

ALLIANCE OF CANTERBURY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS (ACRA)

RESPONSE TO CCC LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

SEPTEMBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

ACRA welcomes this opportunity to comment at this significant stage in the iterative process which leads into the preparation of the next CCC Local Plan.

Earlier this year ACRA was actively involved in the physical and virtual wider stakeholder events which were tasked with defining the outline of the longer term vision necessary to guide the detailed preparation of the plan which is now underway .

It is hoped that our contributions at these events were received as entirely constructive and this principle of positive engagement is one which we would wish to maintain throughout the process as a whole, including the next round of subject specific stakeholder workshops.

Many of ACRA's member RA's will be making their own responses to the consultation reflective of the needs and priorities in the own areas and ACRA is entirely supportive of their contributions.

ACRA works very alongside a number of Associations and Societies in order to ensure that public authorities receive consistent and coordinated feedback from the local community .

Accordingly I can confirm that ACRA has been very closely involved in preparation of the submissions that are to be sent in from CAST and CCAP, covering specifically sustainable transport and carbon reduction.

ACRA is unequivocally supportive of both.

They cover their chosen subject area in impressive detail supported by hard evidence which merits the most careful consideration by Cllrs and officers.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Defining a long term plan is at anytime a challenge.

The only certainty is that the future is uncertain.

This belief has taken on a new dimension over the last year.

Accordingly it is vital that any future plan has built in optimal flexibility to ensure an effective response is made as and when circumstances change

The advent of the pandemic coincidental with the declaration of the climate emergency set against a background of accelerated use of digital technology has generated considerable social and economic change and upheaval, the first effects of which are just being realised.

In the same way that developments that were planned only 5 years ago are now clearly outdated and non compliant with emerging new standards and environmental requirements , current well intentioned proposals may similarly be overtaken by different patterns of work/education and leisure underpinned by technological change..

Flexibility has to a core principle of this new local Plan

Given the declaration of a Climate emergency ACRA assumes that henceforth every aspect of the new Local Plan will be measured against this yardstick following comprehensive environmental impact assessments.

SPECIFIC-following the questionnaire outline.

Climate change and Health and Well Being

ACRA is delighted that these important criteria given top billing .

All too often in the past environmental conservation/improvement and life quality have been sacrificed following pressure from developers to squeeze all possible financial income from every available square metre.

Valuable trees have been cut down, greenery and hedges lost , air quality has deteriorated and remains at danger levels in some parts.

Environmental care and health and well being are inextricably linked and it is pleasing to see that this is now formally recognised as a priority.

Housing and new communities

Truly affordable housing is badly needed for families and in and around the city centre ,where they can easily access the services they need , on for example brown field sites such as former office and large retail premises as well as properties vacated by students following campus accommodation expansion and overall decline in the number of students residing here as on line learning accelerates.

However this need also has to be balanced with those of elderly people who may be looking to downsize as well as single people and the homeless. All too often these sections of the population are excluded from consultations about the design and style of accommodation that would be most appropriate to their needs.

Proper site provision needs to be made for travellers.

It is essential that basic infrastructure is put in place before homes are built

Attention is drawn to the excellent CCAP document on zero carbon buildings

Local economy and employment

Diversification of employment opportunities has to be a major priority because overdependence on academia and tourism is too high risk

There has rightly been continued reference in previous years to the need to retain graduates and facilitate the establishment of SME,s covering a broadly based range of services and services and facilities.

Progress has been slow and needs greater impetus through more effective cooperation between the agencies involved

Movement and transportation

The future holds a real opportunity for securing genuine modal transport shift.

A priority need is a fully integrated multi modal transport hub at C West station..

Not just a single bus stop.

Bus services need to be provided by a fleet of low /zero emission vehicles of varying size which are able to serve *all* parts of the wider city area and with a more flexible pattern of routes able to join north and south and east and west for example without break in the journey

It is pleasing to note that representatives from the public transport services are involved in the Sustainable Transport Forum .The incorporation of their creative ideas into the CCC planning process is vital

Vibrant town centre

The visitor experience in Canterbury is sad to say very poor relative to York and Winchester for example .

Sign posting is patchy and worn out. Parts of the city are shabby and outside of our magnificent Dane John and Westgate gardens there is very little urban trees and greenery to soothe the soul..

Efforts are at long last underway to give more prominence to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists but much more needs to be done. It is vital to the City's economic regeneration that it is.

In our view a late night alcohol based economy is far from a vibrant city centre..

Over and above the issues of air quality, pedestrian access, greenery etc referred to earlier, residents need to feel safe and relaxed in the city centre particularly from 7 pm until midnight. With the decline of large retail and the vacation of office space opportunities present for a wide range of small niche businesses and diverse family leisure facilities.

For a city centre to be genuinely vibrant it needs to be accessible by all sections of the population. This requires much better and more flexible public transport services which serve the wider city area equitably and are available throughout the evening.

It also means easy access by car for those individuals unable to reach or use public transport and who have a registered disability or limited mobility

ACRA strongly supports the work of the Canterbury Heritage Design Forum and feels that its work should be formally incorporated into the CCC planning process and financially supported by the Council.

The Canterbury Society design awards are evidence of some very impressive new buildings and features here.

Sadly though some, which the public at large regard as shockingly awful and quite out of context with the local environment have been allowed to slip through the net and they do not serve the city well..

A design code for the city is badly needed.

Historic and Natural environment

Canterbury is known for having a World Heritage Site but in many people's perception it comprises only the Cathedral.

Outside Canterbury little is known about St Martin's Church and St Augustine's Abbey.

The linkages between the three is a wonderfully interesting history, and would be far more so if set within the overall context of early Christianity in E Kent

The local WHS management cttee has been mainly dormant in recent years. Its proceedings are not open to public scrutiny and the management plan has remained unchanged since 2002

This has to change .Heritage is by a clear margin Canterbury's international USP and the visitor experience needs radical improvement.

The urgent need for more urban trees and hedges has been in Canterbury has been well documented.

Despite inclusion in various earlier green strategies various parts of the area eg S Canterbury have virtually no public open space and this needs early rectification.

What has been seriously overlooked is the management of the flood plain.

There is a real risk of major flooding in years to come if the river environment is not cared for properly.

Water meadows and natural habitats need conservation. Not concrete and tarmac covering

The plan to extend the Wincheap Park and Ride across the water meadow should be abandoned forthwith.

CONCLUSION

I hope these observations are received as helpful.

Please let me know if any matter requires clarification.

David Kemsley

Business Secretary

ACRA

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]