

Christchurch Neighbourhood Plan

Newsletter

Issue 1 - December 2021

About the Christchurch Neighbourhood Plan

Local communities like Christchurch can write planning policies for their own area. This means we can have a "Neighbourhood Plan" that focuses on local issues and allows the community to have a real say about planning decisions in our area and how we want Christchurch to look over the next 25 years. In October 2020, 7 councillors from Christchurch Town Council and 7 community volunteers started working together on a Neighbourhood Plan.

Our first scoping survey

Our first action was to find out what local residents and businesses felt was important.

As Covid-19 restrictions prevented face-to-face meetings and events, the initial consultation was done as an online survey with printed copies available at two locations in Christchurch. It was undertaken in February and March 2021, involving all residents, schools and businesses. We received about 1,300 responses, which has given us some really useful data. This included some responses from local businesses and school-aged children, but we know we need to do more to get feedback from these groups.

Five key themes have been identified based on the feedback and five sub-groups have been built to elaborate each theme. These groups are:

- Open and Green Spaces
- Design and Heritage
- Walking, Cycling and Traffic
- Town Centre and Community Facilities

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What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan...

- Is a document drawn up by the local community, led by the Town Council
- Sets the planning policies and sits alongside the Local Plan – so provides the "ground rules" that govern whether planning permission is granted or refused
- Has to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan, and have due regard to national planning policy
- But does not need to duplicate or cover everything in the Local Plan

Decide to prepare a Plan

Set the area

Determine the scope

Gather evidence (We are here!)

Consult

Submit

Examination

Referendum

Adopt

Local examples of Neighbourhood Plans

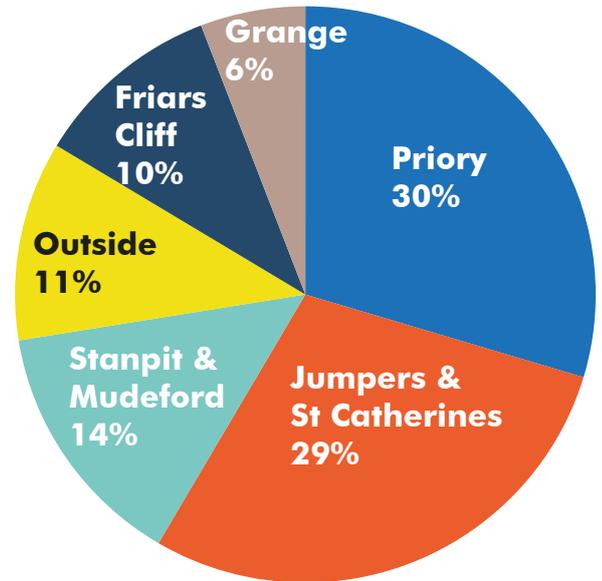
- Poole Quays NP (made February 2017)
- Boscombe and Pokesdown NP (made November 2019)
- Sturminster Newton NP (made March 2019)
- New Milton NP (made June 2021)
- Highcliffe and Walkford NP (draft submitted for examination)
- Burton and Winkton Parish Council and Hurn Parish Council are also working on Neighbourhood Plans for their areas.

Our scoping survey – a bit more detail...

Who responded?

We had responses from across the area, without about a third from Priory ward (which includes the Town Centre, Purewell and Barrack Road areas), another third from the north part of the parish (Fairmile, Jumpers and St Catherine’s) and the another third from the three wards in the east (Somerford, Friars Cliff, Mudeford and Stanpit).

