

# **Canterbury City Council - District Vision and Preferred Options Consultation**

**University of Kent**

## **Part 1: Response to Consultation Questionnaire**

August 2021

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**For and on behalf of Avison Young (UK) Limited**

# 1. Introduction

1.1 This Report been prepared by Avison Young on behalf of the University of Kent (UoK) to set out the University's responses to the current Canterbury City Council Local Plan 'Options' consultation material.

1.2 For ease of reference, this document formulaically sets out all of the questions included within the Council's online questionnaire, published as part of its District Vision and Preferred Options Consultation material alongside the UoK's responses to these questions. These questionnaire responses have also been submitted electronically via the Council's online consultation website.

## **Context**

1.3 The Draft District Vision and Preferred Options consultation document seeks to understand the views of key local stakeholders with an interest in the preparation of the new Canterbury Local Plan. The consultation material sets out the priorities for the District which the Local Plan will seek to address in the future, together with its preferred approach.

1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) confirms at Paragraph 31 that "the preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. This should be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned, and take into account relevant market signals." Furthermore, during the preparation of new Local Plans, Local Planning Authorities should consider the tests of soundness which are set out Paragraph 35, including:

- ***"Positively prepared*** – *providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the areas objectively assessed needs, and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;*
- ***Justified*** – *an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;*
- ***Effective*** – *deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and*
- ***Consistent with national policy*** – *enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant."*

- 1.5 The tests of soundness are applied to strategic policies, and also non-strategic policies, although the latter in a proportionate manner. With this in mind, the tests form the basis of our comments as set out below.

## 2. Response to the Draft Vision and Preferred Options Consultation Document

### Canterbury City Council Proposed Draft Vision, Objectives & Growth Options

#### Draft Vision

- 2.1 Paragraph 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area. The vision should provide the framework for which strategic objectives and planning policies should be development. This is further underpinned by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), Plan-making at Paragraph 001 (Reference ID: 61-001-20190315), which states that a Plan's vision should set out the framework for development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure as well as the basis for conserving the natural and historic environment, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and achieving well designed places.
- 2.2 CCC's Sustainability Appraisal (SA, May 2021) has found that the Draft Vision is broadly supportive of the identified objectives although some possible incompatibility and uncertainties have been identified. These largely relate to the need for the further development of policies or the reliance on the specific implementation of the Local Plan. The University note these conclusions and will continue to monitor the development of the Plan in relation to the SA as the Plan progress through the plan-making process.
- 2.3 The University are supportive, in principle, of the draft vision as set out in the consultation material. It is their view that the vision meets the requirements set out in the NPPF and PPG and the SA supports its general direction of travel. In particular, support is given towards the focus on developing a strong and resilient economy and the role the University has in achieving this, together with Canterbury being the central point for which growth will be focused.
- 2.4 The focus of growth at Canterbury is supported due to its conformity with the NPPF, which has a general thread running through the whole Framework whereby development should be focused in the most sustainable locations i.e. where transport, access to amenities, services and local community facilities are easily available, and where the impacts of the development on environmental and biodiverse habitats, species, flora and fauna would ensure their continued enhancement. It is the University's view that Canterbury, as the largest centre in the District, represents the most appropriate focus for development and indeed the overarching vision for the emerging Local Plan.

- 2.5 The Vision is silent on the operating period of the plan, other than a reference to 2040. We recommend that this is updated to specifically clarify the operating period of the plan from year X to year Y. Furthermore, in order to accord with NPPF para 22, it may be necessary for the Vision to look further ahead beyond the operating period of the plan (30+ years).
- 2.6 In order for the Vision to be achieved, it is essential that the strategic objectives and preferred options (and policies to be subsequently formulated in the new local plan) are fully aligned. As we discuss in more detailed responses to the consultation questions raised through the available Local Plan material, the University has an important part to play in the delivery of the new local plan. Achieving the Vision is dependant on ensuring the future economic resilience of the University which is dependant on the new local plan allocating its surplus landholdings for housing development. Refer to separate report 'Sustainable Development Opportunity – The University of Kent' which forms part of the University's representations and which explains this further.

### **The Strategic Objectives**

- 2.7 The University is generally supportive of the proposed Strategic Objectives on the basis that they are aligned with the Vision and are of the view that they would contribute towards the Plan being found sound during examination i.e. that they have been underpinned by the relevant supporting evidence base and so are positively prepared, justified and also effective.
- 2.8 Notwithstanding the above, and in order to strengthen the proposed objectives we would make the following recommendations:
- The consultation material does not explicitly state what the operating period of the new Local Plan is to be. It suggests that it is going to cover the period to 2040, but there is no start date. In order to be effective, positively prepared, justified, and in accordance with national policy the operating period of the plan from year X to year Y should be clearly stated, with all policies aligning with this (therefore we recommend it is included either in the Vision of the Strategic Objectives).
  - In order to be positively prepared and justified, the objectives should be more specific in terms of the minimum number of new homes that the new Local Plan seeks to deliver over the Plan period. This figure should represent the full assessed needs identified in the Housing Needs Assessment (May 2021).
  - In order to secure the economic resilience of the University for the duration of the Plan period, the fourth objective should be reworded as follows: *"Support the growth, development and*

*economic resilience of our universities as centres of innovation and learning excellence which will help create business start-ups and skilled jobs.”*

- 2.9 Achieving the Strategic Objectives will be dependant on the new Local Plan allocating land at the University for development (refer to separate report ‘Sustainable Development Opportunity – The University of Kent’ which forms part of the University’s representations).

