

Core Strategy

16 Tourism Key Issue Paper

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

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1 Introduction

1.1 This paper has been prepared as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) to inform the development of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy for matters relating to Tourism. 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 issues affecting Christchurch and East Dorset. These issues have been identified from National and local policy documents, stakeholder and local community engagement, local development framework evidence base and the Community Plans of Christchurch and East Dorset. This document sets out the process of how the strategy for tourism 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 tourism. The development of a preferred 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 Tourism is very important to both Christchurch and East Dorset as they are both popular visitor destinations in the South West. The South West is the UK's premier holiday destination, with UK residents alone making 20.5 million trips in 2007. Tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) as comprising '...The set of activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes'. The WTO further explains that 'Tourism' refers to all activities of visitors including both 'tourists (overnight visitors)' and 'same-day visitors'.

1.3 The visitors to the area often return again and again, and some choose to retire here or purchase a second home. Such is the impact of tourism, that it directly affects other issues in the Core Strategy, such as the economy, transport, housing, the local population and impacts on the natural and historic environment.

2 Baseline

2.1 The context of the geographical locations of Christchurch and East Dorset are important in understanding the patterns of visitors to the area. They have historic towns with bustling markets, museums, art galleries and theatres, and are located within close proximity to the New Forest National Park, the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, and the beach resorts of Bournemouth and Poole, so the attraction to the area is understandable and likely to continue to grow. Located within 2 hours of London, the area is seen as a good destination for weekenders looking to head to the coast and south west without the long drive associated with Cornwall and Devon.

Cross Border Issues

2.2 When looking at tourism in Christchurch and East Dorset, it is useful to put it into the context of Dorset as a tourist destination. Christchurch and East Dorset have close links with the popular tourist destinations of Bournemouth and Poole, with tourists staying in one area but making visits to the other areas. Bournemouth is a popular seaside resort with a wide variety of hotels and guesthouses while Poole is also a holiday destination with a working port and Europe's largest natural harbour which offers facilities for water sports and visiting boats.

2.3 Both Christchurch and East Dorset are in competition with other local areas for tourists and the benefits they bring. They cannot compete in retail terms with areas such as Southampton, Bournemouth and Poole, and therefore they must capitalise on their cultural, historical and natural assets in order to attract people to the area. The competition in terms of tourism comes mostly from other areas in Dorset and the New Forest in Hampshire.

Visitor Attractions

2.4 The range of visitor attractions is diverse in both areas, with a high number visiting the natural landscape, harbour and coast (for which there are no recorded figures). However, high numbers are also known to visit during the festivals run in the towns, such as Wimborne Folk Festival in June and the Food Festival in Christchurch in May. The three day market in Wimborne each week draws a high numbers of coach bound shoppers who also visit local pubs and restaurants for lunch during their outing.

2.5 The following destinations are recorded in the South West Key Attractions data collated by South West Tourism:

	Numbers of Visitors	Numbers of Visitors
	2006	2007
Christchurch		
The Priory	83,000	88,913
Highcliffe Castle	48,135	50,282

Christchurch Beaches	Unknown	Unknown
East Dorset		
Kingston Lacy	175,279	145,799
Moors Valley Country Park	770,000	827,881
Wimborne Model Town	30,000	29,000
Other Major attractions in the South West to compare with		
Corfe Castle	163,773	135,041
Stonehenge	879,393	869,432
The Eden Project	1,152,332	1,128,107

Table 2.1 Key Attractions in Christchurch and East Dorset

2.6 Moors Valley Country Park is a key attraction in East Dorset for visitors, whether day trippers or for those staying in the area. The levels of visitors are on a similar level to Stonehenge, which is a national attraction (and in the top 20 tourist attractions in the UK) and management of this attraction will need careful attention in the future to sustain numbers and improve accessibility. Christchurch has a diverse range of attractions ranging from the historic Priory and Highcliffe Castle to Adventure Wonderland theme park and Snowtrax ski slope. The Red House Museum (Christchurch), the Priests House Museum (Wimborne), the beaches and harbour are also key attractions for the area.

2.7 Tourism is very important to both Christchurch and East Dorset as it has beneficial economic impacts directly employing 1,700 workers (Dorset Data Book). The difference between the tourism offer in Christchurch and East Dorset is highlighted well by the table below which breaks up the accommodation supply in both areas. Both Christchurch and East Dorset have a similar amount of bed spaces but these are comprised of different proportions of accommodation types. Whilst Christchurch has a higher proportion of guest houses, Inns and second homes, East Dorset has more of its accommodation supply provided by hotels, bed and breakfasts (B&B's), and touring caravans / camp sites. Due to the harbour location of Christchurch it is able to offer 125 marina berths as part of its accommodation supply. The type of accommodation an area provides can indicate the type of holiday that people are looking for.

2.8 East Dorset is able to offer a rural holiday experience to tourists with its high proportion of B&B's and touring caravan / camp sites, whereas Christchurch with its higher proportion of guest houses and availability of marina berths is more suited to people looking for a waterfront / town centre tourist destination.

Accommodation supply	Christchurch	East Dorset
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Hotels ⁽¹⁾	320	461
Guest Houses ⁽²⁾	155	13
Inns ⁽³⁾	405	103
B&B	72	159
Farm	0	10
Self catering (units)	47	45
Touring Caravans / tents (pitches)	291	1,281
Static vans (pitches)	269	619
Holiday Centres (units)	0	0
Group Accommodation	0	0
Second homes (units)	445	128
Marinas (berths)	125	0
Total	2,129	2,310

Table 2.2 Holiday Accommodation – Bed stock figures (2006/2007) (Source: South West Tourism)

- Hotels – Formal accommodation with full service. Minimum six guest bedrooms but more likely in excess of 20
- Guest houses - Accommodation provided for more than six paying guests and run on a more commercial basis than a B&B. Usually more services, for example dinner, provided by staff as well as the owner
- Inns – Accommodation provided in a fully licensed establishment. The bar will be open to non-residents and provide food in the evenings

2.9 The economic contribution that tourists make to the economy is important to both Christchurch and East Dorset. The table below shows the proportion of bed spaces offered by the areas in relation to the rest of Dorset.