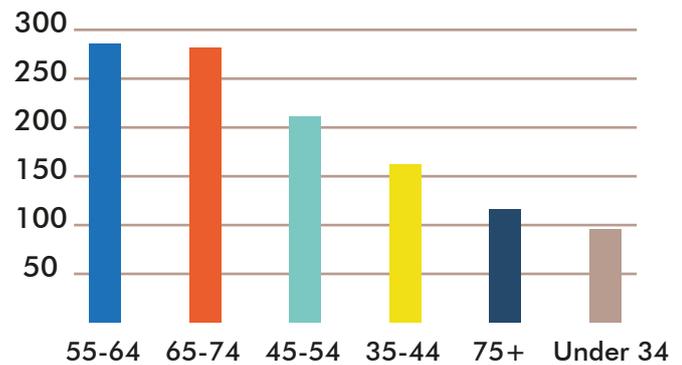
The age profile of the returns showed the highest response rate in the older age groups with about half of all responses from people aged between 55-74. There were far fewer responses from people in the younger age groups (under 34) with these making up less than 10% of total responses (whereas they make up more than 30% of the population).



Respondents' distribution by wards

What people felt about the area?

The survey asked respondents to rate Christchurch and the Town Centre on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the lowest (poor), 5 being the highest (fantastic)). The average rating for Christchurch 'as a place to live' was 4 out of 5 (and over a quarter rated it as 'a fantastic place' to live). The average rating for the Town Centre, however, was slightly lower at 3 out of 5.



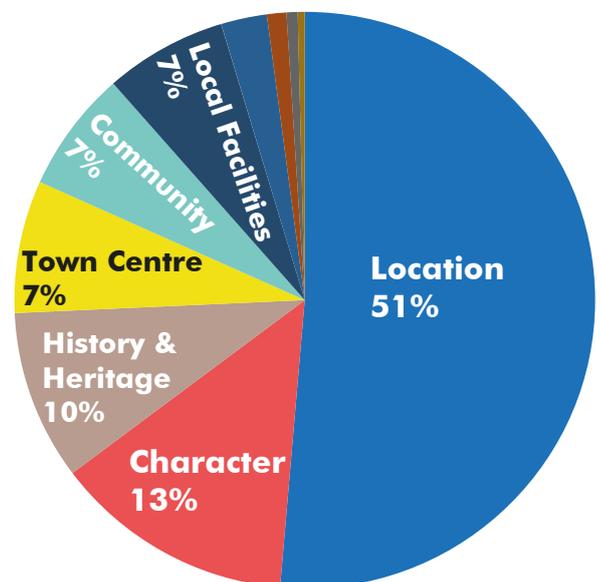
Respondents' age profile

What do people value about being in Christchurch?

A lot of people said it was the 'location' that made Christchurch special. This included a lot of mentions of the 'waterfront' and 'open / green spaces'. Location was followed by the 'character' of the town with an emphasis on the charm, beauty, attractiveness, peacefulness, the unspoilt nature of the town and the good quality of life it provides. Aspects relating to its history & heritage ranked 3rd.

What do people want to change or improve?

The top priority for change was the range of shops and retail in the town centre. On this particular topic, comments focused on the desire to see small, local, independent shops; including more food shops (e.g. butchers, greengrocers, fishmongers, bakery...); a wider range of clothes shops; and an improved market which better reflects the local character of the town. Other suggestions included artisan or "themed" food centres; more shops for teens and children; more traditional shops (e.g. haberdashery, wool/linen shops, electrical goods ...), craft and art material shops, more antique shops and tourist/gift shops. More social events and activities; better public spaces; improved mobility and parking were other common themes.



What is best about being in Christchurch?

Our scoping survey – a bit more detail... (cont.)

What are people most concerned about?

The top five concerns were about increased traffic congestion; closure of local shops and services; loss of green spaces and wildlife areas; increased air pollution and demolition of our historic buildings. Traffic congestion, loss of green spaces and air pollution were key issues for all age groups. The lack of things for young people to do and the price of housing were also high priorities for the younger age groups, who were less concerned about the loss of local shops and services.

What does the Town Centre need?

The most common idea put forward was that the town centre needs a better range of shops and retail units. Other ideas included having more social events and activities, and better public spaces for people to enjoy being in – whether walking, meeting, seating or eating.