### **Growth Options**

- 2.10 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF provides the basis for the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Parts a) and b) of the policy wording address what this means for plan-making, with Part b) confirming that strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses. Paragraph 61 further confirms that in order to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance, unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals.
- 2.11 The PPG confirms that housing need is an unconstrained assessment of the number of homes needed in an area and assessing housing need is the first step in the process of deciding how many homes need to be planned for (Housing and economy development needs, Paragraph 001, Reference ID: 2a-001020190220). The standard method, as set out in the guidance, identifies a minimum annual housing need figure that should subsequently be used as the starting point for determining how many homes to plan for. In order to be positively prepared, the emerging planning context should meet this housing need in full, unless exceptional circumstances demonstrate otherwise.
- 2.12 CCC have prepared a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA, May 2021) which forms the evidence base for the emerging Plan and considers whether there are exceptional circumstances which would result in the application of alternative means for calculating housing land supply i.e. whether there is sufficient justification for CCC to use a different calculation for determining housing need. Paragraph 2.19 of the HNA confirms that *“the latest ONS revision to fertility, mortality and international migration estimates are important demographic changes, but they apply to all LPAs, making it difficult to identify exceptional circumstances for Canterbury alone.”* There are no other reasons included within the HNA conclusions which demonstrate exceptional circumstances. The standard methodology for calculating housing need should therefore be applied. On the basis of the HNA, this equates to **1,120** dwellings per year for Canterbury over the plan period.

- 2.13 The consultation material does not confirm the operating period of the new Local Plan. In accordance with NPPF Paragraph 22, its strategic policies should cover a minimum of 15 years. The preferred option includes growth to be delivered through the expansion of the city and new communities. The minimum housing requirement for the plan period should be derived from the 1,120/annum figure, which equates to a minimum housing requirement of 16,800 homes (15-year) period
- 2.14 The preferred option includes for 14,000-17,000 new homes. In order to be justified and positively prepared this should be revised to a minimum of 16,800 homes over a 15-year period, increasing at a rate of 1,120 homes for each year that the plan period extends beyond 15-years.
- 2.15 The Council's SA confirms that all the proposed growth options would meet the local housing need identified, however the actual figure used should be confirmed on the basis of the above comments to determine if this is correct.
- 2.16 It is important that the new Plan identifies a sufficient supply of land to meet assessed housing needs in full, unless there are exceptional reasons why this cannot be achieved in order to ensure the effectiveness of the plan (not least consistency with the national policy context), in accordance with Paragraph 68, NPPF, 2021. The University note that the CCC currently have an unconstrained land supply submitted to the Call for Sites exercises (2020 and 2021). This supply is due to be tested as part of the Council's Strategic Land Availability Assessment and subsequent site selection process (due Autumn 2021). At this point in time we are not aware of any land supply evidence that would indicate that needs cannot be met in full.
- 2.17 Notwithstanding the above, the University is of the view that the preferred option is the most appropriate growth option from a spatial perspective, and is in accordance with the NPPF which intimates that growth should be directed to locations which are the most sustainable, including those that are well served by public transport connections, close to existing amenities and local facilities, and would support and enhance existing environmental and biodiverse features. With this in mind, the University are of the view that the preferred option is the most sustainable option as Canterbury is the highest tier settlement in the District and therefore presents significant opportunities to achieve a number of the objectives underpinning the Local Plan Vision, specifically those relating to:
- the creation of a thriving economy (objective 3);
  - support the growth, development, and resilience of the university (objective 4);
  - reduce reliance on private transport modes and provide support for low carbon travel (objective 5);
  - the concept of the 15-minute settlement (objective 6);

- capitalise on the rich and distinctive heritage and culture of the city (objective 8); and
- reductions in impacts relating to climate change (objective 12).

2.18 In order to ensure that the preferred option is progressed on a sound basis, it will be necessary to update this to account for the following key points:

- The application of the standard methodology for calculating housing need in relation to the proposed growth options;
- The proposed Plan period; and
- Whether there is a sufficient supply of deliverable housing sites to meet housing needs in full in years 1-5, followed by a sufficient supply of developable sites for years 5-15.

2.19 To conclude, the University is supportive of the Preferred Growth Option (C) from a spatial perspective. Achieving this will be dependant on the new Local Plan allocating land at the University for development (refer to separate report 'Sustainable Development Opportunity – The University of Kent' which forms part of the University's representations).

## Town Centre Strategies

2.20 The University supports the draft Vision for Canterbury City Centre. However, in order for this to be achievable it is essential that other policies in the Plan are formulated in a manner that supports it, particularly housing and economy policies which will drive the centre's catchment area expenditure capacity and profile which will drive town centre vitality and viability. Key to this will be ensuring that the Local Plan supports the long term economic resilience of the University due to the significant contribution that the University's presence makes to the vitality and viability of the town centre via student, staff and visitor expenditure on retail, hotels, evening economy etc. This is dependant on the new Local plan including appropriate allocations for its surplus landholdings (refer to separate report 'Sustainable Development Opportunity – The University of Kent' which forms part of the University's representations).