District	Proportion of bed spaces	Visitor Numbers
Bournemouth	25%	4,223,120
Christchurch	5%	1,017,898
East Dorset	7%	1,721,000

North Dorset	2%	1,256,000
Poole	9%	2,761,000
Purbeck	17%	1,982,000
West Dorset	21%	3,426,200
Weymouth and Portland	12%	1,483,000

Table 2.3 Distribution of Tourist Bed Spaces by District 2006 (Source: The Value of Tourism Key Facts, 2006)

2.10 Christchurch and East Dorset together provide 12% of bed spaces in Dorset. The areas which provide the highest proportion include Bournemouth where a quarter of the bed spaces are provided and West Dorset where just over a fifth of Dorset's bed spaces are provided. As the table highlights, there is an opportunity for Christchurch and East Dorset to increase the proportion of the provision of bed spaces in Dorset. The figures below indicate that although a quarter of the bed spaces in Dorset are provided in Bournemouth, many of the people who stay there may also visit Christchurch and East Dorset. There is the potential opportunity here to encourage people to not only visit Christchurch and East Dorset but to stay overnight too.

Key Facts	Christchurch	East Dorset
Trips by staying visitors	195,000	308,000
Staying visitor nights	838,000	1,214,000
Spend by staying visitors	£35,176,000	£41,965,000
Day visits	827,473	1,443,000
Spend by day visitors	£35,674,613	£59,034,000
Other related tourism related spend	£4,665,000	£7,805,000
Jobs related to tourism spending	1862	2443
% of employment supported by tourism	10%	6%

Table 2.4 Trips, nights and spend to each area by visitors (The Value of Tourism Key Facts, 2007)

2.11 As the table above shows, the amount of money spent by staying visitors is similar in both areas, whereas more day trips are made to East Dorset, more visitors stay in East Dorset and the associated spend is considerably higher. Apart from visitor nights, all these figures have grown from the previous year (2006), which suggests the sector is continuing to grow steadily, creating new jobs and supporting the local economies.

2.12 It is important that the needs of tourists are carefully balanced with those of the existing communities in Christchurch and East Dorset. There are important economic effects of tourism for the local communities, providing jobs, facilities and raising the profile of an area. It must be ensured that the benefits from tourism can trickle down to the local communities and that the facilities are available year round for everyone to utilise. Diversity of tourism and the needs of tourists must be adequately planned for and kept in mind when planning decisions are made.

Sustainability Appraisal Baseline Information

2.13 The local tourist attractions and cultural heritage are of great local importance but there needs to be careful management between visitors and the natural and built environment. Sustainable alternatives of reaching these destinations must be found. The Christchurch and East Dorset Sustainability Appraisal Draft Scoping Report (August 2008) sets out baseline information and identifies sustainability issues, some of which are relevant to this paper are set out below.

Environmental Baseline and Issues

2.14 The environment of Christchurch and East Dorset is of exceptionally high quality, cherished by the local community and attracting tourists throughout the year. Both Authorities boast a rich archaeological and built heritage within an attractive landscape setting.

Biodiversity

2.15 The natural environment of Christchurch and East Dorset is diverse and of high quality consisting of a range of habitats including the coastline and harbour in Christchurch, the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the numerous internationally recognised and protected lowland heaths at Avon Heath, Parley and Ferndown across East Dorset. The Core Strategy should support, balance and manage the natural environment and its biodiversity with the needs of tourists with the aim of maintaining and even enhancing the biodiversity of the areas.

Countryside & Landscape

2.16 In East Dorset, 45% of the land is designated as the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the New Forest National Park lies on the border of the Districts. These designations attract visitors and tourists to the area, which although having many positive benefits, must be carefully managed to ensure that the countryside and landscape is preserved and enhanced while still being utilised in a sustainable manner.

Historic Environment

2.17 Both Christchurch and East Dorset have important historic environments including Wimborne Town Centre, Christchurch Town Centre and many locally and nationally listed buildings and sites of archaeological importance. The tourist appeal of these areas is due to the high quality of much of the historic environment and therefore the Core Strategy must ensure that an appropriate balance between managed access and preservation of the historic environment is reached.

Water/Flooding

2.18 The town centres of both Christchurch and Wimborne lie within flooding zones. Much of the town centre of Christchurch is within zone 3a and much of Wimborne town centre is within zones 2 and 3, making both locations vulnerable to flooding. As these are key destinations for tourists, the risks of flooding need to be monitored. New tourism development should avoid areas of flood risk. The areas at risk of flooding include some of the major tourist attractions including those in the town centres such as the Priory in Christchurch.

Climate change and Pollution

2.19 There needs to be access to tourism attractions by sustainable modes to reduce the impact on climate change. Access is covered in the Transport Key Issue Paper and looks to increase opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport use to access facilities including tourist attractions.

2.20 Rising sea levels and coastal erosion are threats to Christchurch Harbour and the shoreline.

2.21 Pollution is also an issue for Christchurch and East Dorset and must be monitored to ensure that it is kept within appropriate limits. With an expanding airport in Christchurch and congested arterial roads within both authorities boundaries, there is potential for increasing pollution that the Core Strategy must look to address.

Social Baseline and Issues

Culture, Leisure and Recreation

2.22 Christchurch and East Dorset both have a high quality range of cultural, leisure and recreational facilities which are used by both residents and visitors to the town. A conflict lies in the sustainable promotion of these attractions to visitors to support the local economy, against issues of managed access and sustainable modes of transport to them. The Core Strategy will need to address these issues.

