

Canterbury City Council

Equalities Impact Assessment

of the

Canterbury District Local Plan

Publication Draft

June 2014



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Context

The Canterbury District Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 sets out the vision and planning strategy up to 2031. The Local Plan is an important document because it will guide the development of the district to 2031 covering homes, businesses, shops, leisure facilities, countryside - in fact everything that contributes to how people live, work, travel and spend their free time within our district.

Our proposed strategy is to strengthen the local economy, ensure that there is sufficient housing to meet local needs, support economic growth and at the same time protect the high quality of our built and natural environment in the area. To enable this, the draft Plan allocates land for development, and aims to ensure that new development is of a high quality, and is supported by adequate transport and other facilities such as schools, health services and so on. Equally important is the need to protect our environment – heritage, countryside, wildlife sites, etc. and ensure the provision of new open space as part of the new developments.

Aims and objectives

The vision for Canterbury District as set out in the Corporate Plan is to create a dynamic strong economy and distinctive cultural and visitor experience from which communities in the District will prosper.

Some of the key actions in the Corporate Plan relate directly to the strategic direction of this Local Plan. These actions include:

- Preparing and delivering a new Local Plan that strengthens and diversifies our economy in our city, towns and villages;
- Making best use of existing land and identifying new opportunities to enable existing businesses to stay and expand and for new businesses to locate to the area;
- Supporting higher and further education organisations to achieve their ambitions and to create jobs for new graduates and others in the local community;
- Through the Council's plans, encouraging and influencing the growth of the economy, especially in the knowledge-based sector;
- Encouraging the building of the right number and type of homes in the right place to support job growth;
- Ensuring the new Local Plan allocates enough land for enough homes to meet the needs of our sustainable communities in the future;

- Ensuring new building development occurs in the right places to support broader travel options and promoting alternatives to reduce traffic across the district; and
- Ensuring that our plans and activities give sufficient protection to heritage sites and the built and natural environment.

The Council recognises that the achievement of this set of actions for the District does not lie solely with the planning system, or indeed only with the Council. The Council recognises the importance of working with partner organisations in the area and for there to be consistency between the policies and strategies of different organisations.

The Council's Corporate Plan has been strongly supported by both local people and local partner organisations. The Council is now working closely with local partners (through the Canterbury Partnership, which acts as an umbrella group for various local partnerships) to seek to achieve the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan, combining the different resources, skills and powers of those organisations.

The Council's vision for the district is that "through focused, well-planned and environmentally sustainable growth, by 2030 the Canterbury District will be defined by a dynamic strong economy and distinctive cultural and visitor experience from which our communities will prosper. As a council we will provide leadership for our community and shape our district through working in partnership to deliver our vision. We are ambitious and will do the best for our people and will be prepared to take the difficult decisions which may be needed when choices have to be made. We will support the growth needed to deliver our ambition of having a strong dynamic economy and a skilled well-paid workforce supported by the quality of life and housing of the appropriate scale and quality."

Local Plan Objectives

- To strengthen and broaden the local economy
- To provide sufficient housing to meet local housing need and support economic growth
- To protect the built and natural environment
- To develop sustainable communities, and seek to ensure that adequate community facilities are provided

To help to realise the strategic vision, the draft Local Plan needs to make available appropriate land for necessary development and create the right conditions in terms of:

- Conditions for business – to start up, attract and retain new businesses;
- Conditions for visitors – to encourage them to visit, to stay and to spend;
- Conditions for residents – to improve quality of life whilst retaining our heritage and natural assets.

The plan also contains proposals and policies to create new communities with good access to jobs and services and new public spaces accessible to all.

