

**FORECASTING THE FUTURE:
AN OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING
OF THE BOURNEMOUTH AND POOLE CONURBATION**

A Working Paper

by

Dr Douglas Hart

**Department of Real Estate and Planning
School of Business, The University of Reading**

2004

1. Introduction

An important part of strategic planning's purpose should be to attempt to forecast the future, not simply to belatedly respond to events, or accept the future as inevitable. This document puts forward a conceptual approach for seeking to achieve these aims and uses the Bournemouth and Poole area in Dorset as a vehicle for applying the basic methodology. The area has been chosen because of the significant issues that it currently faces in planning terms; and its future development possibilities.

Although Bournemouth and Poole are two distinct areas with different economic, social, and environmental identities; and different local government administrations, they are also historically and geographically linked to one another and they face a number of common contemporary problems, issues, and opportunities. Because Bournemouth and Poole are part of a single urban area, although recognising their differences, it is appropriate in a conceptual exercise of this type that their future is jointly considered and that it is considered strategically – that is, in both a wide-ranging, and long-term, way.

In order that alternative future choices for the area – different 'developmental trajectories' – can be evaluated, they must be carefully and logically constructed. Four Futures for Bournemouth/Poole have been put forward; they are titled and colour-coded:

- **Future One is Maximising Growth – Golden Prospect** which seeks to achieve the highest level of economic prosperity of the area;
- **Future Two is Incremental Growth – Solid Silver** which attempts to facilitate a steady, continuing, controlled pattern of the development for the area;
- **Future Three is Steady State – Cobalt Blue** which suggests that people in the area could be more concerned with preserving their quality of life in terms of their leisure and recreation rather than increasing wealth;
- **Future Four is Environment First – Jade Green** which makes the area's environmental protection its top priority even at the possible expense of economic prosperity.

Each of these future scenarios – and the reasoning behind them - will be described in some detail in the 3rd section of this paper but first the background to the study will be outlined and its basic methodology set out.

The paper is based on the essential premise that in 2004 - the Bournemouth/Poole conurbation is an attractive and generally prosperous place, but it is an area – like many others - which faces important and growing challenges from a number of quarters – economic, environmental, governmental and developmental. The geographical sources of these challenges also vary from the extremely local; to the regional; to the national – and ultimately to the global. In some cases recent changes

straddle the locational divide between different spatial areas and global trends have significant local effects.

The difficulties experienced by the contraction of the defence industries – with particular regard to the Marconi Corporation - provides a cautionary example of this type of effect. The general point about the future is that no place is so wealthy; or has such an attractive environment; or enjoys such a high quality of life that it can afford the luxury of complacency.

The paper is concerned with addressing these changes in a systematic and orderly way. The paper is also based on a number of simple but important assumptions about the future: (1) The only thing we know with any certainty about the future is that it will be different from the past and yet elements of the past will be embedded in the future; (2) no one 'owns' the future and yet everyone has a stake in it; (3) although we cannot precisely and completely control the future, we can influence it; and (4) individuals, and organisations, and areas, who have a clear idea of what they want from the future have a better chance of achieving it than those who do not.

There is a tendency for many local communities to adopt conservative views of their futures; a 'more of the same' view. Change is viewed as marginal, and on occasion, as undesirable, even when those involved know that change is inevitable, and also that, properly managed, change can confer benefits for the local community as well as pose threats.

This conservative approach to change is usually adopted, or more properly, simply accepted by default, rather than being the result of an explicit, conscious process of choice. It should, of course, be said from the outset that the uncritical, unarticulated conservative approach may actually produce outcomes that are generally acceptable to the community.

One of the most seductive elements of the traditionalist approach is the belief that **There Is No Alternative** (often expressed as TINA). But there is. There **is always at least one alternative way** of addressing the future. This approach suggests that it is necessary to be much more critically and explicitly aware about what is possible, and desirable, for an area and which route, or routes, need to be taken over time to achieve it. By explicitly using this approach, even if the traditionalist 'more of the same' route is adopted, at least it will have been chosen deliberately after a process of conscious deliberation – and awareness of the alternatives available - and the consequences of selection.

One way of focusing debate on local economic prospects is to develop **alternative scenarios** of potential futures mentioned earlier. These scenarios can be used to both consider possible alternative futures and to highlight planning policy choices that will be needed to steer the community towards such futures. Thus, this approach is concerned both with the **ways** in which these futures take shape and the **means** of achieving them. A realistic and robust consideration of scenarios will also highlight the difficulties in achieving specific futures: some may be relatively easy to deliver, others may be impossible.