Economic Baseline and Considerations

Tourism and the Economy

2.23 It has already been mentioned that tourism plays an important role in generating significant spending in the local economies of Christchurch and East Dorset. It is likely that the tourism sector will continue to grow and develop, offering more employment opportunities, and the sector will need to continue to receive support through policies in the Core Strategy. Of particular importance is the growth of the periods outside the traditional summer season, to widen the tourism offer and events, and to provide more employment opportunities to local people.

Core Strategic Messages

2.24 From the baseline information it is evident that Christchurch and East Dorset have an existing high quality tourism offer that is economically important. Both areas have important environments that form the basis of the local tourism offer including the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the Christchurch beaches that need to be protected and enhanced.

Policy Background

National

Good Practice Guidance on Planning for Tourism (2006)

Analysis

The economic impacts of tourism can be important for an area, as the revenue generated by tourism can help to:

- Support and enhance local services and facilities such as shops and pubs, particularly in rural areas;
- Secure the retention or upgrading of public services such as public transport, health centres and libraries;
- Support a broader and more vibrant and active community by attracting arts, sports or cultural events;
- Aid diversification within the rural economy; and
- Underpin the quality of the local environment and facilitate further enjoyment of it by residents and visitors.
- Tourism can bring many broader benefits that will contribute to the economic and social well being of local communities
- The economic benefits of tourism in particular can help to sustain and improve both the natural and built physical environment.
- Visitors to historic buildings, archaeology and landscape can provide income or voluntary efforts which help maintain and conserve such assets.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy needs to address the economic, social and environmental aspects of tourism to ensure that Christchurch and East Dorset remain vibrant and attractive places to visit. The Core Strategy has a vital role to play in terms of facilitating the development and improvement of tourism in appropriate locations.

Table 2.5

Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to PPS1 2007

Analysis

- Consider the desirability of avoiding new development in those areas with likely increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change, particularly where it is not viable to manage likely risks through suitable measures to provide resilience.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy must ensure that tourism related development is not located in areas that would increase the risk from the effects of climate change e.g. flooding.

Table 2.6

PPS25 Development and Flood Risk 2006

Analysis

PPS25 states that:

- Land used for holiday or short-let caravans and camping, other temporary occupancy sites and permanently occupied caravan, mobile home and 'park home' sites that use similar structures give rise to special problems in relation to flooding.
- Sites intended for temporary occupation are classified as 'more vulnerable' because they are usually occupied at times of the year when flood events are less likely to occur, although they may be located for amenity and recreational reasons on coastal or riverside sites with a high residual risk of flooding. However, the attractiveness of waterside sites for holiday accommodation also has to be recognised, provided that proper warning and evacuation arrangements are put in place through appropriate planning conditions.
- 'More vulnerable' development (such as sites intended for temporary occupation) should not be permitted in Zone 3b.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy must ensure that tourist development is located in the most appropriate areas to avoid flood risk – this must be carefully managed as many of the vulnerable areas are the most attractive for tourists e.g. the town centres and the water frontages and the river valleys.

Table 2.7

PPG13 Transport 2001

Analysis

Developments involving leisure, tourism and recreation which generate large amounts of travel should accord with the advice contained in PPG13. In determining the acceptability of such developments where they are proposed near to existing buildings, monuments, physical features or landscapes and which will not be well served by public transport, the local planning authority should:

1. Consider the extent to which the proposal needs to be in the proposed location, including whether the development has a meaningful link with the particular location or
2. Pay particular attention to the scale, layout, parking and access arrangements; and
3. Seek measures to increase access to the site by sustainable transport modes, and the use of traffic management and appropriate parking policies near to the site.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy must take into account that tourist development in particular in rural areas may cause an increase in traffic congestion. Increasing sustainable modes of transport to existing and new tourist development should be part of the Core Strategy.

Table 2.8

PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment 2010

Analysis

- The historic environment is of particular importance for tourism and leisure, and Government policy encourages the growth and development of tourism in response to the market so long as this is compatible with proper long term conservation.
- The historic environment is also of immense importance for leisure and recreation.
- Policies and decisions concerning the development and use of land should take account of the positive benefits of conserving and, where appropriate, enhancing heritage assets (such as encouraging sustainable tourism to support economic growth or re-using existing heritage assets for example as part of regeneration)
- By delivering more effective conservation and enhancement of heritage assets through the planning system, the new PPS will result in a better quality historic environment, and that this in turn may lead to an incremental growth in the revenue generated by tourism.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy must balance preserving and enhancing the historic environment with the needs of tourism in the area.

Table 2.9

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010**Analysis**

- The sensitive sites of biodiversity should be protected from the pressures of recreation placed on them by new housing development.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy should seek to protect the sensitive natural habitats from further recreational pressures, in particular the internationally designated sites and the New Forest National Park.

Table 2.10

Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (December 2009)**Analysis**

To help achieve sustainable economic growth, the Government's objectives for planning include promoting the vitality and viability of town and other centres as important places for communities. To do this, the Government wants competition between retailers and enhanced consumer choice through the provision of innovative and efficient shopping, leisure, tourism and local services in town centres, which allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community.

Policies should encourage a diverse range of complementary evening and night-time uses which appeal to a wide range of ages and social groups, making provision, where appropriate, for leisure, cultural and tourism activities such as cinemas, theatres, restaurants, public houses, bars, nightclubs and cafes.

Local planning authorities should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise and enrich, rather than harm, the character of the countryside, its towns, villages, buildings and other features.

The Core Strategy will:

- support the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres, carefully weighing the objective of providing adequate facilities or enhancing visitors' enjoyment or improving the financial viability of the facility with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites, and
- wherever possible, locate tourist and visitor facilities in existing or replacement buildings, particularly where they are located outside existing settlements.