Data relating to equalities issues

Basic demographic, social and economic data has been collected to inform the policies and proposals in the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014. Included in part of the process to assess the needs of local people the Council has carried out a Strategic Housing Market Assessment in 2009, workshops with local stakeholder groups and a community stakeholder conference in 2011, public opinion research was carried out in 2011 and 2012 and a residents survey in 2012. In 2013, a public consultation on the preferred Option Local Plan was carried out and in 2014 public meetings took place and a further consultation on the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 which gave everyone in the local area and outside the District, who may have an interest, an opportunity to comment on the policies and proposals in the 2013 preferred option local plan and subsequently the 2014 publication draft local plan. We received a total of 9,491 comments relating to the 2013 and 2014 local plans which reflects the fact that the Council has been proactive in ensuring that the document was available to everyone. This ensured there was equality of opportunity for everyone who wanted to respond and make their comments.

The Council supports the need to promote equality of opportunity for involvement in the planning process therefore hard to reach groups, which include people that do not have time to be involved in the planning system due to other commitments, such as work or family and people that avoid involvement in the planning system because they believe that their input does not have an impact. These include older people, carers, commuters, one parent families, people with disabilities, young people, students, people living on a low income, gypsies and travellers, black & ethnic minority groups, homeless people, people who need help with reading, writing and speaking English, small settlements, isolated rural communities and communities in the rural/urban fringe. These hard to reach groups have been identified and included in the consultation process. The local plan publication draft 2014 was made available in various locations and on the Council website to ensure it was accessible to all. It was also available in different formats and languages if requested to ensure accessibility to all of these groups.

Key baseline studies were also carried out to inform the Draft Local Plan and provide evidence of what will be required.

In 2011, a Development Requirements Study was undertaken by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) (Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners “Canterbury Development Requirements Study” Final Report February 2012) in partnership with Canterbury City Council, with input from Kent County Council’s demography and economic forecasting teams. This considered a number of realistic development scenarios based on different social and economic factors, and also considered the effect of environmental and infrastructure constraints.

The main conclusion of the NLP report was that a significant level of housing would be required to support an increase local labour supply and encourage new job creation and the development of new and innovative industries.

In 2011 and 2012, public opinion research was carried out in the district by Ipsos MORI “Public Opinion Research into Future Development in Canterbury District” February 2012 seeking to understand the opinions of a representative sample of 900 local people in relation to planning and development related issues.

This work demonstrates that there is a significant level of public support for the scale of development set out in this draft Local Plan. There was an expressed desire that higher levels of development should deliver tangible benefits to local people in terms of affordable housing and economic benefits, and providing the opportunity for young people and families to remain in their local area. The majority of respondents also believed that more needed to be done to support local business. The research found that younger residents, a high proportion of who were students were in general more likely to be pro-development. The primary driver for this group is the desire to see more jobs and more employment opportunities in the area. Older people were also in favour of development, however they were concerned about building on greenfield land. The research indicated support for development at Canterbury, Herne Bay and the larger, better-served, villages, but less support for development at Whitstable and the smaller villages.

It is important to ensure that the vision, Plan objectives and policies contained within the draft Local Plan contribute to the aims of sustainable development. This is commonly defined as ensuring that there is a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future. To this end, the Canterbury District Local Plan is subject to a process called Sustainability Appraisal (SA). SA considers the anticipated effects of the Local Plan on the area's environmental, economic and social conditions.

A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the scenarios in the Nathaniel Lichfield Partners report 2012 was carried out by AMEC Environment & Infrastructure. This concluded that Scenario E (the futures preferred option), 780 dwellings per year including the provision of 178 ha of open space offers the greatest potential to achieve the appropriate balance to optimise growth and minimise detrimental environmental effects. A further SA was carried out in 2013 on the Preferred Option Local Plan and in 2014 on the Submission Draft Local Plan.

The conclusions arising from the SA on the Preferred Option Local Plan 2013 and the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 are that the vision is anticipated to have a positive effect on the following SA objectives: Economy and Employment; Rural/Coastal Communities; Access to Services; Housing; and Quality of Life. The Local Plan Submission Draft 2014 objectives reflect the vision's aim of a strong sustainable economy supported by a supply of housing appropriate to the local community's needs.

