic landscape structure around its northern and western edges. The main urban area of Ferndown and West Parley is, again largely 20th century development, but also has a conservation area separate from the urban area.

Of the character areas studied, densities in Wimborne Minster ranged between 5 and 60 dwellings per hectare (dph), whilst in Corfe Mullen the range was between 8 and 29. Ferndown and West Parley's densities ranged between 9 and 21 dph.

Areas identified for consideration

In identifying land for development, a two stage sieving process was carried out in each area of search. The first stage was to identify sub-areas (within each of the areas of search) that were considered more suitable locations for development based on criteria such as: location in relation to existing services; transport accessibility; environmental designations and coalescence. This process identified the following as suitable locations:

- Wimborne Minster North: western sub-area and parts of the central sub area
- Corfe Mullen: northern sub-area
- Ferndown and West Parley: eastern, central and western sub-areas

The Wimborne Minster East site was considered to be problematic in that it forms a "critical gap" between the urban areas of Wimborne Minster and Colehill. Whilst both sub-areas were originally discounted, the southern sub-area was seen as part of a wider spatial strategy to provide more affordable housing in the area. This strategy involves a number of land swaps leading to this area becoming a potential recreational resource for the town including a relocated football club, rugby club, allotments and much needed new playing fields. A country park could also be provided, albeit on land to the south of the A31. To achieve this, an element of enabling residential development will almost certainly be required.

The second stage of this process was to refine this further and identify specific sites, based on more localised factors such as landscape, environmental and conservation designations and land use. This resulted in the following sites being identified as having potential for development:

Wimborne Minster North:

1. Land north of Wimborne
2. Industrial estate adjacent to land to the north of Wimborne
3. Stone Lane Industrial Estate
4. Land off St Margaret's Hill
5. Cuthbury Allotments
6. Land to the south of Cuthbury Allotments/ Julian's Road

Wimborne Minster East:

1. Land to the south of Parmiter Drive

Corfe Mullen:

1. East part of Recreation Ground
2. Land off Violet Farm Close
3. Lockyers School

Ferndown and West Parley:

1. Land at Holmwood House
2. Land north of Christchurch Road
3. Land east of New Road
4. Land west of Ridgeway

Development capacities

Each site was then measured and an average residential density of 20 dph applied to provide a housing figure. These were then totalled to provide town wide figures, as set out in the table (right). The table also provides a potential population figure based on an average household size of 2.46 people.

Town	Potential number of new homes	Potential population
Wimborne Minster	1,301*	3,200
Corfe Mullen	328	807
Ferndown and West Parley	716*	1,761

* It should be noted that the figures shown for Wimborne Minster and Ferndown and West Parley are maximum figures assuming that both the sites to the south of Leigh Road and land to the east of New Road are developed to their maximum capacity. In reality the land to the south of Leigh Road is likely to be part of a wider leisure/green space/affordable housing strategy for the town and not a pure housing site. On land to the east of New Road, development could potentially comprise a local centre led scheme with limited housing. Therefore housing capacities in both locations are likely to be considerably less.

Land use and infrastructure requirements

With the potential housing and population figures established, an investigation of the necessary community infrastructure required to support this new housing and population was carried out. At town wide level the following was identified:

Wimborne Minster (North and East)

- Local shops in the north
- New first school in the north and potentially a new first school (or expansion of the one of the existing first schools depending on the size of the residential element) in the east.
- Should both north and south new neighbourhoods come forward for development, the additional population could potentially create demand for a new secondary school in the district and the re-distribution of pupils. The opportunity exists to build such a facility at Verwood.
- New health centre in the north
- Town wide open space (12.01ha)
- Town wide SANGs (between 25.61ha and 51.22ha)
- Possible Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant in the north

Corfe Mullen

- Local shops (including 2,000 sqm convenience store)
- Replacement middle (primary) school for Lockyers.
- Sports, recreation and open space (3.03ha)
- SANGs (between 6.46ha and 12.91ha)
- Possible Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant

Ferndown and West Parley

- Local shops (including 3,000 sqm convenience store)
- No new school requirement is envisaged, though pressure on Parley First School could result in the need to redistribute pupils between this school and Ferndown First School (which is generally below capacity).
- New health centre
- Sports, recreation and open space (6.61ha)
- SANGs (between 14.10ha and 28.20ha)
- Possible Combined Heat and Power (CHP)

Concepts

The report concludes with a series of concept plans showing how the sites could accommodate development spatially. They also show how they link in with the adjacent urban areas and wider countryside.

Next steps

This report sets the foundations for the Core Strategy consultation which will take place in the autumn of 2010. It also provides a robust base from which to masterplan the areas in the Stage 2 report. The Stage 2 report will be undertaken following the Core Strategy consultation.