- support extensions to existing tourist accommodation where the scale of the extension is appropriate to its location and where the extension may help to ensure the future viability of such businesses
- ensure that new or expanded holiday and touring caravan sites and chalet developments are not prominent in the landscape and that any visual intrusion is minimised by effective, high-quality screening and examine the scope for relocating any existing, visually or environmentally-intrusive sites away from sensitive areas or from sites prone to flooding or coastal erosion
- recognise that in areas statutorily designated for their natural or cultural heritage qualities, there will be scope for tourist and leisure related developments, subject to appropriate control over their number, form and location to ensure the particular qualities or features that justified the designation are conserved

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy will support tourism in the rural and urban areas in order to support sustainable economic growth in both Christchurch and East Dorset.

Table 2.11

Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)

Analysis

- Plan policies on the form and location of development should take a strategic approach to the conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geology, and recognise the contributions that sites, areas and features, both individually and in combination, make to conserving these resources.
- Plan policies should promote opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of development.

Core Strategic Messages

In relation to Tourism, the Core Strategy should recognise the value of biodiversity and natural habitats as an attraction for visitors, being mindful of the need to develop suitable alternative natural green space to mitigate against the pressures on sensitive heathland sites.

Table 2.12

Regional

Towards 2015 Shaping Tomorrow's Tourism (South West Tourism, 2005)

Analysis

The Vision is that *'By 2015, the South West of England will be internationally recognised as a model tourism destination. This will be achieved by creating a unique balance between its environment, communities, industry and visitor satisfaction, while earning long-term economic, environmental and social benefit for the whole region'*. The aims of Towards 2015 are:

- Driving up quality
- Delivering truly sustainable tourism
- Creating superior destination management arrangements.

Core Strategic Messages

The South West is the premium tourism region in the UK, with premier destinations and experiences. We need to promote our local destinations and experiences more effectively through the Core Strategy.

Table 2.13

People, Places and Spaces: A Cultural Infrastructure Development Strategy for the South West of England. Culture South West. (September 2008)

Analysis

- Provides a cultural spatial infrastructure strategy for large scale proposals for the south west over the next 20 years
- To conserve and where appropriate, enhance access, interpretation and other participative services centred around the SSCTs
- Supporting major festivals in the south west

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy should provide a framework for the delivery and provision of cultural development over the next 20 years, supporting projects and festivals located in our urban areas.

Table 2.14

A Better Place to be: Culture and The South West of England. Culture South West (September 2008)

Analysis

- A regional approach to culture - it recognises the impact a collective goal can have on an objective – collaborative partnership working
- To promote vibrant cultural activity; supporting employment, opportunity and diversity

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy should identify and support cultural projects affecting the region, and promote them to support employment opportunities and diversity.

Table 2.15

Local

Draft Cultural Strategy (2009–2014) Dorset Strategic Partnership (May 2009)

Analysis

- Delivering a legacy from the 2012 Games
- Developing Dorset's Economy – creative sector, festivals, cultural tourism, arts and business, 2012 legacy
- Improve planning and use of resources through collaboration across Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole, which values local distinctiveness and diversity.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy should encourage the growth and support of cultural tourism, particularly in the rural and creative sectors.

Table 2.16

Dorset County Community Strategy 2007 – 2016 ‘Shaping our Future’

Analysis

- The high quality of the environment is a driver in Dorset’s economy in terms of both the attraction of people to the area, and the provision of a ‘product’ that underpins tourism, agriculture and recreation.
- The development of environment based economic sectors including environmental technologies, sustainable tourism and local food and farming, particularly the development of organic farming, can boost Dorset’s economic growth.
- Access to Dorset’s beautiful natural environment is important for residents and visitors alike for health and enjoyment.
- There are particular issues to address in the Core Strategy to ensure access to green space in south-east Dorset.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy should recognise the importance of the rural area to the local economy, and in promoting sustainable tourism opportunities into the countryside.

Table 2.17

Christchurch Local Plan (2001)

Analysis

- The local plan has one saved policy (see below) which resists the loss of existing significant holiday accommodation and tourist facilities.
- Policy ET1 states that *‘the change of use or redevelopment of holiday accommodation or tourist facilities to other uses will be permitted provided that:*
 1. *there is no reasonable demand for such accommodation or facility for holiday or tourist use, and*
 2. *the proposed development would not result in the loss of accommodation or tourist facility contributing significantly to the stock of such accommodation or to the holiday character of the area unless suitable provision is made to compensate for such loss’.*

Core Strategic Messages

The Borough with its unique historic assets, including the Priory and Castle Ruins, together with the rivers, harbour and beaches, is not only enjoyed by the local residents but is of particular importance as a tourist centre within south east Dorset. The Council actively promotes the area for tourism, whilst at the same time attempts to safeguard the quality amenities which make it a popular place to live and visit.

Table 2.18

Christchurch Borough Council Corporate Plan (2008-2012)

Analysis

Within the Christchurch Corporate Plan there are four business and tourism objectives which are also key messages for the core strategy:

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.

BT4 Support expansion at the Airport which promotes economic growth and mitigates environmental impacts.

Core Strategic Messages

Tourism and associated business should be supported in Christchurch.

Table 2.19

Christchurch Town Centre Strategy (2003) – Chapter 6 Leisure / Visitor Attractions Appraisal

Analysis

- Christchurch is very much a day visitor destination attracting people mostly from the south of England.
- Christchurch lacks a vibrant evening economy despite the number of restaurants and pubs in the town centre.
- There are a number of attractions within the Borough which although not considered to be part of the town centre offer, are part of the Borough's tourism portfolio and play an important part in the wider Dorset tourism portfolio.
- 80% of the visitors to Christchurch arrive by car and that tourist car parking plays an important part in the parking strategy for Christchurch.

Core Strategic Messages

Tourism in Christchurch is based on the Borough's location, the quality of its natural environment and its built heritage; all of which combine to produce a high quality tourism offer.