The basic purpose in producing scenarios is to enhance the debate about possible futures by looking systematically at the range of possibilities available. The idea is not so much that one scenario can be chosen solely and in isolation from the others – although this may be a perfectly reasonable thing to do following a constructively critical examination of the alternatives – rather it is to allow those involved in making decisions about the future to consider possibilities that might otherwise be inadvertently ignored. Similarly, the exercise will allow the identification of features that are undesirable for the community as a whole and hence need to be avoided.

Once again for the purposes of this paper those deciding about the future are not restricted to elected representatives and public officials. Indeed, the most likely outcome from a scenario construction process is that those participating in the exercise will identify features that they like from a number of futures, allowing one or more **hybrid scenarios** to be formed based on their collective experience and preferences.

The next step in the process of discovery is to set out the template which the future scenarios are based on. The template presented below is drawn in principle from a previous planning research study, **Bright Green**, which suggests that scenarios, or ‘visions’ as they were called in that study, needed to meet a number of criteria (Hart 1995). They needed to be: choice-enhancing, informed, imaginative, adaptable, accessible, achievable and manageable.

But this approach, to be effective, needs to concern itself not simply with the recent past and the present – but with the future. Factual, statistical and policy information about the present need to be supplemented with some imagination about medium and long-term possibilities – hence, the earlier use of the term ‘vision’. A longer term benefit in producing scenarios is that they may help in anticipating and adapting to change. Thus, while a particular set of policies might be adopted in the short term, changing circumstances might suggest a change of tack at a later date. The scenario building exercise might help in identifying new courses of action. Thus, the exercise should produce a bundle of ideas, some of which may be of value later. The features of scenarios should be readily understandable, and hence accessible, to the community at large – so that anyone can engage in debate about the merits of particular visions.

It is self-evidently true, that there is little point in elaborating futures which are utterly unachievable under any conceivable set of circumstances. However, this should not mean that only obvious, conservative futures should be considered. This would defeat the object. Scenarios are worth considering, even if to deliver them might stretch the imagination and resources of policy makers and because people could then more clearly determine not only what they want from the future but how they could actually achieve it. Not accepting the obvious; questioning the inevitable; stretching the imagination are basic aims of this type of conceptual approach.

2. Facilitating Choice – Managing Change: Dimensions and Options

The approach adopted in the **Bright Green** study suggested a two-stage process in producing scenarios. Firstly, critical ‘dimensions’, or factors, were identified against which scenarios could be characterised. Within each of these dimensions major

options were identified. This is called the **Basic Future Scenarios Template**. The second stage involved creating visions by selecting options from each dimension. The same basic approach is adopted here but modifications will be made to take into consideration the special circumstances which are found in Bournemouth and Poole to 'customise' the scenarios. This is the **Four Futures For Bournemouth and Poole?** set. A chosen permutation of options will give a crude characterisation of each scenario. The task then is to elaborate each scenario into a story of what each future might be like.

An analogy could be drawn here to further illustrate the difference between the two approaches. The difference between the two types of scenario models – the **Basic Template**, and the **Four Futures**, is the difference between buying a suit 'off-the-peg' and having one tailor-made. What is being attempted here is to construct a customised future for Bournemouth and Poole and then trace through the consequences – positive and negative – of achieving it for the local area. This tracing through the cumulative consequences of change is the very essence of good planning but it isn't always easy, and its results can sometimes be surprising. It cannot automatically be assumed that there are no problems associated with a chosen future. **All** positive actions have potentially negative consequences for some-one, for some group, for some business, or for some area. The point is to be aware of the consequences of the scenario(s) chosen. As the Jewish proverb says, 'beware of what you want, you might get it'. The real challenge for this type of process is to compare the desirable and undesirable effects of the preferred developmental trajectory so that a positive balance of advantage for the area can be achieved. Table 1 on the following page sets these features out.

As the table demonstrates, the key dimensions of the **Basic Template** relate to issues which are economic, social, environmental, or which affect the general quality of life for an area. Some of these economic and social issues can be quantified in terms, for example: the number and type of new jobs created; the change in Gross Domestic Product per Capita measured in pounds; and degree of social inclusion or exclusion. But in the cases of some issues – such as environmental, or quality of life considerations, precise measurement is difficult - and in some cases - impossible. Therefore the Basic Template is a mixture quantifiable and qualitative issues. Within each of the discussion dimensions on the basic template there are three associated future options.