2.21 The University recommends that the significant contribution that its student / staff population makes to the District's, and specifically Canterbury's, economy should be accounted for as part of the formulation of policies for the city centre. It is an important contributor when considered against the city's high footfall and the aspirations to build on its success as the key visitor and shopping destination in Kent; enhancing its creative and cultural offer; and improving its commercial offer, specifically in relation to the development of further research and development facilities and a conference hotel.

- 2.22 *The Economic Impact of the University of Kent* (prepared by Viewforth Consulting Ltd, April 2018) demonstrates the economic impact of the University's presence. A snapshot of these benefits was provided in the University's *Response to Canterbury City Council's: Our Future District 2040 Consultation (September 2020)*, but is replicated below for ease of reference.
- 2.23 This demonstrates the direct and indirect economic impact the University in terms of gross value added at a local and regional level.

	Canterbury	Kent	South East Region	UK
Output	£342.9m (directly or through secondary effects) Additional £142.9m generated by student expenditure <b>Total: £485.7m</b>	£423.1 (directly or through secondary effects) Additional £211.4 generated by student expenditure <b>Total: £634.5m</b>	£549.7 (directly or through secondary effects) Additional £357.9m generated by student expenditure <b>Total: £907.6m</b>	£594.3m (directly or through secondary effects) Additional £371.8m generated by student expenditure <b>Total: £966.1m</b>
Employment	2,969 FTE (direct jobs) 1,166 FTE (indirect) jobs 1,242 FTE generated by student expenditure <b>Total: 5,377 FTE jobs</b> in Canterbury are dependent on the University (10% of Canterbury employment)	4,988 FTE (direct & indirect) jobs 1,837 FTE generated by student expenditure <b>Total: 6,825 FTE jobs</b> in Kent are dependent on the University (1.4% of Kent employment)	6,338 FTE (direct & indirect) jobs 3,110 FTE generated by student expenditure <b>Total: 9,448 FTE jobs</b> in the South East Region are dependent on the University (0.19% of South East employment)	6,706 FTE (direct & indirect) jobs 3,206 FTE generated by student expenditure <b>Total: 9,912 FTE jobs</b> in the UK are dependent on the University
GVA	£208.5m (directly or through knock-on effects)	£208.5m (directly or through knock-on effects)	£320.6m (directly or through knock-on effects)	£342.1m (directly or through knock-on effects)

	£67.3m generated by student expenditure <b>Total: £275.8m</b> (9% of Canterbury's GVA)	£67.3m generated by student expenditure <b>Total: £275.8m</b> (9% of Canterbury's GVA)	£168.5m generated by student expenditure <b>Total: £489.1m</b> (0.2% of South East GVA)	£174.2m generated by student expenditure <b>Total: £516.4m</b>
Export Earnings (2015/15)	<p>Non-EU students: paid £36.4m in fees  EU students: paid £13.4m in fees.  Research related: The University earned £14.5m for research and other services paid from international sources.  International student spending: estimated at £77.4m of off-campus personal spending  <b>Total: £141.7m in export earnings.</b></p>			

- 2.24 The importance of the University in underpinning the future Town Centre Strategy for Canterbury is therefore fundamental and it plays an important role in maintaining and improving its vitality and viability. Within the Plan and indeed the Town Centre Strategy itself, support should be given for the continued growth and development of the University.
- 2.25 It should be noted that the emerging strategy and vision for Canterbury and indeed other towns within the district (Herne Bay and Whitstable) should not restrict the delivery of other centres at a local level coming forward and in support of future residential development. In order to meet the aspirations of the overarching vision for the Plan this will be necessary to ensure the sustainable development of new communities; meeting the required housing needs; and ensuring the factors associated with climate change, the 15-minute City, and reductions in the need for private car ownership can be realised.

## Housing and New Communities

Issue HNC1. How should we make sure the right types and tenures of housing are provided?

***Options HNC1A – Continue current approach to allow some flexibility for developers to provide a mix of homes within a broad range.***

***Options HNC1B – Set specific housing mix targets which each site must deliver based on the identified needs for size, type and tenure, across different parts of the district.***

***Option HNC1C – (Preferred Option) Set specific housing mix targets which each site must deliver and identify opportunity sites for specific types or tenures.***

- 2.26 Paragraph 62 of the NPPF sets out that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.
- 2.27 The Canterbury City Council Housing Needs Assessment (May 2021) confirms the dwelling mix requirements by tenure, type and size for the District as a whole.
- 2.28 When considering how to most effectively 'reflect' these needs in local plan policies it is essential that policies strike an appropriate balance between the need to impose controls (to meet needs) but without being so overly prescriptive that this might prejudice deliverability. In order to be effective, policies formulated now should be capable of continuing to be effective over a 15-year period – in practice this means that they must include flexibility to account for unknown site specific circumstances, market conditions and so on.
- 2.29 Accordingly, it is our view that specifying a housing mix on a site by site basis in policy would go well beyond what is required by NPPF para 62 and would limit the effectiveness of the plan and would therefore not be sound. Having regard to the alternative options, in our view Option HNC1 would be the most effective (and therefore sound) approach.

Issue HNC3. How should we provide opportunities for suitable brownfield and regeneration developments?

