

New Builds Evaluation

Project Report

Corporate Research Team, Borough of Poole, February, 2008

Purpose of the Report.

This report summarises the findings of the 2007 New Builds Evaluation, which looked at new build housing occupied in the Borough of Poole between April 2004 and March 2007. It collates the information collected over all three stages of the Evaluation project and includes:

- Data sourced through a targeted re-analysis of information already held by the local authority.
- Responses to the People and Places Survey – a census of residents living in new build properties
- Qualitative insight from new build residents collected through a series of four focus groups.

The New Builds Evaluation aimed to provide increased understanding of the demographics of people owning or residing within newly built properties in Poole. It also investigated residents' motivations for choosing new build properties, and their experiences of living within new developments within the Borough.

As the local Planning Authority, it is the responsibility of The Borough of Poole to ensure that as well as additional capacity, new build developments within the Borough provide a good quality of life for their inhabitants, are able to meet the needs of the local community and assist in providing for an appropriately skilled workforce. This report therefore aims to provide evidence and direction to enable informed decision making with regard to future development within the Borough.

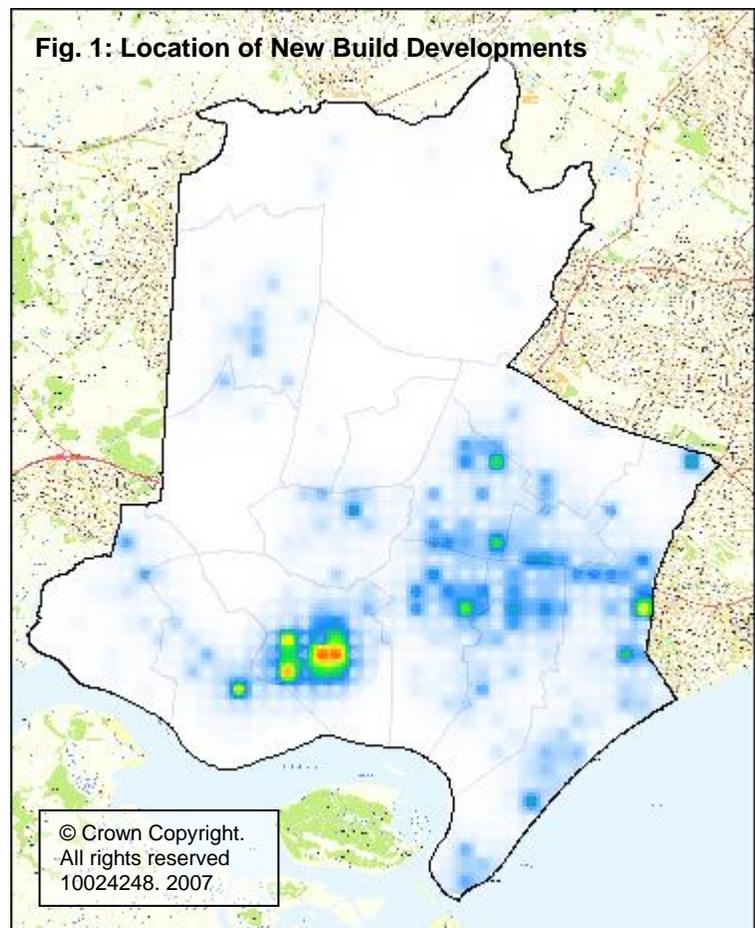
New Housing Developments

Borough of Poole records indicate that a total of 1,929 new residential property developments were completed and officially banded for Council Tax purposes in Poole between 1st April 2004 and 31st March 2007.

These new properties can be grouped into three types of development. The main type are entirely new buildings, of which 1,807 were developed across the Borough. In addition, 27 properties changed from commercial to residential use, and 95 properties have been split or merged to create new housing over the past three years.

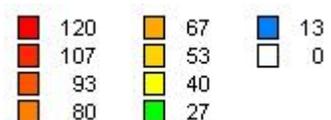
The map to the right shows the location of these new build developments within the Borough of Poole.

Whilst obvious 'hotspots' of new housing development can be observed in Poole town centre, and to the east of Hamworthy, a significant number of smaller new builds are located throughout the Borough – particularly to the north and south of Ashley Road, in Canford Cliffs and around the Sandbanks peninsula.