As well as describing the scenarios, it may be useful to try to put some type of scale on them. It is not possible to put precise numbers to all of the component parts of the scenarios, as we have already indicated, but it is possible to indicate the overall **pace, content and direction** of change.

The options under each dimension can be considered as both deliberately planned features of a particular scenario and/or direct or indirect consequences. In some cases these both these direct and indirect consequences could be beneficial for an area and in other cases they may be harmful. Thus, for example, a positive environmental effect might arise in a scenario where this is an objective or it might be the outcome of a scenario where the emphasis is on slow economic growth.

Dimensions	Future Options
Pace of Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High • Moderate • Low
Sectoral Emphasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing • Diverse • Services
Functional Emphasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Command/and control • Diverse/SMEs • Routine
Affluence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High • Medium • Low
Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High • Moderate • Low
Environmental Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Neutral • Negative
Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced • Stable • Degraded

Table 1 – The Basic Scenario Template

It is useful to begin by contrasting the scenarios against what is likely to happen if existing policies and statistical trends simply continued. This extrapolation of events is called the **Base Case** approach and it relates, in many ways, to the traditionalist view of the future mentioned earlier in this paper. The set of middle options highlighted in Table 2 on the following page can be assumed to approximate to the Base Case.

In effect the Base Case poses the question: what would happen if things simply went on marginally changing year after year, in the way that they have been in the recent past in terms, for example, of the economy of the area? The Base Case provides the benchmark for the future. Thus, alternatives to the Base Case are based on permutations of other options.

Once again the Base Case approach **may be** precisely what does happen in the future – but we cannot simply assume the permanence of one particular direction of change. The policies and the statistical trends the Base Case is, itself, based upon can change and change fairly dramatically. For this reason, it is useful to think about alternatives to the Base Case. One simple example will suffice for the moment. After years of quiet but steady economic growth in Bournemouth and Poole, what would happen to the area if there were a substantial recession, this year or next?

Dimensions	Future Options
Pace of Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High ➤ Moderate • Low
Sectoral Emphasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing ➤ Diverse • Services
Functional Emphasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Command/and control ➤ Diverse/SMEs • Routine
Affluence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High ➤ Medium • Low
Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High ➤ Moderate • Low
Environmental Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive ➤ Neutral • Negative
Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced ➤ Stable • Degraded

Table 2 – The Base Case

Each of four main scenarios with their appropriate colour-codings which were mentioned earlier:

- **Future One: Maximising Growth – White Gold**
- **Future Two: Incremental Growth – Solid Silver**
- **Future Three: Steady State – Cobalt Blue**
- **Future Four: Environment First – Jade Green**

will be described below in some detail. In addition, the assumed permutation of all of the associated options is explained. It is important to make the point again that there are advantages and disadvantages attached to each scenario. Each has benefits and costs – none are consequence or risk-free. The overall benefits of each scenario – the **gain** – are deduced from the options, as are the potential problems – the **pain** – that might arise from pursuing them.

3. Developing the Scenarios

➤ Future One: Maximising Growth – White Gold

The Maximising Growth – White Gold scenario acknowledges that Bournemouth/Poole does have economic potential that is not being tapped, or at any rate not tapped to the maximum extent possible. Table 3 below illustrates the main features of this future scenario. The scenario would seek to take advantage of the area’s potential to maximise the rate of economic growth in terms of creating new jobs; enhancing wealth; and increasing Gross Domestic Product Per Capita largely, but not exclusively, as will explain later, through the increased entrepreneurial activities of private sector firms – but the public sector could well have an important role to play as well.

Future One: Maximising Potential – White Gold	
Dimensions	Options
Pace of growth	High
Sectoral emphasis	Services
Functional emphasis	Command/Control
Affluence	High
Equality	Moderate/Low
Environmental effect	Negative
Quality of life	Moderate

Table 3 – The Maximising Growth Scenario Template

Under this scenario, the options available emphasise strong economic growth, and, more specifically, on growth focussed on the service sector. This scenario is colour-coded ‘White Gold’ because it seeks to increase the number of the often highly-skilled highly-paid, white-collar jobs which has underpinned the recent growth of the area’s economy in, for example, financial services firms such as Chase, Abbey Life, Lloyds Bowmaker, and the Portman Building Society. The service sector has provided the basis for virtually all job growth in recent years in Bournemouth and Poole - and other successful local economies in the UK and other developed countries; and this is likely to continue to be the case in the future. This is not to say that the manufacturing sector does not have a role to play. Poole has performed relatively well in this sector with firms such as Sunseeker and Poole Pottery, and has demonstrated that competitive production companies do have a future and can contribute to local success. But it is likely that they will occupy specialist, niche markets rather than being involved in global mass-production activities.