***Option HNC3A – continue with the current approach to brownfield sites***

***Option HNC3B (preferred option) – maximise opportunities for delivery of suitable brownfield and regeneration developments***

- 2.30 We consider the preferred option to be a broadly sound approach to policy-making concerning the maximisation of housing delivery on suitable brownfield and regeneration sites. However, we also

stress the requirement for suitable greenfield sites to be allocated for housing within the new Local Plan, and to be allowed to be brought forward in parallel with Brownfield sites (i.e. there should be no sequential controls). Our reasoning for this is set out in further detail below.

- 2.31 Paragraph 119 of the NPPF (2021) confirms planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.
- 2.32 Paragraph 120d) states that substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs.
- 2.33 These policies are underpinned by the PPG which provides the mechanism for ensuring up-to-date and consistent information on brownfield sites that authorities consider appropriate for residential development. Any brownfield or previously developed land that is suitable for residential development should be included on the relevant authority's Brownfield Land Register. The criteria for inclusion requires sites to be of at least 0.25 hectares or capable of supporting at least five or more dwellings; the land is suitable for residential development; is available for development; and that residential redevelopment of the land is achievable.
- 2.34 At the time of writing, CCC's register indicates there are 52 sites within the district that are capable of meeting the criteria, highlighting a potential maximum delivery of 1,433 residential dwellings. Of the 52 sites, 33 are identified as having planning permission, whilst the remaining 19 have not yet been brought forward i.e. no planning applications have been submitted. The remaining 19 sites would, as per the register, be able to deliver a maximum total of 521 dwellings.
- 2.35 With the above in mind, and as a result of the application of the Government's standard methodology for calculating housing need, together with an assessment of available land supply, the Council have identified a need for the release of extensive Greenfield sites in order to ensure the district's housing needs can be met. This is further quantified by CCC's recent Call for Sites exercise.
- 2.36 With this in mind, the University agrees that the new Local Plan should support the regeneration of previously developed land. However, the evidence on development need and the potential supply of deliverable/developable land is clear that there is a need to bring forward significant greenfield land to meet development needs, particularly for housing, including in years 1-5 of the plan period. Accordingly, the inclusion of a 'brownfield-first' policy in the plan cannot be justified and policies must

allow greenfield land to come forward for development at the same time as previously developed land.

Issue HNC4: How should we make sure that the right densities are delivered in development across the district?

***Option HNC4A – continue current approach of influencing site density through good design***

***Option HNC4B – identify a minimum density for the district as a whole, and continue the current approach of influencing site density through good design.***

***Option HNC4C (preferred option) – set specific densities, or a range of densities, for areas of the district to make best use of the land. Site allocation densities would be influenced by the local distinctiveness and character so that housing fits in with surroundings***

- 2.37 The effective use of land is promoted at Chapter 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraphs 124 – 125 discuss how appropriate densities can be achieved, noting at Paragraph 124 that planning policies should support development that takes account of the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it; local market conditions and viability; the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services; the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting; and the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.
- 2.38 Paragraph 125 further notes that area-based character assessment, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently whilst also creating beautiful and sustainable places. The policy confirms that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.
- 2.39 Part b) of Paragraph 125 notes that the use of minimum density standards should be used in these circumstances for part of the plan area, and that it may be appropriate to set out a range of densities that reflect the accessibility and potential of different areas, rather than one broad density range.
- 2.40 The Housing Needs Assessment (May 2021) does not include an analysis on the density requirements for the Plan period, and so in order to be found sound, policies relating to housing densities should be underpinned by clear evidence which demonstrates that an appropriate strategy to meet the objectively assessed housing need has been developed.

2.41 Whilst the University understands the aspirations of the preferred option (HNC4C), in order for this to be sound approach in policy terms it will be important that it is not overly prescriptive. The key will be to include minimum density targets at an area-wide level, but no caps, with a design led approach being the most appropriate mechanism to determining the most appropriate densities on a site specific basis.

Issue HNC7. How should we make sure all design is high quality?

***Option HNC7A – continue current criteria based approach to design***

***Option HNC7B – use the new National Design Guide and National Model Design Code***

***Option HNC7C (preferred option) – embed master plans and design requirements for strategic development sites in the Local Plan, and continue current design criteria based approach for other sites and types of development; setting out when specific design tools like design codes should be used***

2.42 The degree to which the Preferred Option would be a sound approach is partly dependent on possible reforms to the planning system being considered by the Government. At this point in time there is significant uncertainty about these reforms. To ensure the effectiveness of the new plan, it should progress on the basis of the current planning system, but with the ability to shift into a reformed system with relative ease if this comes to fruition. This is particularly relevant to strategic allocations if they are to be designated as ‘growth areas’.

2.43 On the basis of the current national policy framework, the key issue is striking an appropriate balance between securing detail in the Local Plan while ensuring future flexibility. With this in mind, in this scenario the University recommends that site specific policies are informed by masterplanning work but that actual masterplans are not included in the Local Plan. Instead, policies can include spatial diagrams and design principles (informed by masterplanning work) , together with the requirement for planning applications to be underpinned by a site-wide masterplan either secured as part of a single site-wide planning application or via a Planning Brief/SPD adopted by the Council. This should make reference to the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.