Key concerns

- Increased traffic congestion
- The closure of local shops and services
- The loss of our green spaces and wildlife
- Increased air pollution
- The loss of historic buildings
- The price of housing (particularly for younger respondents)

What would be most beneficial for the area?

- Having accessible green spaces, wildlife and trees
- Supporting the town centre to adapt with the economy
- Improving traffic flows by local road improvements
- Having local neighbourhood centres
- Having better pedestrian and cycle route links
- More 'eco-friendly' buildings

If you want to read the full report on this consultation – it is online at

<https://www.christchurchplan.uk/scoping-survey-summary-report-september-2021/>

Some of your comments...

We have many wonderful unique town features but their charm needs to be enhanced and celebrated to reinvigorate the aesthetics of our Town. We have amazing walks and views around the town, but traffic and eyesores need to be analysed to try and reduce their impact where possible.

More independent shops, much more attractive town centre landscaping, more green spaces and trees, more places to sit and eat take away food in beautiful surroundings, more evidence of a local community and personality. Encourage the attractive shops with real incentives and deter the wrapped windows of the fast food shops, barbers and newsagents - these look terrible.

Emphasis on the history and heritage. We hold a food festival every year, not at all related to the town. It's a market you can see anywhere. Why are we not capitalising on the Ducking Stool, the stocks, the Priory, the Castle etc.. to hold festivals of these great buildings and landmarks?

Don't create any more retail - create social spaces instead!

Although times are changing, traditional independent retailers! Although competition from conventional retailers is a challenge, they can provide greater food security through accessibility and affordability. Not just food either, the town market is an excellent resource for local traders, however, I feel as though this should be embraced and emphasised, perhaps we need a higher power within our council to raise the awareness of a greater approach to localism in our community. After all, lots of small movements are greater than one large blanket change.

Clear information boards for visitors including walking routes. Few people find the Druitt Gardens, Red House Museum, Convent Walk, etc. More use of Saxon Square and the Quomps for community activities and outdoor eating. A much improved tourist website including info about easy access to Christchurch using the train. A beautiful marina near the old council offices. A free electric shuttle from town centre to Avon Beach. We need less charity shops and more individual and interesting ones instead.

Christchurch Neighbourhood Plan - Key Themes

Open & Green Spaces Group

The Open & Green Spaces Group will be focusing on all of the local green (and blue) spaces that make this area so special – the rivers and coastline, our beautiful countryside and the smaller parks and play areas that are much loved. One of the first steps is to better understand what we have, what we want to protect, and also how we might add to there or improve access to them.

Design and Heritage Group

The Design and Heritage team will be focusing on understanding which buildings and features give Christchurch its unique and immensely valuable character, and developing design guidance. This should help new buildings to achieve high standards of design in terms of energy efficiency and innovation but in a way which will keep this area's unique historic character. One of our next steps will be to work with local residents to identify locally important buildings that are not currently under any statutory protection, but are locally important. We are planning to appoint an external consultant to work with us on developing the design guidance.

Walking, Cycling and Traffic Group

The Walking, Cycling and Traffic Group will be focusing on needs, problems and the potential to improve opportunities for walking and cycling and the way traffic flows are managed. In that scope, the Group works to identify local 'problem areas' and potential to improve and expand the pedestrian and cycle links; to enhance the pedestrian circulation in the High-Street. The working group is planning to appoint an external consultant to identify traffic management solutions.

Town Centre & Community Facilities Group

The Town Centre Group aims to support the town centre and local community facilities and to improve the image and attractiveness of the town centre to local residents and visitors. A lot of work has been done previously on a Town Centre Strategy which we are checking through. The group will work alongside the Christchurch BID Steering Group – the BID is a business-led and business-funded body that was formed to improve the Christchurch town centre. The Group will also look at our neighbourhood centres so that there are shops, services and jobs close to where people live to meet day-to-day needs.