In principle, almost all service sector activities will have a role under this maximising potential scenario. However, experience suggests that higher order activities – headquarter command and control functions in national or international companies – provide the greatest benefits and companies who are engaged in knowledge-based activities. They will draw in the most skilled people, and they tend to be less

vulnerable to company reorganisations than do more routine activities located in branch offices, and with regard to some of the older, more traditional firms.

This scenario has tended to concentrate on the role of the private sector so far but in any area the economy is based on the **relationship between the private and the public sectors** – and Bournemouth and Poole are no exceptions in this regard. This ‘inter-sector’ relation is often currently described as a public/private sector partnership. But partnerships can assume a number of different forms and perform a number of different tasks. Under this scenario an important task is that of overcoming the problems facing the proposed future development. Two of the biggest obstacles facing, not just the maximum growth scenario, but other scenarios as well, are **the general inadequacy of the transport infrastructure particularly the lack of recent major road and public transport investment; and the problem of improving worker productivity.**

Unless additional investment by the public sector is undertaken, under this scenario as well as the activities of the private sector, this high growth strategy may fail to deliver widespread benefits and could even exacerbate some problems in the medium to long term. For example, a high growth option may undermine efforts to minimise environmental damage. The scenario may put pressure on urban, and even on, green belt sites that have environmental characteristics that would otherwise be protected.

Also, the emphasis on making maximum use of urban sites for employment, alongside the inevitable pressure to squeeze as much new housing as possible into the urban areas, will lead to greater congestion – most obviously on the roads requiring investment to improve communication links between Poole and the national Trunk Road system particularly in the attempt to separate out Heavy Goods Vehicle’s (HGVs) from other traffic. The long-discussed A31 to Poole Link Road may be one such route needing to be provided as part of this scenario. In addition, the growing airport at Bournemouth needs better surface linkages and the long-discussed improved Poole Harbour Bridge – which has now generated a good deal of support - would also need to be built to help to facilitate this scenario.

In the short and medium-term, it is likely that higher densities of jobs and people might make radical public transport solutions look more viable in term of improving the east west links between Bournemouth and Poole. Also, in addition to the continuation of current policies to regenerate the Poole Power Station area and Boscombe the high growth option will require a review of green belt boundaries to identify land suitable for further employment and housing development – possibly in the form of extensions to the urban area - as the **Draft Regional Guidance for the South West**² (2000), and the **Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10)**³ (2001) have already hinted.

In addition, under the Maximum Growth vision overall affluence is likely to be high, but the distribution of benefits may be skewed in favour of those who are directly engaged in the new economy. Local people with low skills, or no skills, may fail to get into a high order, knowledge-based service economy would see no or few benefits from the new affluence while at the same time more and more people would be attracted into the area to gain employment which would cause more long-term commuting - and congestion – by people travelling in from other areas, and place

additional stress on housing accommodation. Thus, sustainability could be undermined and the greater social inclusion being promoted by Government may be elusive under this scenario. Additional skills and training education would be required at organisations such as the schools, colleges and the Learning and Skills Council would have an important role to play in the attempt to ‘up-skill’ the local workforce and in so doing address one of the area’s perennial problems as well: the relative poor performance, in competitive terms, of employee productivity in Bournemouth and Poole.

The overall effect of this scenario on quality of life is difficult to judge. The ‘go-getting’ atmosphere that this growth scenario would generate might not fit neatly with outsider’s perception of Bournemouth and Poole as being predominantly retirement communities with holidaymaking dominating the local economy. It could also ultimately undermine the relaxed lifestyle enjoyed by many residents in Bournemouth and Poole. Likewise, the physical pressure of more development, more traffic, etc might be resented by those who have chosen to live in the area away from the pressures and congestion found in many areas of similar size.

These effects might be offset, of course, by the greater affluence that would be enjoyed by at least some residents. In principle, economic growth can also be used to prime investment in public transport and community infrastructure as well as ensure the retention and further development of leisure facilities and provide the funds to provide for the stewardship of the environmental assets which will be subject to further pressure. The environment can not simply be assumed to be a free good.