2.44 This, in our view, avoids over-burdening the plan-making stage with potentially nugatory time-consuming work and better allows the Plan to respond to changing circumstances over its life.

**Issue HNC8. How can we deliver low carbon and energy efficient housing?*****Option HNC8A – continue current approach but with indicative net zero******Option HNC8B – early introduction of Future Homes Standard******Option HNC8C – (preferred option) all new homes delivered to net zero***

- 2.45 Paragraph 153 of the NPPF (2019) confirms that *“plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of community and infrastructure to climate change impacts, inter alia.”*
- 2.46 Paragraph 155 sets out that new plans should: provide a positive strategy for energy from renewable and low carbon energy and heat sources that maximise the potential for suitable development; consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources and supporting infrastructure where this would help secure their development; and identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from.
- 2.47 Subsequently, the Future Homes Standard was consulted on between 01<sup>st</sup> October 2019 and 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020. This was part of a two-stage consultation about the changes to the Building Regulation and covers the wider impacts of Part L, which will require new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency. In feedback following the consultation, the Government confirmed they will allow Council’s to set higher standards in their Local Plans, however, the introduction of the Future Homes Standard is anticipated to make this less necessary.
- 2.48 The Local Plan evidence base currently comprises two studies relating to the carbon emissions of construction and energy standards, together with an evaluation of greenhouse gas emissions for the Local Plan development options based on the spatial development proposals (Development Options Carbon Emissions, April 2020). The latter recommends the implementation of a policy for planned developments to evaluate their embodied carbon emissions; the Council to maintain a register of embodied carbon emission from approved and completed development; the Local Plan to set a net zero operations emissions standards for new development in the District; and life cycle carbon assessments to be undertaken for road infrastructure schemes in accordance with the Highways England SA119 Climate to determine their contribution to district emissions reductions.

- 2.49 The University is supportive of the general thrust of the emerging policy but is of the view that the preferred approach is unsound. In order for it to be found sound, the viability of the proposed policy requirements will need to be tested to ensure they are a deliverable proposition.
- 2.50 It should also be noted that achieving energy efficiency in homes has to be balanced in combination with maintaining the supply of housing required to meet the District's need and thus there are issues wider than those pertaining to viability. The physical deliverability of zero carbon should also be considered, most notably with regard to the reliance of housebuilders on their supply chains. These supply chains need to adapt so that the necessary products are available to meet the proposed standards. The Future Homes Standards is expected to introduce a stepped approach to zero carbon homes allowing this wider transition to be supported. The preferred approach is therefore not consistent with the national approach being suggested by Government and the University would recommend the application of the Building Regulations as the emerging policy requirements is taken forward as the preferred approach. Where developments fail to achieve these requirements onsite, a mechanism for mitigating this shortfall should be embedded into the policy (i.e. a carbon offset fund). The practicalities of such a mechanism would require further viability testing.

Issue HCN11. How and where should we provide new student accommodation?

***Option HNC11A – continue current approach to purpose built student accommodation***

***Option HNC11B – provide purpose built student accommodation only on or near campus, for example within a 5-10 minute walk of the campus***

***Option HNC11C (preferred option) – provide purpose built student accommodation on or near campus, for example a 5-10 minute walk, but also have some flexibility on alternative locations subject to strict criteria***

- 2.51 Paragraph 62 of the NPPF (2021) confirms that plans should account for different groups in the community when assessing the different sizes, types and tenures of housing. This includes, amongst other groups, the student population, which require specialist accommodation.
- 2.52 The Council's Housing Needs Assessment (May 2021) confirms that Canterbury has one of the highest ratios of student to permanent residents in England, at 16.4% compared to the national average of 6%. As a result, there has been an increase in the purpose-built student accommodation section since 2001, with the current estimated supply equating to 8,850 bedspaces. However, the assessment concludes that this increase in PBSA has coincided with a decrease in the number of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) in Canterbury, although the private rented sector does remain an attractive option, especially for domestic students.

- 2.53 The Assessment notes that the demand for student accommodation in the short term is unlikely to rise due to an increase in remote teaching resulting from the COVID19 pandemic. Notwithstanding this and due to higher birth rates in the early 2000s, the number of young adults likely to apply to university in the medium to long term is likely to increase. It is noted the impacts of the pandemic may continue to have an impact of the level of demand for student accommodation and as such this should be kept under review alongside the development of the Plan.
- 2.54 It should be noted that the University has a Council-endorsed masterplan which identifies its direction of travel for the growth of the campus. Whilst not included in the emerging Local Plan evidence base, the masterplan is endorsed by the adopted policy context at LMP7 (and this forms part of the evidence base submitted to the Council by the University as part of its representations to previous local plan consultations) . Paragraph 9.2.2 of the masterplan identifies the need for a further 2,000 student bedspaces so as to provide overseas students with a three-year guarantee of student accommodation during their whole course.
- 2.55 The masterplan identifies several suitable locations for the development of student accommodation, including within the University's Main Retained Campus..
- 2.56 With this in mind, there is evidenced need for a specific policy supporting the delivery of student accommodation in the District. The University therefore supports, in principle, the preferred option (HNC11C) and considers this be a 'sound' approach to addresses these matters.
- 2.57 It should be noted that, as the key operator of higher education services within the district, the University has identified sufficient land within its retained campus for higher education uses including those relating to student accommodation. The Council have been made aware of this through the previous Call for Sites exercises undertaken in 2020 and 2021.
- 2.58 The acceptability of alternative locations for student housing should be judged on sustainability grounds – particularly connectivity via public transport, walking or cycling to the University.