Map Key: Count per 250m2.

(Stated figure corresponds to upper end of range.)



New Build Housing – Type and Tenure

839 households responded to the People and Places Survey (*Stage Two of the Evaluation*) – representing a 60% response rate. Their responses indicate that:-

- 57% of new build residents live in purpose built flats, compared to 36% who live in houses.
- Most residents (64%) live in one or two bedroom properties.
- 64% of the properties are owner occupied – 9% through a shared-ownership scheme.
- 21% of those who own their properties are first time buyers.
- Almost all of those who rent do so from a Housing Association (46%) or private landlord (42%).

Council Tax registrations indicate that 6.3% of the new build properties are second homes, with particular concentrations in Canford Cliffs, Poole Town and Parkstone Wards. The usual residences of over half of these second homeowners are London (15%), Surrey (12%) or Dorset (27% - *over a third of whom have their primary residence within Poole*). These registrations also indicate that 23 of the new build housing properties are 'Halls of Residence'.

19% of residents chose their property specifically because it was a new build. However, overall, the main motivator was location - with 49% of residents choosing their property for this reason.

Property size was also a notable motivator. 14% of residents were looking to downgrade to a smaller property and 15% wanted to upgrade to a larger one. The catalyst behind this appears to be age, with around two thirds of those who wanted a smaller property aged over 60, and over half of those who wanted a larger property aged under 40 years.

Household Demographics

The People and Places Survey also enabled more to be learnt about the people living within the new developments. The survey revealed that:

- 77% had moved to their property from within the BH postcode area, and 53% from within Poole.
- Household size tends to be small, with 71% of the properties having only one or two residents.
- Around 10% of households are single parent households.
- 18% of households are occupied by one female resident only, and 14% by one male resident only.
- Nearly 18% of households had at least one resident with a limiting long-term illness.
- 10% of new build residents have an ethnic background that is not White British. As the chart shows, this compares to 4% of residents in Poole as a whole.

ETHNIC GROUP	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (Residents)	PERCENTAGE (Poole)
White British	1553	90.0	96.0
Other white	74	4.3	2.2
Asian	36	2.1	0.5
Black	19	1.1	0.2
Chinese	8	0.5	0.2
Mixed	21	1.2	0.7
Other	14	0.8	0.2
TOTAL	1725	100	100

Sources:
People and
Places
Survey 2007.
Census 2001.

- 69% of residents are in employment, compared to 78% of residents in Poole as a whole.
- One in five are retired.

Levels of Satisfaction

Overall, residents reported high levels of satisfaction with both their chosen property and the location in which it was sited.

- 53% of residents were 'very satisfied' and 37% were 'fairly satisfied' with their new home.

In particular residents enjoyed having good views, easy access to local facilities and amenities and being close to local open spaces such as the beaches, parks and harbour. They felt that a new build property offered significant advantages in terms of easy maintenance, low costs and energy efficiency, although some did report difficulties in resolving their 'snagging' lists.

- 43% of residents were 'very satisfied' and 43% were 'fairly satisfied' with their local area.

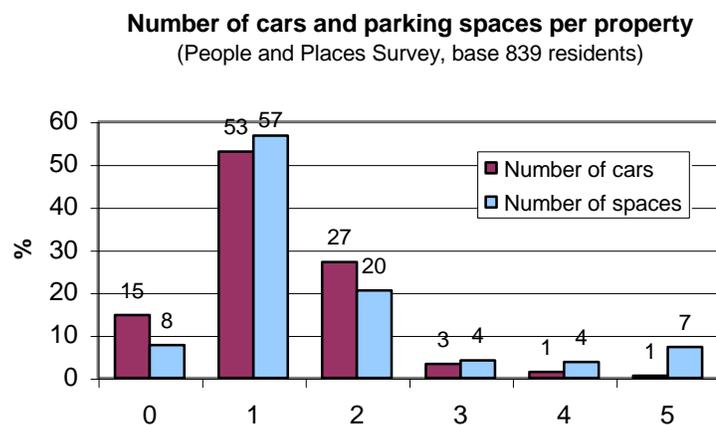
Factors that were important in choosing a neighbourhood included access to shops, being close to the sea, near to family, and having good transport links or proximity to work. Respondents also felt that living in a safe area influenced their choice.