Growth would be facilitated by maximising both the prospects for (i) land-related growth, which would allow development on new or re-used sites, and (ii) ‘land-less growth’, which would seek to increase productivity in existing firms and on existing sites.

It should be possible to increase employment by releasing new sites for employment uses. There are limited opportunities within Bournemouth and Poole, and stringent efforts would need to be made to bring them forward for development. Where there is a reluctance on the part of owners to develop sites for commercial reasons, local agencies will need to be proactive to investigate what can be done to expedite the situation. Where other constraints on the release of sites exist – such as infrastructure problems or access issues, again the local agencies may be able to help. A good example of this proactive approach is the strenuous effort being made by Poole Borough Council to achieve redevelopment of the Holes Bay Basin site through a second harbour crossing.

If emphasis is to be placed on economic growth, then a balance will have to be made between housing and employment uses on the few precious sites available. Under the Government’s current urban renaissance agenda, local authorities are encouraged to regard virtually all urban sites as potential housing sites – in order to minimise housing pressures on greenfield sites. Where there is an abundance of urban sites available, as in the conurbations, this approach will still leave land for employment uses. In Bournemouth and Poole it would not. Hence, the local planning authorities must protect urban employment sites.

Ultimately, a ‘maximising potential’ scenario would have to look for new sources of land for employment and housing development. This will mean looking at reviewing and ultimately possibly adjusting the green belt’s boundaries. Significantly, the **South West Regional Planning Guidance** (RPG 10) (already referred to earlier) comes close to encouraging this. Indeed, it suggests that careful encroachment into the green belt can be done in ways that may enhance the local environment rather than spoiling it.

It is likely that, even with policies that seek to maximise potential, land shortages – if viewed as the main policy tool - will act as a constraint on economic development. The development of sites within Bournemouth and Poole, and the development of new sites on the urban edge, may prove to be problematic and slow. Thus, a land-based approach has to be supplemented with a ‘land-less’ approach that seeks to squeeze the most out of the existing economic resources of the area. This will be a familiar prospect because increased productivity is a target of existing policies and is promoted in **RPG 10**. However, to be effective the means by which this is to be achieved needs to be clearer than at present.

The current approach seeks to deliver greater productivity by increasing the skills level in the area and by promoting ‘knowledge-based’ industries. In the first case, while increased skill levels can only help, evidence suggests that Dorset is not particularly short of skilled people. It may not match levels exhibited in, say, Berkshire, but compares well with most other counties in the south of England. If the concern is with higher skill levels – to provide for the ‘knowledge-based’ economy - there is little that local agencies can do. People with such skills are recruited in a national, or even international, market. Likewise, people educated locally to this level will look for jobs in such markets. The Bournemouth University initiative to retain its graduates locally and to entice people who come from Bournemouth, but who have attended university elsewhere, back to the local area might have some marginal benefit. But otherwise, the drawing in of people with higher skill levels is likely to result from economic growth rather than cause it.

The current concern with increased productivity, and hence land-less growth, emphasises the role of ‘knowledge-based’ industries. The problem is that this amounts to little more than a slogan; and a slogan used by just about every local authority in the UK. Knowledge-based industries range from software to pharmaceuticals and each industry has different needs and requirements. If the aspiration is to mean anything, the local agencies promoting the idea need to be much clearer about what they mean and how they propose to bring about an economy based more heavily on these industries.

Gain: The gain under this scenario is clear: higher economic growth and all of the benefits that this brings. There would be more jobs, in higher order sectors, unemployment levels would fall a little, average prosperity would rise, and the economic future of Bournemouth and Poole would be guaranteed. New infrastructure would follow; in the form, for example, of better public transport.

Pain: An accelerated rate of economic growth would inevitably bring a downside. Congestion on the roads would increase requiring investment in infrastructure and alternative modes of transport. A more intensive use of land might bring a reduced

quality of life in the urban areas. The prosperity that a growth approach would bring is likely to be unevenly spread; with some people continuing to lose out but their prospects for improvement may increase if this process is properly managed. It is likely that pressures on precious natural environments would increase. Some green belt would disappear. Political conflict could increase under a growth scenario as different groups would argue about appropriate policy and about the distribution of benefits and losses. Table 4, below, attempts to roughly indicate the effect of Future One in relation to the Base Case.