Issues HCN16. How can we make sure that infrastructure is delivered at the right time to support development?

***Option HNC16A – continue current approach to infrastructure delivery***

***Option HNC16B – set clear requirements that necessary infrastructure must be provided at the right time to address the impacts of development***

***Option HNC16C (preferred option) – set clear requirements for necessary infrastructure to be provided at the right time and explore opportunities to deliver critical infrastructure ahead of development***

- 2.59 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat). Furthermore, Paragraph 72 confirms *“the supply of large number of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and design and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes.”* Planning policies should also seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment (Paragraph 82 (c)).
- 2.60 CCC’s SA confirms that significant positive effects are assessed for all of the options presented, however, Option C would identify specific allocations for infrastructure and set criteria for the development of this infrastructure which *“would provide opportunities to take account of environmental constraints in the siting of infrastructure and to ensure that criteria help to avoid any negative environmental effect from the development of infrastructure.”* Further environmental enhancements might be identified as a result of good design. Due to the uncertainty associated with the location of development some unknown effects are demonstrated.
- 2.61 On the basis of the above, the University is supportive of the ambitions of the preferred option (HNC16C) and considers this to be a sound approach to addressing these matters. However, further evidence on whether it is a deliverable option would need to be prepared by CCC in order to assess whether the requirement of infrastructure provision upfront will reduce the viability of a development, including its ability to provide affordable housing.

Issue HNC17. How should we address changes in development viability at the planning application stage?

***Option HNC17A – continue current approach to accepting viability assessments***

***Option HNC17B – no new viability evidence is accepted at planning application stage***

***Option HNC17C (preferred option) – set clear and limited criteria where new viability evidence is accepted at planning application stage***

- 2.62 Paragraph 34 of the NPPF confirms *“plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure).”* Importantly, the policies contained within a Local Plan *“should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.”*
- 2.63 The PPG provides additional guidance for the plan-making process noting *“these policy requirements should be informed by evidence of infrastructure and affordable housing need, and a proportionate assessment of viability that takes into account all relevant policies, and local national stands, including the cost implication of the Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106. Policy requirements should be clear so that they can be accurately accounted for in the price paid for land.”* (Paragraph 001, Reference ID: 10-001-201905905).
- 2.64 Local Plan policies should therefore be viability tested to ensure that they are deliverable at the point in time which the Plan is adopted. The policies must incorporate sufficient flexibility to account for unknown changes that will occur over the life of the Plan, and unknown site specific issues, to ensure they are effective. Unknown changes may include (but are not limited to): build costs, finance costs, fee, sales values, and site-specific technical constraints.
- 2.65 It is the University’s view that a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing changes in viability is not capable of taking account of site-specific viability issues, and as a result, key values cannot be fixed through the Local Plan as these will vary over the course of the Plan period and on a site by site basis.
- 2.66 The University understands the aspirations of the proposed policy and the preferred options, however, recommends that the policy wording sets out clear requirements in relation to viability, but if these requirements are not met then the viability tested route set out in the PPG should be followed. This would help to ensure that emerging viability-focussed policies within the emerging Local Plan were ‘sound’ in accordance with relevant criteria within the NPPF.

## Employment and the Local Economy

Issue EMP6. How should we support the development of our universities?

***Option EMP6A – Continue with current approach to university development***

***Option EMP6B (preferred option) – Align the Local Plan with the growth plans of the universities***

- 2.67 We fully support CCC's aspiration to ensure that the development needs of the District's universities are robustly addressed through the new Local Plan. In our view, Option EMP6B comprises an sound response to this matter.
- 2.68 Through engagement with relevant higher education establishments, and through understanding the specific needs, requirements and challenges facing this sector more widely, the planning process can help ensure that the future economic competitiveness of the District's Universities is bolstered.
- 2.69 As set out within the accompanying report (titled 'Sustainable Development Opportunity – the University of Kent', July 2021), the University has identified parts of its landholdings as being suitable, available and achievable for redevelopment in the future (including for residential-led development). As such, we consider the future allocation of the University's landholdings to be fundamental to the soundness and deliverability of the emerging Local Plan's policies regarding Universities, the economy, town centres, and housing.). Overall, we consider the University's landholdings to comprise a 'unique opportunity to achieve sustainable development within Canterbury.
- 2.70 We would also welcome the inclusion of a site-specific allocation and policy being included within the future Local Plan which is geared towards the University's retained campus. This approach would allow for university-related development to come forward on the main campus as part of a wider and comprehensively masterplanned process. This could align with the University's wider growth plan, in due course.

## Movement and Transport

Issue MT1. How can we maximise active travel in the district?

***Option MT1A – continue with the current approach to safeguard pedestrian and cycle routes***

***Option MT1B – (preferred option) all new developments must show how they will maximise opportunities for walking and cycling***

- 2.71 In accordance with NPPF Paragraph 104, we fully support aspiration to ensure that new active travel is maximised within the District and that healthy lifestyles are promoted through new development.