The Group is researching how planning can help achieve the aspirations of the community for a good range of shops and services; the use of public spaces and venues to hold events, and what else needs to be done to reinvigorate the centre. This may include simple measures such as elegant shop fronts and signage; advertisement and communication boards; planting and street furniture.

Place-making Opportunities Group

Place-making is an overarching theme that touches upon each theme that we mentioned above. Here, the group focuses on identifying where and how areas may change for the better and looks to provide guidance on how to these changes can reflect local needs and aspirations. We have requested a 'technical support package' from the Government Neighbourhood Planning support programme to help us better understand local housing needs. Pulling all of this information together, we hope to collectively re-imagine and reinvent the future of streets, public spaces and neighbourhoods.

How the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group works

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group meets once every fortnight, one being an online/virtual meeting and one being an in-person meeting. Meanwhile, the sub-groups that focus on individual themes do meet up in a less formal and with a more flexible agenda.

If you wish to attend our in-person meetings of either the whole working group or any of the sub-groups, please let us know. We will be very pleased to have you with us. You can contact Daniel Lucas on townclerk@christchurch-tc.gov.uk or 01202 022 479. Alternatively, you may prefer contacting individual team leads depending on your area of interest.

Peter Fenning for Open & Green Spaces Group (pj_vj@hotmail.com)

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Cllr Vivienne Charrett for Design and Heritage Group (viv@charrett.com)

Cllr David Jones for Walking, Cycling and Traffic Group (david.cllr.dcjones1@gmail.com)

Zeynep Aktuna for Place Making Opportunities Group (zeynep.aktuna@gmail.com)

Children's Survey Results - Collaboration with Twynham Primary School

We have been delighted to collaborate with the Twynham Primary School children in the scope of our Neighbourhood Plan. In the first half of the Autumn term (October 2021), around 130 children from Year 2 to Year 6 (age 6 to 11) took their time to fill our short children's survey to let us know about what they love, don't love and would like to change in their local area.

We would like to thank to all the children, their teachers and the Twynham Primary School staff who contributed to the survey which helps us better understand the key ideas, needs and problems from the eye of the children.

We asked four simple, open-ended questions to children to learn about their opinions and experiences about their local area. Here are some of the main points that emerged from their comments:

When we asked the children what they love most about their neighbourhood, shops were the most mentioned. They love the variety of the shops - especially food shops, sweet shops and the ice-cream parlours – that we have in town. The parks and the playgrounds also had many mentions as the places they like to meet and play various games with their friends, to walk their dogs, to cycle and skate, with the River Way Park and the Quomps particular favourites. Linked with this, the nature and wildlife was also mentioned frequently, including the rivers, beaches, forests and woodlands (especially St Catherines Hill). After these, in fourth place, was the 'lovely' people, friends and neighbours the children have, which perhaps shows us the critical role of the neighbourhoods on fostering the sense of community and belongingness in young people.

At the top of the list of the things they don't love in their local area, is litter and dog mess. In second place was traffic and traffic related noise such as revving cars, motor-bikes and horns. Children also mentioned that they don't like to see any form of disrespectful or bad-behaviour, whether this was bullies, noisy neighbours, fast drivers, people shouting, smoking and drinking in public spaces, thieves and vandalism. Other aspects mentioned were the lack of open spaces near their homes where they can meet with their friends, to play and to walk their dogs, the limited play equipment in parks and playgrounds, poor paths/roads for cycling and walking. These all linked with what they would like to see improved – a cleaner and more cared for environment, more and better parks and playgrounds, less traffic and noise, more shops and safer places with no anti-social behaviour. Some children suggested providing better support for homeless people living on the streets.

Reading through children's ideas and comments, we really enjoyed their insights, and thought we would share some of these with you here. Their ideas included:

- Improving and reviving old, abandoned buildings instead of constructing more new buildings;
- Providing better facilities and care for the disabled people;
- Building more spacious houses;
- More opportunities for children to socialise (clubs, leisure centres, festivals and events);
- Better signage around the town;
- Better wi-fi connection.

