

CANTERBURY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT DISTRICT VISION AND OPTIONS

Response from Canterbury Sustainable Development Goals Forum

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We welcome the commitment to sustainable transport and travel, to environmental sustainability, and to action on climate change, as in the following Draft Strategic Objectives:

- Create a transport network with a focus on low-carbon travel to improve air quality and people's health while ensuring excellent access to city and town centres on foot, cycle and by public transport including through intelligent transport systems.
- Protect and enhance our rich environment, creating a network of spaces, supporting wildlife and biodiversity and improving the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- Adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change by ensuring new development is highly energy efficient and encourages low-carbon lifestyles.

We would have liked to see these objectives embedded in a stronger overall narrative of sustainability which should run right through the Local Plan and underpin all the proposals. We believe that the Preferred Growth Option is incompatible with a commitment to a sustainable future for the district.

GROWTH OPTIONS

We strongly disagree with the Preferred Growth Option. There is ample evidence to show that building more roads is not the best way to address traffic problems, since it invariably generates more traffic. Building 14,000-17,000 new homes mainly in Canterbury would virtually double the population of the city, would inevitably create a big increase in traffic and congestion, and would consequently be totally counter-productive.

We find it impossible to say which of the other options to support, in the absence of crucial information. We recognise that the Local Plan will have to work with the government-imposed requirement of 9,000 new homes within the period of the plan. However:

- In Canterbury Focus A, although we welcome the proposals to reallocate space on the ring road in order to promote walking and cycling, and to invest in bus infrastructure, we cannot see how an additional 9,000 can be built mainly in Canterbury without destroying the character of Canterbury as a historic city and thereby undermining the tourism sector of the local economy.
- The Rural Focus option would require either 13 new villages the size of Bridge, which would be unsustainable, or expanding existing villages in a way which would destroy their rural character.
- The New Freestanding Settlement option is impossible to assess in the absence of any information about where such a new settlement would be.

We urge that there should be further consultation when more detailed options have been provided, indicating much more specific possible locations for new development in the light of the assessment of the submissions to the Call for Sites, and indicating also how the necessary infrastructure, including transport infrastructure, could be provided for each of the options.

DRAFT VISION

We support the commitment to sustainable transport and travel in the Draft Vision for Canterbury:

Canterbury will experience significantly-reduced traffic congestion through a decisive switch towards active travel which will improve health, quality of life and the environment.

We support the corresponding Draft Objective for Canterbury:

- Facilitating a significant increase in opportunities for walking, cycling and sustainable transport to ease congestion and improve air quality and people's health

and the similar objectives for other parts of the district. We repeat the recommendation which we made in response to the Issues consultation, for a fully integrated transport system that links all of the key sites in the city and district and which explores innovative forms of public transport such as small electric buses and trams which could be tried in Canterbury and, if successful, extended to other parts of the district.

HOUSING AND NEW COMMUNITIES

We repeat what we said in response to the Issues consultation, that there is an urgent need for more genuinely affordable housing, and that this will require in particular a substantial increase in the amount of social housing. We would like to see much more emphasis on this than is apparent in the Draft Options.

We support the proposal for more emphasis on the use of brownfield sites for development:

HNC3B: Maximise opportunities for delivery of sustainable brownfield and regeneration developments

but we would add that such developments do need to be in keeping with the existing character of the various town centres.

We strongly support the commitment to low-carbon and energy-efficient housing, including

HNC8C: All new homes delivered to net zero

and

HNC8F: Set higher local domestic build energy standards for modifications to existing homes and require the submission of an energy plan to assess the potential for improvements to the energy performance of the overall building.

We note that "this could mean that a modification to an existing home which requires planning permission such as an extension would need to lower operational emissions of the whole building", and we welcome such an approach.

HISTORIC AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

We welcome the commitment to protect and enhance biodiversity and green and blue infrastructure, and we support NE3C:

NE3C: Require new developments to enhance existing or provide new green infrastructure, to conserve and where possible enhance blue infrastructure, and seek 20% biodiversity net gain.

We welcome the commitment to an Open Space Strategy, and to the use of this to identify and protect open spaces in the Local Plan (NE7B). We note the reference in NE7 to the proposal for a Stour Valley Regional Park, and the statement that “should these ideas progress they will be considered appropriately through later stages of the development of the new Local Plan.” We hope to see this idea progress and we hope that it will be supported in the Local Plan.