2.72 We support the Preferred Option (MT1B), which would require all new developments to demonstrate how walking and cycling can be maximised within the District. We consider this to be a sound approach to policy-making concerning these matters.

Issue MT2. How do we support greater use of public transport in the district?

***Option MT2A – continue with the current approach to bus improvements***

***Option MT2B – (preferred option) all major developments must show how they will maximise access to the existing local bus network***

2.73 We broadly support the Preferred Option (MT2B) insofar as we consider that new major developments should demonstrate how they will maximise access to the existing local bus network. We consider that this matter could be considered as part of a high-quality and masterplan-led design process concerning major development schemes, to help ensure that these integrate well with local public transport services and are well connected to Canterbury City Centre and other key centres and locations within the District. This approach would help to ensure that any associated emerging Local Plan policy was sound (in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF).

Issue MT3. How will we support the rapid transition to zero emissions vehicles?

***Option MT3A – continue with the existing approach to electric vehicle infrastructure***

***Option MT3B – (preferred option) accelerated transition to zero emissions vehicles***

2.74 We broadly support the Council's policy aspiration to promote the use of zero emissions vehicles within the District. Through the planning process, this could be secured through policies requiring provision of electric vehicle charging points. For larger strategic developments, green travel plans could also be required for submission as part of a planning application process in due course.

2.75 We do not consider there to be a 'one size fits all' approach to this matter. However, planning policies should be worded flexibly to require applicants to demonstrate how the use of low emissions vehicles will be promoted through their development at masterplanning and/or application stage. In our view, this approach would help to ensure that any emerging associated planning policies accorded with the tests of soundness set out within the NPPF.

2.76 The current approach within the Borough requires 10% electric vehicle charging points to be delivered within new development, whereas Preferred Option MT3B would required 20% 'active' provision of electric vehicle charging points and 20% passive infrastructure (i.e. development enabled to increase provision of EV charging points over time and as the development matures). In our view,

this option could provide the flexibility to ensure that new development schemes optimise their ability to facilitate the transition to zero emission vehicles in the future.

Issue MT4. How should we set parking standards in the Local Plan?

***Option MT4A – continue with the current approach to parking standards***

***Option MT4B – remove parking standards and adopt a more flexible approach to specific sites***

***Option MT4C – (preferred option) amend the current parking standards to significantly reduce car parking in the most sustainable locations, and to allow for enough spaces in suburban areas***

2.77 Option MT4C would seek to change the current parking standards within the District to reflect the shift towards restricting parking in the most sustainable and accessible locations, such as town centres and close to transport hubs (whilst recognising that additional parking may be required in suburban locations). This Option would also seek to optimise cycle parking provision within new development. In our view, this Preferred Option appears to be a sound approach at this stage.

Issue MT5. How should we produce transport assessments, transport statements and travel plans?

***Option MT5A – continue with the current approach to transport assessments and travel plans***

***Option MT5B – all major developments must submit transport assessments and travel plans***

***Option MT5C – (preferred option) all major developments must submit transport assessments and travel plans, with additional criteria to cover other types of development which could have significant impacts on the network, and all minor developments would have to submit transport statements***

2.78 We consider Preferred Option MT5C to be a sound approach at this stage.

## Historic and Natural Environment

Issue NE1. How can we protect and enhance our heritage assets?

***Option NE1A (preferred option) – continue with the current Local Plan approach***

***Option NE1B – make changes to the current Local Plan policies***

2.79 Option NE1 (the current approach) ensures that the Local Plan sets out detailed policies concerning a hierarchy of designated heritage assets within the District, namely the World Heritage Site (incl. its

associated buffer zone and views to/from this asset) and other heritage assets including listed buildings, conservation areas, shopfronts, archaeology and historic landscapes, parks and gardens.

- 2.80 In accordance with Paragraph 190 of the NPPF, Local Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In accordance with Paragraph 201 of the NPPF, LPAs should ensure that any substantial harm caused to the setting and/or character of designated heritage assets be justified (and outweighed) by the planning benefits associated with the proposals (or otherwise planning permission should be refused).
- 2.81 Given the above, we consider that the LPA's current policy approach (and preferred option NE1A) to be a sound approach concerning the protection and enhancement of heritage assets within Canterbury.

Issue NE3. How should we protect and enhance biodiversity and green and blue infrastructure?

***Option NE3A: continue with the current Local Plan approach of new developments providing and extending green infrastructure (including trees) where they can, and set a 10% biodiversity net gain requirement***

***Option NE3B – require new developments to enhance existing, or provide new, green infrastructure to conserve, and where possible enhance blue infrastructure, plus a 10% biodiversity net gain***

***Option NE3C (preferred option) – require new developments to enhance existing, or provide new, green infrastructure to conserve, and where possible enhance blue infrastructure, plus a 20% biodiversity net gain***

- 2.82 We do not consider the preferred option to be a sound approach to policy-making concerning biodiversity net gain. Our reasoning for this is set out below.
- 2.83 At a national level, NPPF Paragraph 179 identifies that Local Plans should “*promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity*”.
- 2.84 Whilst the NPPF does not apply a strict threshold to the level/amount of biodiversity net gain which should be achieved in new development, a minimum 10% gain requirement is set out within the Environment Bill 2020 (which is due to become law from 2023 onwards).
- 2.85 We consider that, in order to comprise a ‘sound’ policy approach in due course, the new Local Plan should seek to accord with the requirements currently set out in national planning policy and any subsequent policy targets that may come into force pursuant to the emerging Environment Bill.