Residents who were satisfied with their local neighbourhood emphasised their closeness to amenities and good transport links – ie. the *convenience* of the location. They also enjoyed being close to the Borough's natural open spaces. Satisfaction with the neighbourhood was also strongly influenced by the local 'atmosphere'. Very satisfied respondents emphasised the quiet and friendly nature of their area – whereas those less satisfied complained of noisy traffic, pubs or noisy/anti-social neighbours.

Parking

Although the adjacent chart suggests that the number of households with cars is similar to the number with spaces, residents feel that car parking is a significant issue, and one of the main causes of tension in their area.

Two-thirds of residents use their car to travel to work, and just under half (47%) for travel to school or college, although most residents do work or are educated within the BH postcode area.

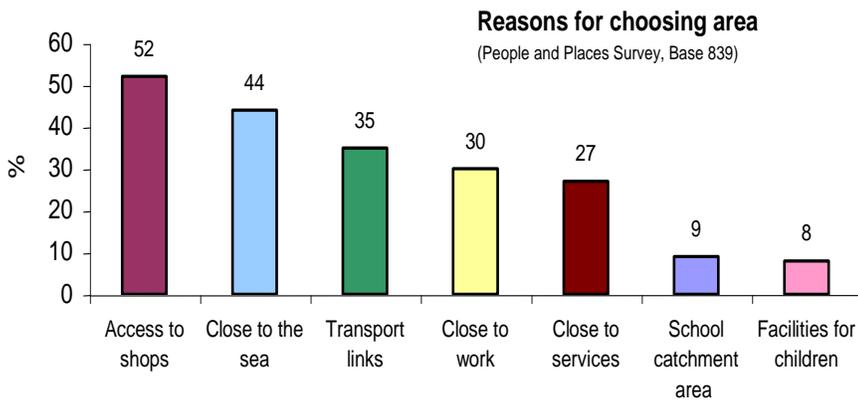


Parking was felt to be a particular concern for trades-people and those working at irregular times whose car was essential for them to be constantly mobile, transport equipment or work anti-social hours. The Stage Three Focus Group participants also felt that both they and the developers had failed to consider some of the practical issues involving non-resident parking - having found through experience that their visitors were put off by the expense, particularly when staying for a length of time. Of particular concern were the support needs of older or disabled residents who required home help and were more likely to suffer from social isolation if their visitors began to stay away.

In future developments, residents felt that there should be a minimum of one parking space per property, or at least permit schemes to better facilitate, control and monitor resident and visitor parking.

Local Amenities and Open Space.

As the chart below shows, local infrastructure had a key role to play in residents' choice of area to live. Their qualitative comments both through the survey and focus groups also reflected the considerable importance that residents attributed to both amenities and open space. In particular they were concerned about perceived over-development in the Borough and its impact on both the character of the area, and the ability of local facilities to provide an effective service.



Although recognising the value of larger open spaces such as Poole Park, Canford Heath and Baiter, most residents would like their own private open space within their development. Where a garden was not practical, they advocated communal areas that were well overlooked – particularly for use by parents with younger children and to help provide a focus for the community.

Residents would also like their local amenities to be easily accessible from where they live. In terms of distance, this tended to mean a short walk to a local shop, pub or post office, and no more than a short drive to doctors and dentists. Overall, their preference was for 'village' type centres that provide everything within easy walking distance and helped to contribute to a sense of community.

Neighbourhood and Community

As part of the focus groups, residents were asked to define their local neighbourhood. Although the neighbourhood always centred on the individual home, local shops and amenities were very often key to defining a neighbourhood space.

In terms of the people within their neighbourhood, residents felt that they only knew people who lived in their immediate vicinity. Informal, rather than formal, opportunities to meet neighbours were viewed as most successful – regular encounters that provide an opportunity for dialogue such as going out to the car, dog walking or solving issues. They felt that design could encourage these 'accidental' encounters.