Maximising Potential	Change Relative to Base Case
Population	+
Jobs	+
Unemployment	-
Net Commuting	+

Table 4 – The Likely Impact Template of the Maximising Growth Scenario

The next future will examine the effect of Future Two – Limited Growth on Bournemouth and Poole.

➤ **Scenario 2: Limited Growth – Solid Silver**

This scenario accepts that physical constraints will limit the growth of jobs and housing in the Bournemouth and Poole area. It assumes that these physical constraints will not be removed by, say, significant adjustments in the boundary of the green belt. This assumption exists in some current policy stances. So, this scenario reflects many existing policy stances – which tend to focus on ways of maximising economic growth within current planning constraints. However, the difference between this scenario and the thrust of existing policies is that this scenario makes a virtue of modest growth, rather than such growth being the consequence of unavoidable constraints.

Structure and local plans tend to deal with the scale of growth that existing policy constraints can allow, while the economic development agencies stress the need for productivity gains and a more dynamic economic structure in the face of slow employment growth.

At present, conditions seem to support this constrained growth scenario. Employment projections suggest that pressures for job growth are likely to reduce, suggesting only modest rates of growth compared to the more buoyant past. Thus, the lack of land for job expansion may not be a major problem.

Where there is pressure for further job growth, this scenario relies upon some of that growth being accommodated as ‘land-less’ growth – that is growth that is absorbed without additional releases of land. This may be achieved to a degree by increased economic activity rates amongst existing residents. Thus, for example, a continuing buoyant economy may be expected to induce more women to return to the labour market. Local authority and agency policies might play a role in encouraging this trend. Likewise, reduced unemployment has the effect of finding more workers from the existing community. However, the area already has relatively high economic

activity rates and low unemployment rates, and so this contribution to ‘land-less’ job growth may be marginal. Another way of absorbing job growth without additional land is to increase employment densities – that is to accommodate more workers on existing sites or in existing buildings, as Table 5 below indicates.

Scenario 2: Incremental Growth	
Dimensions	Options
Pace of growth	Moderate
Sectoral emphasis	Diverse
Functional emphasis	Diverse
Affluence	Medium
Equality	Moderate
Environmental effect	Neutral
Quality of life	Stable

Table 5 – The Incremental Growth Scenario Template

However, a feature of this consciously modest growth scenario might be a desire to avoid the pressures, such as congestion, that arise from a more intensive use of sites for housing or employment. Thus, while the scenario might feature the best use of existing sites, it might avoid excessively intensive uses of such sites.

The permutation of options under this scenario is very similar to those that feature in the trend scenario – that is, a selection of the middle option in most cases. Thus, economic growth is likely to be moderate to low, with a dependence on a diverse range of sectors and a diverse range of company functions. Levels of affluence would be similar to those now and in the trend scenario. Likewise, levels of equality in the distribution of benefits would change little from the status quo. If the constrained growth scenario is a little less assertive than the trend scenario, involving for example less intensive use of land and buildings, then it might bring rather more environmental benefits than the trend approach, and it might also protect quality of life a little more.

Gain: The major merit of this approach is that it makes explicit an approach that at present is implicit. It accepts both that physical constraints in Bournemouth and Poole and limited growth prospects are a fact of life at the present time but that this does not spell disaster – rather, they will allow a continuation of the current buoyant, if not dynamic, economy. Life is likely to remain largely unchanged for most people under this scenario. Some of the most challenging of problems for local politicians, such as the accommodation of additional housing development, would be minimised under this scenario.

Pain: This is a difficult scenario to accept in a place where the prevailing assumption is that economic growth is a good thing and where numerous agencies are charged with the responsibility for generating such growth. Such agencies might argue that complacency – which they would argue that this scenario represents – is dangerous. A permanently buoyant economy is not guaranteed, particularly in the face of competition from areas that will continue to promote growth. The recent decision by Marconi to close down in Poole is a case in point. They would argue that Bournemouth and Poole’s problems – such as infrastructure weaknesses - which at

present do not seem to hold the area back, may become major disadvantages as they are not addressed. The obvious riposte is that the scenario does not imply a neglect of the economy but simply an acceptance of constraints and a resulting modest, but acceptable, economic performance. Admitting that this scenario poses the potential long term risk of being overtaken by more dynamic areas and a loss of the current buoyant economy has to be made clear by decision makers.