I love my neighbourhood because...

- There are great shops
- There are beautiful parks and playgrounds
- The nature and wildlife is beautiful
- There are lovely people

My favourite places in Christchurch are...

- The parks and the playgrounds - especially the River Way park and the Quomps
- The food shops, restaurants, sweet-shops and ice-cream parlours
- All the nature and the wildlife (beach, rivers, forests)
- Leisure Centres
- My home

What I don't love in my neighbourhood is

- People polluting the environment and leaving litters and dog mess lying around
- Traffic
- People behaving badly
- Not enough parks and playgrounds
- The condition of roads and pavements



Children love the variety of food shops in the town centre.

Children's Survey Results - Collaboration with Twynham Primary School (cont.)

Concluding remarks

Through these comments, we are delighted to see how much the children understand and care about their town. These findings are so valuable for us, as they remind us:

- The importance of protecting and enhancing the local, small-scale open/green spaces for the physical, social and mental well-being of the children;
- The need to enhance the ability of the town centre and neighbourhood centres to provide more facilities and opportunities for children;
- The need to take better care of our environment; to adopt more environmental-friendly transport solutions and make more room for active travel means including cycling, scooting and walking.

These findings are also reassuring for us to see that they well align with the results we got from the 'grown-up' survey. Again, a huge thank you from Christchurch Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to all the children and school staff who shared their opinions and experiences with us.

At the next step, we are planning to engage further with the older children to learn about their opinions.

Children and the Neighbourhood Plan

We want to encourage children/young people to think about their neighbourhood and to get them involved with the decision making in Christchurch. Whether it is their street, their school surroundings, the town centre or any areas they use or familiar with. Children need to be given the opportunity to take responsibility for helping to shape the future of our town. We believe getting children involved in the Neighbourhood Plan will:

- Help give a voice to young people.
- Increase involvement in the plan and decision making.
- Develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills
- Encourage volunteering
- Develop and sustain a sense of belonging and pride in the Town.
- Develop a critical eye on what is happening in and around the area.

As such, we have prepared an introductory leaflet to provide teachers, parents/guardians and pupils with a basic understanding of neighbourhood planning.

Let the children have their say on what they need in Christchurch!



Some of children's comments

What I love most in my neighbourhood

Everyone is very kind and there's a park in my neighbourhood.

All of the parks because I make new friends!

That we have nice people and they make a park at the field so me and my friend can play together.

All the beautiful wonderful parks, the roses and laven- ders and all of the flowers in my neighbourhood. I love my neighbourhood so much!

I love all the nature like St Catherines Hill, River Way Park. I love Two Riversmeet because you can do lot of sport and workout. I love all the parks because they are soooooo fun!

The park is close to it. And the fact that I can see my nanny because she lives close to me. I'm very happy about that.

What I would like to change in my neighbourhood

Less litter on the floor, more wild life and less trees being chopped down.

More colourful, more parks.

Replacing some places like old buildings to turn into nicer bits.

Make a homeless shelter for homeless people to stay until they have a house.

The billboards in my neighbourhood always fly up in the strong wind. Can you build a park in the field by my house?

Less houses, less crime, more child friendly places and more bakeries.

There is a lot of homelessness. The nearest hospital is Bournemouth Hospital and there isn't a nice and peacefull garden? The floating hippo needs cleaning.

Changing pollution streets to clean streets and chang- ing old destructed houses to green parks.

Less internal combustion enginer cars, use EV's inste- ad. They're so quiet. Also, I would love to lower speed limits and what is the point of a tanning shop at St Catherines Hill!