Overall, residents felt that on a macro level having a mix of people living in their area was a positive thing, and that young people especially should be encouraged to the area. However, on a micro level they asked that more consideration be given to the mix of people living within small developments or blocks of flats - in the hope that shared outlooks or similar lifestyles would help to address some of the challenges of living together. These challenges included noise, parking and a lack of social behaviour.

Generally residents feel that Poole is a safe area and that they feel safe living within their development. Their concerns tended to encompass low-level offensive behaviour rather than serious crime. In addition to proactive police initiatives, residents highlighted the importance of the development's design in achieving this - particularly in terms of the layout and lighting.

Unfortunately, although there appeared to be a number of ways in which residents could come together in the local area to share concerns and find joint solutions, the level of awareness of these opportunities was less encouraging. Residents also felt that there was a lot of apathy about residents groups that needed to be addressed before real progress would be made.

The Major Developments

Seldown Eco Village is a centrally located affordable housing development of 85 houses and flats. 50% of households in the Village took part in the People and Places Survey (*Stage Two of the Evaluation*), and residents were also represented in two focus groups. Key findings from the development include:-

- Four out of five households own a car. The number of cars is 1.7 times the number of parking spaces.
- Although location (47%) was the main reason for choosing the property, 28% were attracted by environmental considerations.
- 23% of residents were very satisfied, and 67% were fairly satisfied with their new home.
- Main reasons for choosing the area were access to parks and open spaces (77%), and to shops (74%).
- Most residents are aged between 20-40 years, the mean age being 37.5 years.
- 83% of residents who owned their properties were first time buyers.
- The residents association is active at Seldown and residents enjoy having a community centre that provides a community focus. However many resident remain apathetic about getting involved.
- Residents' main concerns include a lack of play areas (children are playing in the roads with no warning for drivers entering), and a lack of lighting on the walk down the slip road from the town centre.

Poole Quarter is a large development of 512 purpose built 1-2 bedroom apartments and 3-4 bedroom town houses, located adjacent to the town centre. At the time the Evaluation was conducted, around two thirds of the development had been completed. 101 households took part in the People and Places survey and residents were also represented in two focus groups. Notable results arising include:-

- 86% of households have a car and parking, but the lack of visitor parking was seen to be a big concern.
- Location (43%) was the main reason for choosing the property, and access to shops the main reason for choosing the area (70%). 59% also enjoyed being close to the sea.
- 51% of residents were very satisfied, and 42% were fairly satisfied with their new home.
- Most residents are aged between 20-40 years. The mean age was 41.9 years.
- 46% of residents who owned their properties were first time buyers.
- Residents felt that Crest's Travel Plan was a gesture, rather than a practical alternative to car use.
- Residents would like more open space and play facilities within the development – particularly for parents with small children and to provide a community focus.

Harbour Reach (Shapwick Road) is located just south of the town centre in Hamworthy. It is a large development of 1, 2 & 3 bedroom apartments and 3 & 4 bedroom homes. At the time the Evaluation was conducted, only part of the development had been completed. 40 households took part in the Survey and were represented in one focus group. Key findings from residents at Harbour Reach include:-

- 62% of households own a car. Parking for visitors and residents was seen as a major cause of tension.
- Reasons for choosing the property included location (28%) and lower living costs (28%), although many respondents were allocated their property from the housing register, and stated this as a key reason.
- Access to shops (24%), proximity to the sea (22%) and to family (22%) influenced the choice of area.
- 53% of residents were very satisfied, and 40% were fairly satisfied with their new home.
- Most residents are aged between 20-40 years. The mean age was 41.9 years.
- A key local issue was the need to enable direct access to Hamworthy Park from the development.
- Residents feel more removed from the town centre and are becoming concerned that current local amenities are insufficient to cope with the growing level of development in lower Hamworthy.
- Of the three large developments, Harbour Reach residents report the most issues with unsocial behaviour, noise and an incompatible mix of residents within apartment blocks.

Where to Find Out More

Individual reports, providing additional detail on each stage of the New Builds Evaluation are available to view on request. For access, or further information on the evaluation project please contact Corporate Research on (01202) 633367 or visit our website at www.boroughofpoole.com/research