

# Canterbury District Local Plan.

## Response from Canterbury Cathedral regarding the City Centre plan.

In broad terms we are disappointed with the section of the plan that focusses upon Canterbury City Centre.

We feel that this is a missed opportunity to develop our great City and ensure that it remains vibrant and resilient to face the future challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

There are a number of areas that we feel the plan falls short;

- There does not seem to be a clear vision for the City Centre that would form the direction of travel for future plans. In the coming year's competition for visitors will intensify as other towns, cities, and broader destinations develop their offers, and individuals become more discerning in how they spend their precious leisure time and hard earned money. Canterbury city centre needs to ensure that it develops further into a resilient welcoming and vibrant destination of choice for a broad range of visitors from both the UK and beyond.
- We live in a unique city with an unrivaled history and worldwide reputation. It feels like the plan does not recognise "brand Canterbury" and instead is utilising a generic approach which means we are missing a substantial opportunity. The starting point for the city centre should be what it is and what levers it already has to draw in visitors. Then to build on this by determining what we want the city to become and hence what additional layers need to be added. This approach would ensure that the plan is rooted in Canterbury and is geared towards future prosperity.
- The transport and parking proposals feel at odds with making Canterbury a destination of choice. To prosper it is vital that the city centre can provide outstanding connectivity and easy parking for all. Looking at the plan while the removal of cars from the city is interesting in theory this will provide massive issues for the commercial strength of the city moving forward. In the long term there is no clarity on how the city centre will address its connectivity. The plan needs to fully address this issue to ensure that it provides visitors with a seamless transport and parking solution that adds real value to the city's offer, and does not deter future visitors.
- The plan refers to the World Heritage Site but seems to down play the role that the Cathedral plays in attracting visitors from across the globe. Canterbury is blessed with having an iconic world renowned Cathedral within its city walls. As we know this draws in hundreds of thousands of visitors each year who then go on to spend significant amounts of money in the city and surrounding area. It feels that the city plan should embrace the Cathedral to a greater extent in its longer term plans which will in turn maximise this important income flow for generations to come. **A good starting point for this could well be to incorporate the Cathedral into the town centre boundary which would encourage a more productive and seamless approach to future plans within the city.**

In summary

For Canterbury city centre to develop and thrive into the future it needs a plan that is totally rooted in the essence of the city, but with a clear eye to the future. One of the core income streams across

the city is generated from tourist visitors from around the world. We need to make their visits easy, inspiring and relevant, which will in turn ensure that they become vocal advocates of our wonderful city.

We feel that while a huge amount of focus rightfully has been given to housing and transport across the region this has been at the expense of the City Centre which should be seen as the heartbeat of our community and the motor for future financial growth. The biggest concern is the transport and parking provision which will significantly damage the viability of the centre going forward at the very time when we should be putting plans in place to enhance and develop the city.

We recognise that developing such extensive plans is a difficult task but hope that going forward we can work closely with the city planners to help to optimise Canterbury's future potential.