Table 2.20

Christchurch Community Plan (2007-2010)

Analysis

- As part of the Community plan for Christchurch the Increased Prosperity Action Group has identified an objective to improve the evening economy in Christchurch for tourists and visitors.
- The Culture Learning and Lifestyle Group has an Action to work with tourist attractions in the heritage quarter to promote that area as a tourist destination.

Core Strategic Messages

To promote an evening economy in Christchurch and promote the heritage quarter for tourists and visitors.

Table 2.21

Christchurch Arts Strategy (2003)

Analysis

- The strategy has a mission statement which is *'Working in partnership, the Borough Council will endeavour to ensure that a broad range of arts and cultural provision is available to all residents and visitors'*.
- Arts provision is important culturally, socially, commercially and educationally, and should be regarded as an asset to the town as well as enhancing the quality of life of the Borough's residents.

Core Strategic Messages

The Council provides a multitude of diverse services to its residents and visitors, ranging from services that are essential, to those that are concerned more with social, community and cultural aspects which also contribute towards making Christchurch a pleasant place to live. The Core Strategy must ensure that this diverse range of services is maintained and enhanced.

Table 2.22

East Dorset Local Plan (2002)

Analysis

- The local plan supports rural and heritage based tourism, and recognises its value to the local economy in the creation of jobs and in tourism spend. Policy TODEV2 aims to manage locations where chalets, static or touring caravans, tents or cabins will be permitted, to prevent the visual intrusion into the countryside of holiday accommodation into the Green Belt, AONB and Areas of Great Landscape Value.
- The diversification of traditional farm buildings to holiday accommodation or craft or rural attractions is supported, subject to other policies in the plan being satisfied.

In urban areas, encouragement is given to the provision of additional hotel accommodation and for the development of tourist attractions.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy should continue to promote tourism opportunities in the District, by recognising the intrinsic value of the rural area, and continuing to support rural tourism opportunities. The countryside should be safeguarded from inappropriate development, and the town centres promoted for hotel accommodation and for the development of tourist attractions to support the local economy.

Table 2.23

East Dorset District Council's Corporate Plan (2010 - 2016)

Priority Area - Economy

- Tourism plays a major role in the economic prosperity of the district. It brings in over £100 million to the district's economy and provides over 2,000 full and part time jobs. It is important therefore that the district, with its partners, supports the development of tourism business.

Core Strategic Messages

The Core Strategy should recognise the economic value of tourism to the local economy and supports the development of tourism business.

Table 2.24

East Dorset Cultural Strategy (2005)

Analysis

- The Council will seek to attract people and investment both to and within East Dorset through a growing cultural economy.
- The Council will maintain a positive attitude towards economic activities, especially tourism, and play an active part in its development.
- The Council will encourage and promote special events, festivals and activities as part of improving the overall quality of life and to stimulate visitor numbers.
- The Council will encourage off season tourism to support the sustainability of tourism businesses all year round.
- The Council need to make more use of its historic treasures, educational and leisure holiday opportunities to stimulate the economy during the off season.
- The Council will market East Dorset to a diverse range of target markets locally, regionally and nationally and internationally, using the cultural assets as key selling points.
- The Council will capitalise on East Dorset’s excellent rural reputation and seek opportunities to attract and develop more cultural events in the area.

Core Strategic Messages

The key message for the Core Strategy is to support the tourism industry and in particular to support events, and off season activity to ensure tourism is sustainable in East Dorset.

Table 2.25

East Dorset Community Strategy (2008)

Analysis

- By 2015, the Community Strategy states that East Dorset will be *‘an enjoyable place to live and visit where culture and leisure is valued’*.
- It encourages the provision of opportunities that are based around structured family activities and to give access to all cultural venues and services.

Core Strategic Messages

The key message for the Core Strategy is to support cultural facilities, venues and opportunities in East Dorset.

Table 2.26

Core Strategic Messages

- The Core Strategy needs to address the economic, social and environmental aspects of tourism to ensure that Christchurch and East Dorset remain vibrant and attractive places to visit. The Core Strategy has a vital role to play in terms of facilitating the development and improvement of tourism in appropriate locations.
- The Core Strategy must ensure that tourism related development is not located in areas that would increase the risk from the effects of climate change e.g. flooding, and that it is located in the most appropriate areas to avoid flood risk.
- The Core Strategy must take into account that tourist development in particular in rural areas may cause an increase in traffic congestion. Increasing sustainable modes of transport to existing and new tourist development should be part of the Core Strategy.
- The Core Strategy must balance preserving and enhancing the historic environment with the needs of tourism in the area.
- The Core Strategy should seek to protect the sensitive natural habitats from further recreational pressures, in particular the internationally designated sites and the New Forest National Park.
- The Core Strategy will need to consider the significance of developing the evening economy for tourism in Christchurch and East Dorset, especially in the town centres. The Core Strategy should consider the promotion of rural and leisure enterprises which do not impact adversely on the environment. In particular rural self catering accommodation should be encouraged, re-using redundant buildings which accords with sustainable development objectives.
- In relation to Tourism, the Core Strategy should recognise the value of biodiversity and natural habitats as an attraction for visitors, being mindful of the need to develop suitable alternative natural green space to mitigate against the pressures on sensitive heathland sites.
- The implications for the Core Strategy are that tourism should be promoted to support the growth of local economies, town centres and culture. The forthcoming Olympics will have an impact on tourism in both East Dorset and Christchurch as they are located within an hour of the Sailing Academy at Weymouth.
- The South West is the premium tourism region in the UK, with premier destinations and experiences. We need to promote our local destinations and experiences more effectively through the Core Strategy.
- The Core Strategy should provide a framework for the delivery and provision of cultural development over the next 20 years, supporting projects and festivals located in our urban areas.
- Christchurch Borough with its unique historic assets, including the Priory and Castle Ruins, together with the rivers, harbour and beaches, is not only enjoyed by the local residents but is of particular importance as a tourist centre within south east Dorset. The Council actively promotes the area for tourism, whilst at the same time attempts to safeguard the quality amenities which make it a popular place to live and visit.