Subdued Growth	Change Relative to Trend
Population	-
Jobs	-
Unemployment	=
Net Commuting	-

Table 6 – The Likely Impact Template of the Incremental Growth Scenario

➤ **Scenario 3: Steady State – Cobalt Blue**

Here the focus is on building on the idea – based largely on anecdotal evidence – that many people in the area already sacrifice some degree of economic prosperity in order to lead a slower pace of life. It acknowledges that such an approach runs counter to the prevailing wisdom about the promotion of economic growth, but is nevertheless a legitimate approach to life for those with the financial means and free time to pursue it. It is an approach that says that ‘work – and indeed wealth - is not everything’.

The anecdotal evidence referred to earlier, suggests that some small businesses in Bournemouth and Poole are run by people who carefully balance their working and social lives. The multiple leisure attractions of the area – most obviously the beaches, walking environment, sailing and golf – have induced these people to place a high priority on their quality of life. It is possible that people move to the area, perhaps when close to retirement, with the specific intention of establishing small businesses and settling for a comfortable existence rather than maximising business growth. This relaxed attitude does not appear to have damaged the economy to any significant degree. Unemployment in Bournemouth and Poole remains consistently low. Perhaps the attitude does have an effect on productivity levels, which local agencies claim is also consistently low. However, they would argue that low productivity is feature of businesses generally, not just small ones.

Scenario 3: Steady State – Cobalt Blue	
Dimensions	Options
Pace of growth	Low
Sectoral emphasis	Diverse
Functional emphasis	Diverse
Affluence	Low
Equality	Moderate
Environmental effect	Positive
Quality of life	Enhanced

Table 7 – The Steady State Scenario Template

This scenario does not envisage a weakening economy. It would deliver an economy that remains as modern and competitive as that at present. Economic progress might be slower than in the strongest local economies in the UK, but the area would remain economically buoyant and relatively affluent unless the present balance which provides the current context within which the Poole and Bournemouth economy operates is upset, in which case the economy will not be in a position to respond.

Gain: This approach may simply maintain the status quo – if it is true that some people already choose to balance economic and social progress. It should help to ensure that some people, at least, experience a quality of life that is not available in many other parts of the UK.

Pain: The conventional economic view suggests that Bournemouth/Poole is already falling behind in the UK and European economic stakes. A failure to give priority to economic growth would lead to further slippage. This is likely to result in lower incomes for some than might otherwise be the case. But is this a loss if the people concerned – largely in small businesses - understand and accept it? There is no indication at present that the ‘leisure business’ phenomenon has any real effect on unemployment levels. These are, in effect, as low at present as they can be. Just as with Scenario 2, this scenario sits uncomfortably with the prevailing ethos in national and local government, and in local agencies – an ethos that assumes that maximum economic growth is necessary and desirable and is necessary to safeguard against bad effects of major changes in external circumstances not in the control of the local authorities.

Steady State – Cobalt Blue	Change Relative to Trend
Population	-
Jobs	-
Unemployment	=
Net Commuting	=

Table 8 – The Likely Impact Template of the Steady State Growth Scenario

➤ **Scenario 4: Environment First – Jade Green**

This scenario places the maximum priority on the natural environment. It requires that as development decisions are made, environmental considerations take precedence. This does not necessarily imply that economic growth has to suffer – simply that economic growth has to be achieved in a way that at worst minimises environmental damage, and at best might lead to environmental enhancement.

This environmental approach is likely to put constraints on land-led development. It might, for example, exclude considering any adjustment to the green belt, if loss of green belt land is regarded as environmentally damaging. This might not be the case, of course. The new **Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG 10)** suggests that some incursions into the green belt around Bournemouth and Poole, if done properly, could lead to environmental gains not losses. The scenario might also imply less intensive use of urban sites; whether in cases of the development of currently undeveloped sites, the redevelopment of sites, or more intensive use of sites. The environmental need for urban greenery and for less pollution implies a generally extensive not intensive use of land. This has to be balanced against the fact that more

intensive use of urban areas can relieve some pressure on the possible development of greenfield sites.

‘Land-less’ economic growth could have environmental merits, in that it would not consume land, it would not increase employment and housing, and it would not create more traffic and pollution. Some growth in jobs and people is likely to result because of the increase in spending power that arises from growth in the economy. But this would be modest compared to growth generated through land releases. The implication of all of this is that the policy of increased productivity, pursued now and favoured in some of the above scenarios, would be environmentally appropriate.