Issue NE4. How should we make sure that the local landscape designations (areas of high landscape value) continue to protect our valued landscapes?

***Option NE4G – keep the Blean Woods LLD as identified within the existing Local Plan***

***Option NE4H – keep the Blean Woods LLD with boundary changes 1 – 4 and 5i***

***Option NE4I – keep the Blean Woods LLD with boundary modifications 1 – 4 and 5ii***

***Option NE4J – keep the Blean Woods LLD with boundary changes 1 – 4, and 5iii (Tyler Hill Road)***

***Option NE4K (preferred option) – keep the Blean Woods LLD with boundary changes 1-4, and changes between the University of Kent and Clowes Wood***

2.86 We consider that the existing Local Plan approach, Option NE4G, comprises a sound policy approach to this issue. We do not consider at this stage any boundary changes should be required to the Blean Woods Local Landscape Designation (LDD) Area.

2.87 Some of the proposed options (Options NE4H, NE4I, NE4J) notably seek to scope in additional areas into the Blean Wood LLD. In our view, however, the area between Blean and Tyler Hill is a working, agricultural landscape which includes other uses, roads, footpaths and historic features alongside woodland, hedgerows, fields and streams. Unlike the main part of the existing Blean Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) the area between Blean and Tyler Hill is not heavily wooded and is a more open landscape which accommodates a range of uses. As such, we do not consider it appropriate (nor it to be a sound policy approach) for this area to be included within the Blean Woods LLD area.

Issue NE11. How can we maximise the benefits of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)?

***Option NE11A – keep the current approach to require enough drainage and encourage major developments to design SuDS that include other benefits***

***Option NE11B (preferred option) – encourage all developments to contain SuDS, and also keep the requirement to have enough drainage. Encourage SuDS to be designed to include other benefits and provide information and guidance on the design of them***

2.88 We broadly support the Preferred Option NE11B. However, in accordance with NPPF Paragraph 169, we consider that any emerging policy should acknowledge that in some instances delivery of SuDS may be inappropriate (where justified by clear evidence). This approach would align with Paragraph 169 of the NPPF.

Issue NE12. What should we do about groundwater protections?

***Option NE12A – keep the existing approach of having groundwater protection zones******Option NE12B (preferred option) – set clear requirements for development proposals in groundwater protection zones, nitrate vulnerable zones and drinking water safeguard zones***

- 2.89 We recognise that nitrate levels locally are an increasingly important issue and that emerging Local Plan policies should seek to address these matters. As such, we broadly support Option NE12B.
- 2.90 In our view, emerging Local Plan policies need to include a clear mechanism which allows new development to proactively offset the levels of nitrates which it generates (i.e. such as through creation of a nitrate offsetting fund, or through a County-driven strategy to pool financial contributions, secured through S106 obligations, to help take land out of agricultural use elsewhere in the District as a means of offsetting the levels of local nitrates). It is imperative that this mechanism be agreed ASAP by the LPA and Kent County Council, in order to ensure that these matters do not restrict nor stifle the rate at which local development (and much needed new homes) can be delivered locally.
- 2.91 We would welcome the opportunity to work alongside the Council and County Council to help refine the approach towards archive 'nitrate neutrality' within the District and the through the new Local Plan.

**Sustainability Appraisal**

- 2.92 We note that CCC's Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has also been published for consultation. However, rather than inviting responses to the SA via a questionnaire, CCC has instead invited responded to more broadly comment on up to 5 key topics within the document.
- 2.93 At this stage, we consider the SA's approach to Housing to be the key relevant matter to UoK's current development aspirations. As such, please find our relevant comments below:

***Housing***

- 2.94 The SA identifies that a total of six growth options have been appraised within the District, including a Preferred Option at this stage.
- 2.95 The SA further states that 'all of the above options meet the minimum Local Housing Need figure identified within the Housing Need Assessment'.
- 2.96 We highlight that in December 2020, MHCLG published indicative figures based on the application of the standard method for calculating housing need. For Canterbury City Council, the resultant need is

identified as equating to 1,120 per annum. The Council's Housing Needs Assessment (May 2021) further confirms that on analysis of both the demographic and methodological changes to population estimates which inform the projections used to set the baseline for calculating housing need (Step 1 of the formula), no exceptional circumstances for applying an alternative approach to the calculation were identified. The starting point for Canterbury's housing need is therefore 1,120 per annum.

- 2.97 As per our responses to other questions, , clarity is needed over the duration of the Plan period so as to further interrogate whether the appropriate levels of housing need are quantified within the growth options presented.
- 2.98 Given these circumstances, we consider it unlikely that all of the above Growth Options would sufficiently plan for Canterbury's housing needs. Some of the options identify a minimum of 9,000 new homes to be provided to meet Government targets, however, this would only equate to just over 8 years supply of housing (when a housing need figure of 1,120 is assumed, as per the standard method). Whilst the Local Plan period is currently unclear, we envisage that this document will likely seek to span a longer period than 8 years.
- 2.99 Given the above, and further to CCC's clarification regarding the likely Local Plan period, the above growth options are not all considered to be 'sound' at this stage.

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