- The Core Strategy should continue to promote tourism opportunities, by recognising the intrinsic value of the rural area, and continuing to support rural tourism opportunities. The countryside should be safeguarded from inappropriate development, and the town centres promoted for hotel accommodation and for the development of tourist attractions to support the local economy.
- The Core Strategy should support the tourism sector by encouraging sustainable tourism and a wider choice of accommodation and attractions.
- The Core Strategy will support the tourism industry and in particular to support events, and off season activity to ensure tourism is sustainable.
- The Core Strategy will support cultural facilities, venues and opportunities.

3 Identification of Issues

3.1 This section will consider the validity of the questions posed in the Issues and Options consultation (TM1 and TM2) and how appropriate they were, based on responses and other issues identified by key stakeholders, members of the public and through the evidence base. 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.

TM1 – How can the Core Strategy ensure that Christchurch and East Dorset remain vibrant and attractive destinations for visitors?

3.2 There was support for this issue in the Issues and Options consultation with a good rate of response to the options. No new issues were identified through the consultation. The baseline data and policy analysis discussed above supports this being an important issue to take forward in the Core Strategy.

TM2 – Have we identified all of the issues under this theme?

3.3 The following responses were received to TM2 in relation to the identification of further issues. Some comments repeat those suggestions from TM1.

1. The location of tourist related development should not be within areas at flood risk particularly with regard to camping and caravanning sites – this should be informed through the Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA). This issue is covered in the consolidated issue set out below.
2. Promote a development supporting a theatre or summer festival – can be a major tourist attraction. This is not a strategic issue and therefore it will not form part of the Core Strategy as it is too locally specific.
3. Promote the management of the natural environment as a tourist attraction – linked cycleways, educational information. This issue is covered in the consolidated issue set out below.
4. Link the value of culture to enhancing tourism – more investment in publications, archaeology and education about the natural wildlife and habitats. This is not a strategic issue and therefore it will not form part of the Core Strategy.
5. The Highways Agency considers the improvement of public transport interchanges and pedestrian/cycle links that serve tourist destinations should be promoted within Key Issues TM1. This issue is addressed in the Transport Key Issue Paper.
6. GOSW – need to consider the impact of our local tourism within the linked region and sub-region to better understand its potential growth and contribution to the local economies - what is necessary in spatial terms to implement this. This issue is covered in the consolidated issue set out below.
7. Support the growth of the local economy and jobs in the tourism sector. This issue is covered in the consolidated issue .
8. Promotion of tourist and visitor attractions in sustainable locations with appropriate destination management.

Sustainable Tourism

3.4 The issue of sustainable tourism has developed during the evidence gathering process, having been identified from the policy base including PPS4 (Prosperous Economies), PPS13 (Transport), PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas), Towards 2015 Shaping Tomorrows Tourism, Draft Cultural Strategy, Christchurch Borough Council's Corporate Plan, East Dorset District Council's Corporate Plan and the East Dorset District Cultural Strategy.

3.5 Sustainable tourism is likely to play a key part in the future economic development of the tourism sectors in Christchurch and East Dorset, helping to promote tourism in tandem with the protection of sensitive buildings, town centres, landscapes and habitats. These assets need to be sensitively utilised for economic and social benefit.

3.6 This is an important strategic issue cutting across the whole of the South East Dorset sub region and will be addressed in the following other Key Issues Papers – Transport, Sustainable Economic Growth, Climate Change, Managing and Safeguarding the Natural Environment and Town, Village and Neighbourhood Centres and within the consolidated issue set out below.

Cross Border Issues

3.7 Dorset as a whole is a very popular tourist destination with much of the attraction being that it is relatively easy to go from urban to rural and coast to countryside within a very short space of time. Christchurch is the most easterly part of Dorset and shares a border with the New Forest in Hampshire. Christchurch also borders the Borough of Bournemouth to the west and East Dorset to the north. East Dorset also borders the New Forest to the east, the Boroughs of Bournemouth and Poole to the south, North Dorset District to the north-west and Purbeck District to the south west. Due to the close links with a number of other areas this raises a number of cross border issues.

3.8 The main A31 runs through East Dorset linking the M3/M27 to the New Forest and Hampshire to Dorset. This route is the main east west route into Dorset and the south west from London and Hampshire and feeds traffic into Bournemouth, Poole, Purbeck and West Dorset. It is a key route for holiday and weekend traffic and will also provide the key route for Weymouth and the 2012 Olympic Games from London and the south-east. This has serious implications for traffic movement during peak holiday months, and issues of pollution also affect the tranquillity of the area.

3.9 The coastline and beaches in Christchurch join those in the New Forest to the east and Bournemouth to the west, and attract a high number of visitors to the area who may visit several destinations in the area whilst they are there. There is a close relationship between the locations, which have different things to offer visitors.

3.10 Bournemouth Airport is set to expand to carry more passengers over the next 5 years. Whilst many people are leaving the Country for foreign destinations, the Airport also acts as a key point of entry into the region, being well located to the resort towns and the New Forest. With cheap air flights this has the potential to be a key mode of transport into the region from other parts of the Country and abroad.

3.11 The cross border issue here is the cumulative impact of visitors to the area which can adversely affect the environment, tourist destinations themselves and create issues of congestion. This issue will be considered and addressed in Section 4 and will form part of Consolidated Issue set out below.

Critical Issues to be addressed in the Core Strategy

3.12 The following issue is the consolidated issue identified from the stakeholder engagement undertaken at Issues and Options and from the baseline information, evidence and consideration of other plans and strategies.