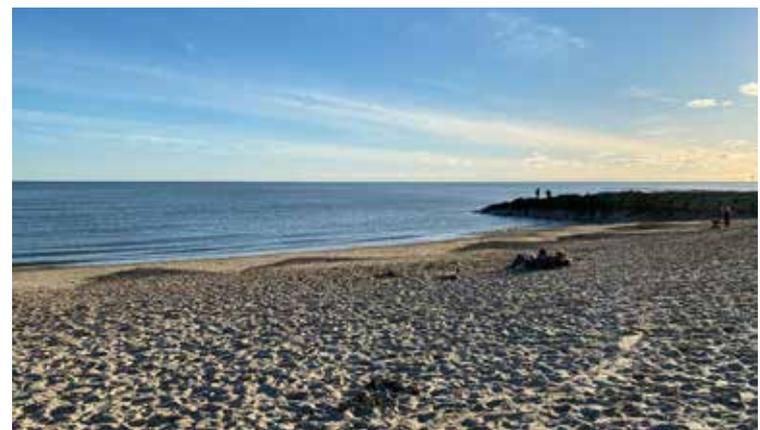
What I don't love in my neighbourhood

The beach because sometimes sewage gets dumped in the beach. Also I don't like seeing homeless people that don't have money.

Traffic, I don't like the fact that my neighbourhood is by the main road, the amount of traffic on Hurn/Fairmile road is horrendous.

That people put rubbish in my front garden and people are up at night 12 pm blasting loud music and they're pulling mom's son flowers.

There could be more protected nature and safer paths.



Some of children's favourite places in Christchurch: The Quay and the Quomps Park and the beaches...

Christchurch Neighbourhood Plan at the Christchurch Carnival

(14-15 August 2021 at the Quomps)

Thank you to all those people who came to visit our Gazebo at the Christchurch Carnival. Both Town Councillors and residents on the Neighbourhood Planning Group were there to speak about the Neighbourhood Plan and ask for input on the key themes which had emerged from our first scoping survey. There was a lot of interest, and over 70 people spent time and gave their opinions, all of which are now written up and fed back to the working groups. Your input has been extremely useful, so thank you very much.



During the events, we asked you to stick a “sticky-dot” on the issues that you are mostly concerned with. The ‘most liked’ ideas were:

- Pedestrianise the High Street as far as possible (30 dots)
- Improve the image of Saxon Square (30 dots)
- Link High Street and Bargates better for pedestrians (28 dots)
- Increase pedestrian access to the river / water fronts (26 dots)



A new look to the Fountain Roundabout Underpass

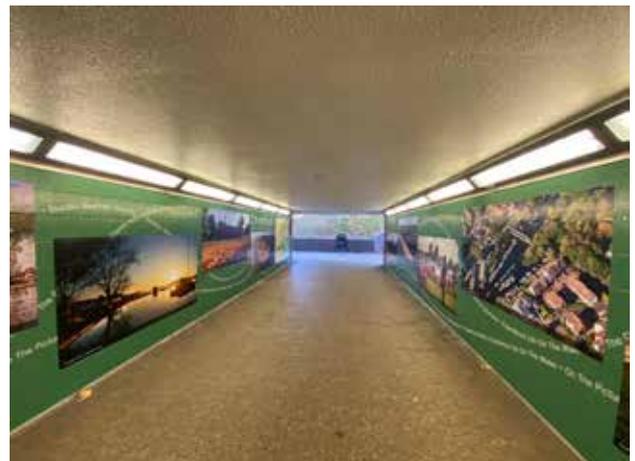
Our first scoping survey showed that one of the main town centre related issues is the poor connection between the Christchurch High-Street and the Bargates. Few respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the Fountain Roundabout in terms of its look and safety and stated they don't feel comfortable using the underpass especially during the night times.



Before

Now more colourful and welcoming, we believe that the new look of the underpass with updated lighting and new stair treads will help encourage the use of the underpass. New images in the underpass are of Christchurch and there is a Town Centre map with a QR code that directs visitors to the tourism website.

What do you think?



After