Scenario 4: Environment First – Jade Green	
Dimensions	Options
Pace of growth	Low
Sectoral emphasis	Diverse
Functional emphasis	Diverse
Affluence	Low
Equality	Moderate
Environmental effect	Positive
Quality of life	Enhanced

Table 9 – The Steady State Scenario Template

Gain: The obvious merit of this scenario is that it would do the most to prevent further encroachment upon the natural environment of the Bournemouth and Poole area. There has in the past been significant losses of, for example, heath land. Not all the unbuilt natural environment is, however, of high environmental quality. Much of the green belt lies within the urban fringe where farming is no longer viable and this is reflected in the condition of land and the presence of marginal uses such as ‘horsiculture’. Whilst this scenario need not stop economic progress, giving priority to, and finding mechanisms to manage the environment, will not happen spontaneously and will require financial resources.

Pain: Just as with the Steady State scenario, this environmentally-focussed scenario defies the conventional wisdom. This wisdom suggests that economic growth must have priority, even if conciliatory gestures are made to environmental sensibilities. Governments – both national and local – claim that we can have our cake and eat it; that we can have maximum economic growth and maximum environmental protection. With the best will in the world, this is unlikely to happen. Rapid economic growth will always tend to lead to some environmental degradation. We can try to minimise the effects; but there will be effects. The implication, then, is that in giving priority to the environment some economic growth has to be sacrificed. Whether the sacrifice may be small, or large depends upon the relative performance of other competing local economies. Catching up with others is always difficult after they have gained a lead and therefore in choosing this scenario involves a conscious decision that the environment comes first. In an area that is likely to remain buoyant in any event this is a risk that may be considered worth taking.

Environment First	Change Relative to Trend
Population	-
Jobs	-
Unemployment	+
Net Commuting	-

Table 10 – The Likely Impact Template of the Environment First Scenario

4. Conclusion – Alloys and Amalgams

The table below summarises the permutations of options assumed for each scenario. It is useful to put them alongside each other in order to check the differences, and perhaps to change the assumed options.

Dimension		Trend		Visions	
		Maximise Potential	Subdued Growth	Steady State	Environment First
Pace of growth	Moderate	High	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Sectoral emphasis	Diverse	Services	Diverse	Diverse	Diverse
Functional emphasis	Divers	Command/control	Diverse	Diverse	Diverse
Affluence	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Low
Equality	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Environmental effect	Neutral	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Positive
Quality of life	Stable	Sacrificed	Stable	Enhanced	Enhanced

Table 11 – The Likely Combine Impact Template of the Four Scenarios

At this conclusion, it is worth reiterating the intended purpose of the scenarios. The primary purpose is to generate visions about futures that are desirable or undesirable – as an antidote to the conservatism that usually pervades local policy making. Too often it is assumed that the future will simply be more of the present. This may be perfectly acceptable. But it is usually preferable that an area faces its future explicitly and tries to bring about what is desirable rather than what is uncritically assumed to be inevitable. Clearly, there are limits to what can be done in influencing futures. But exploring futures will help in establishing what these limits are, and in assessing the degree to which it might be possible to stretch those limits.

The scenarios proposed here are not sacrosanct. Nor are they simply confined to the Bournemouth and Poole area. In theory, suitably modified, they could use in a variety of different contexts. Consideration of the scenarios – wherever located - might then generate other, additional scenarios. These are called hybrids, alloys and amalgams. Likewise it might identify some of them as inappropriate or impossible. Most likely, careful consideration of the scenarios will suggest hybrid scenarios, in which features from different scenarios are combined to produce alternative or additional futures for consideration. The real issue then becomes how best to fashion such a future for the particular area under consideration.

References

Hart, Douglas; Breheny, Michael; Doak, Joe; Strike, Jim; and Montgomery, John, (1994) **Bright Green: Developing a Knowledge-Based and Environmentally-Aware Industrial Strategy for Hertfordshire into the 21st Century**, Hertford: Hertfordshire County Council.

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (2000) **Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Structure Plan**, Bournemouth: Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole.

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (2004) **Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Replacement Structure Plan**, Bournemouth: Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole.

South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) (2001) **Regional Guidance for the South West – RPG 10**, Bristol: SWRDA.

Baker Associates (1999) **Economic Appraisal of the Draft Revised Regional Strategy**, 2 Volumes, Bristol: SWRDA.

South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) (2003) **Regional Guidance for the South West – RPG 10 - Full Annual Monitoring Report for 2002**, Bristol: SWRDA.

South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) (2004) **Regional Guidance for the South West – RPG 10 - Full Annual Monitoring Report for 2003**, Bristol: SWRDA.