How can the Core Strategy ensure that Christchurch and East Dorset remain vibrant and attractive destinations for visitors ensuring that tourism in both areas promotes and meets sustainable tourism objectives?

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 Sustainability Appraisal process undertaken at Issues and Options. This includes a critical assessment of the options put forward to address issues identified in the Issues and Options paper. Options for tourism are set out within this section under the consolidated issues identified in Section 3.

Issue Identified at Issues and Options

Issue TM1 How can the Core Strategy ensure that Christchurch and East Dorset remain vibrant and attractive destinations for visitors?

Issues and Options Consultation Response

Option A – By protecting the beaches, river fronts and harbour from development

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
72	16	12

Table 4.1

4.2 This shows there was strong support for their protection from development.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.3 The Good Practise Guide for Tourism strongly supports the role of the natural environment in adding to the quality of an area and attracting tourists. Tourist related development should not detract from the quality of the environment, but should be sensitively located and designed. It is also important that visitor pressures on the protected heaths are not increased.

Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.4 Overall this option has neutral or minor beneficial impacts in relation to most objectives. It does however have uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine an assessment in relation to objective 10 (flooding). Although not part of the initial Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal this option could have potentially negative impacts on the economy by not allowing development in these key locations however the protection of assets could be seen as sustainable for the economy.

Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.5 A careful balance must be struck between protecting the beaches, river fronts and harbour from development and allowing development that could encourage sustainable tourism. It is evident from the responses that people would like to see the beaches, river fronts and harbour protected from development and in sustainability terms this has mainly neutral or minor beneficial impacts for Christchurch and East Dorset. Therefore, this option will be merged with options B and C and carried forward as part of the Core Strategy and form part of the Preferred Option PC 17.

Option B –By promoting tourist related development at key locations, such as the beaches, river front, harbour and the town centres.

Issues and Options Consultation Response

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
67	16	10

Table 4.2

4.6 There was strong support for making use of key locations for tourist related development.

4.7 Option A above was well supported with the majority of people agreeing that the beaches, river fronts and harbour should be protected from development. However the majority of people also agreed with Option B that tourist related developments should be promoted at key locations including the beaches, river front, harbour and the town centres. Therefore the responses to these options were both well supported but are in conflict with one another. A careful balance between the two must be struck with an appropriate amount of development allowed whilst still protecting the environmental quality of key locations.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.8 PPS4 supports the provision of tourist related development at key locations, which do not detract from the quality of the environment, but should be sensitively located and designed to enhance the locality.

Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.9 This option has potentially significant beneficial impact in relation to objective 23 (town centre viability) and a minor beneficial impact in relation to objective 24 (sustainable economy). It has uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine an assessment in relation to objectives 10 (flooding) and 18 (protect heritage). Overall this option has mainly neutral or minor beneficial impacts in relation to the majority of sustainability appraisal objectives, however the most beneficial impact of this option relates to town centre viability and sustainable economic growth.

Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.10 A balance between appropriate and over development must be reached, as the beaches, river front, harbour and town centres are the key locations that tourists want to visit and therefore there is likely to be pressure for tourist development in these locations. However, it must be ensured that any such development is appropriate and does not result in the over development of these locations. In sustainability terms this is acceptable as it has mainly neutral or minor beneficial impacts. It is proposed that options A, B and C will be merged and carried forward as part of the Core Strategy and form part of the Preferred Option PC 17.

Option C – By encouraging development in the town centres which will increase activity in the evening

Issues and Options Consultation Response

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
66	15	13

Table 4.3

4.11 This option was strongly supported by respondents. It links to the Town, Village and Neighbourhood Centres Key Issue Paper which supports the vitality of the town centres. However, the responses to this option included the comment '*but not pubs & clubs*' (XED 2743), and concern by GOSW was highlighted that this could lead to the use of patio heaters for outside cafes in the evenings, which conflicts with issues of climate change.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.12 PPS4, the Christchurch Town Centre Strategy (2003), the Christchurch Community Strategy, and the East Dorset Cultural Strategy supports the development of the evening economy in promoting the town centres, adding vitality and viability through extended hours and supporting the growth of the economy.

Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.13 This option has potentially significant beneficial impacts in relation to objective 23 (town centre vitality) and minor beneficial impacts in relation to objective 24 (sustainable economy), and has uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine an assessment in relation to objective 19 (enhance diversity). Overall this option has a mainly neutral impact in relation to the majority of the sustainability appraisal objectives, however the most beneficial impact of this option relates to town centre viability and sustainable economic growth.

Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.14 This option was well supported by the respondents and the available policy. A balance between appropriate and over development must be reached, as the beaches, river front, harbour and town centres are the key locations that tourists want to visit and therefore there is likely to be pressure for tourist development in these locations. However, it must be ensured that any such development is appropriate and does not result in the over development of these locations. In sustainability terms this is acceptable as it has mainly neutral or minor beneficial impacts. It is proposed that options A, B and C will be merged and carried forward as part of the Core Strategy and form part of the Preferred Option PC 17.

Option D – By protecting visitor attraction sites from change of use

Issues and Options Consultation Response

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
66	16	16

Table 4.4

4.15 The majority agreed that visitor attraction sites should be protected from a change of use.

Consideration of Relevant Evidence and Policy

4.16 PPS4 and the Good Practise Guide for Tourism recognise the contribution tourism has for the local economy and the need to support the rural based tourism sector which is often located in sensitive and unsustainable locations. This option may be more viable if it is linked with the options below concerning the protection of accommodation, such as hotels, caravanning and campsites, as they all seek to support and sustain the tourism sector.

Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.17 This option has uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine an assessment in relation to objectives 7 (need to travel), 20 (places and spaces), 21 (public access open space), 22 (enhance landscape), 23 (town centre viability) and 24 (sustainable economy). Overall this option has mainly neutral impacts in relation to the majority of the sustainability appraisal objectives.

Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.18 This option had a positive response from the issues and options consultation and is supported by policy. It also has a mainly neutral impact in relation to the majority of sustainability appraisal objectives. It is logical that this option is merged with options E and F as together they form a package that protect tourist related development from change of use which has significant policy support set out in PPS4, and the Good Practise Guidance.

Option E– By protecting hotels from change of use

Issues and Options Consultation Response

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
52	22	20

Table 4.5

4.19 This option had a fairly mixed response but overall showed majority support.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.20 The Regional Spatial Strategy and Good Practise Guide for Tourism recognise the importance of tourism in the local economy and support the provision of visitor accommodation in sustainable locations.

Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.21 This option has uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine an assessment in relation to objectives 7 (need to travel) and 20 (places and spaces). Overall however this option has mainly neutral impacts in relation to the majority of sustainability appraisal objectives.

Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.22 The Core Strategy must ensure that hotels are adequately protected from change of use to ensure that there is a supply of accommodation to support the tourism industry in Christchurch and East Dorset. Dependant on their viability, hotels should only be allowed a change of use if it can be proved that their use is no longer economically viable. This option had a fairly mixed response in the issues and options consultation and in sustainability terms this option has a mainly neutral impact in relation to the majority of sustainability appraisal objectives. On this basis, this option will be merged with options D and F and carried forward as part of the Core Strategy.

Option F – By protecting caravan and camp sites from change of use

Issues and Options Consultation Response

Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
43	26	23

Table 4.6

4.23 Again this option had a fairly split response with 43 people agreeing that caravan and camp sites should be protected from change of use and a total of 49 either disagreeing or having no opinion.

Consideration of Evidence and Policy

4.24 The Regional Spatial Strategy and the Good Practise Guide for Tourism recognise the importance of tourism in the local economy and support the provision of visitor accommodation in sustainable locations.

Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal

4.25 Generally this should have a neutral impact on the sustainability objectives, although there is uncertainty as to the effect on the economy, public access open space, enhancing the landscape and the need to travel.

Conclusions and Implications for Preferred Options

4.26 This option had a fairly mixed response in the issues and options consultation but is however well supported by policy. In sustainability terms this option has an overall neutral impact in relation to the majority of the sustainability appraisal objectives. This option will be merged with options D and E and taken forward as part of the Core Strategy, as together they will form a package of measures that will protect tourist related development from change of use.

Other relevant comments made as part of issues and options consultation (Option G – other, please specify)

1. Christchurch needs a heritage centre and a fund to promote tourism. This is not a strategic issue for the Core Strategy.
2. Recognise the link between culture and tourism. This is covered in the consolidated issue.
3. Promote new hotels and accept the loss of aged accommodation. This is covered in the consolidated issue .
4. Enable attractive development on gateway sites. This is covered in the consolidated issue .
5. Airport needs a hotel for tourists. No evidence has been given to support this at this strategic stage.
6. Ban dogs from the beaches. This is not a strategic issue for the Core Strategy.

4.27 The relevant comments will be taken forward into the Consolidated Issue. Some comments made are not relevant to this paper or the Core Strategy, as they are not strategic in scale and cannot be taken forward. Based on the evidence and response to the consultation, the following consolidated issue is suggested:

Issue 1: How can the Core Strategy ensure that Christchurch and East Dorset remain vibrant and attractive destinations for visitors ensuring that tourism in both areas promotes and meets sustainable tourism objectives?

Preferred Option PC 17: The Core Strategy will protect and enhance the unique features of Christchurch and East Dorset that attract visitors to the area whilst encouraging investment. This will be achieved through the following measures:

- **Protection of the beaches, river front and Christchurch Harbour and supporting appropriate sustainable tourist related development at these key locations and in the town centres of Christchurch and Wimborne.**
- **Tourist related development will avoid increasing visitor pressure on the Dorset Heaths. Appropriate mitigation measures will be identified through the Heathlands Interim Planning Framework (2010 - 2011) and subsequently by the Joint Heathlands Development Plan Document.**
- **By protecting visitor attraction sites and visitor accommodation from change of use, unless it can be proved the use is no longer economically viable, and promoting new visitor attractions and accommodation in sustainable locations.**
- **By encouraging sustainable transport to tourist and cultural sites.**

Tourism and culture in Christchurch and East Dorset will develop in the context of the wider sub regional strategy (Towards 2015 - Shaping Tomorrow's Tourism), by improving planning and use of resources through collaboration across Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole, which values local distinctiveness and diversity.

5 Implementation

5.1 This section sets out an implementation plan with reference to the key stakeholders involved in the delivery / implementation of strategic infrastructure inclusive of the timescales involved. This will be linked to the infrastructure schedule. Discussion within this section will also determine why specific infrastructure is not being considered for implementation during the plan period e.g. resources constraints.

Delivery Timetable for Tourism Strategy (draft)

	Infrastructure	Timing	Funding Sources	Responsibility	Delivery Documents
Recognise the significance of tourism and culture in the wider sub region	None	Now	Grants	Tourism Officer, Arts Officer, Economic Development Officer Policy Planning Officers	Cultural Strategy Core Strategy
Safeguard the beaches, harbour and rivers from insensitive development	None	Now	Grants	Marine Management Organisation	Harbour Management Plan(?)
Promote sustainable tourist related development at key locations in the town centres	Public transport, cycle routes, linked footpaths	3 – 5yrs	Grants	Transport Officers Policy Planning Officers	Local Transport Plan Multi Modal Transport Study Core Strategy
Protect visitor attraction sites and accommodation from a change of use	None	Now	Grants Private investment	Policy Planning Officers	Core Strategy

5 Implementation

Promote new visitor attractions in appropriate locations	Redevelopment of brownfield or new sites for tourism	5 – 10 yrs	Private investment Grants	Tourism Officer Policy Planning Officers	Core Strategy
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Table 5.1