It is anticipated that the policies of the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have significant positive effects on the SA objectives relating to the following topics: Economy and Employment; Rural/Coastal Communities; Access to Services; Sustainable Living; Design; and Housing. The cumulative effects on the Countryside and Historic Environment SA objective have also been assessed as significant positive as the draft Local Plan policies offer protection to a broad range of designated and non-designated assets of landscape, archaeological and historical value whilst protecting the countryside from adverse effects resulting from development. Significant negative effects are expected in respect of the Natural Resources and Waste, however, these adverse effects can be mitigated and there are a number of policies contained in the draft Local Plan that provide appropriate mitigation.

However, the SA also states that careful consideration should be given to the proposed location of new development to avoid close proximity to (and adverse effects on) sensitive sites (such as SSSIs or heritage designations) and to take

opportunities to maximise innovative design to decrease land-take and resource use of residents to mitigate any potentially significantly negative impacts.

The SA has therefore concluded that the Draft Local Plan 2014 is aiming to ensure that there is a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future.

Consultation

Consultation on the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 included a wide range of methods to ensure as high a level of participation as possible. The consultation methods used sought to ensure maximum participation by the widest number of people from the community.

The details of all the consultations carried out can be found in the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 Consultation Statement that forms part of the background documents.

The consultation included :

- The document being made available at the District offices at Canterbury and Herne Bay and at all of the libraries in the District.
- Copies of the consultation document and associated questionnaire was made available on the Council website. An online comments form was also available and an alert for the consultation will be placed on the main Council Home Page.
- Articles were placed in editions of the Council produced publication District Life, which is distributed to every household in Canterbury District, detailing the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 proposals.
- Public meetings took place in Canterbury, Herne Bay, Whitstable and Sturry.
- Letters and emails were sent out informing all the interested parties that the consultation was taking place and how to comment.
- The Council placed an advertisement in the Kentish Gazette for two weeks at the beginning of the consultation period stating where the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 would be available for inspection and the address to which representations should be sent.

In terms of equality, the Council has already received a comprehensive nature of responses, in relation to the Core Strategy, the Ipsos MORI public opinion research into Future Development in Canterbury District and the Local Plan Preferred Option Draft 2013. The Council also received positive feedback from the consultation events undertaken previously.

This has fed into the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014. This can be seen as a clear indication of a desire among local residents and stakeholders to remain involved in the Local Plan process. It is readily apparent from the detail and length of responses that considerable thought and care has gone into the majority of these replies.

A schedule of the Preferred Option Draft Local Plan 2013 representations has been produced within the consultation statement, this forms part of the background documents. We are aiming to ensure that everyone is involved in the process of producing the Local Plan. As part of the consultation process, the Council also consulted the Development Advisory Panel, who represents disabled and non-disabled people. Their aim is to ensure development is well designed and safe ensuring that services and facilities are accessible by all and that no one is excluded.

Key findings

Having examined the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 against the results of the Ipsos MORI public opinion research, the Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) Canterbury Development Requirements Study, the Local Plan Preferred Option 2013 SA and the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 SA, the following general conclusions have been reached:

The overall objective of the Draft Local Plan is to develop sustainable communities, and seek to ensure that adequate community facilities are provided alongside a sustainable transport plan.

The plan is committed to accessibility and inclusion for all. It is aimed to achieve this through Policy DBE7 to ensure better space standards for housing including a 20% commitment to lifetime homes and Policy DBE8 to meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion with a commitment to high quality building and inclusive design. Policy HD2 states that there is a requirement for housing schemes of 7 or more units to provide 30% affordable housing, this will ensure that housing is available to a wider range of people. The draft local plan is also aiming to provide local employment for local people which should be accessible to all and provision of mixed use and sustainable residential areas.

The quality of life chapter states that 'access to all' and identifying gaps in provision to the wider community is essential to community well being. There is a commitment to create diverse and sustainable communities with specific mention of the needs of disabled people and of maintaining independence by ensuring the services and facilities within the area are accessible to all. The council's objective is to also improve the accessibility for all to open space, community gardens and leisure activities to improve the health, well being and quality of life of the districts residents' and visitors.

Race and Ethnicity

It is considered that the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have a positive impact by promoting equality of opportunity. The Local Plan will promote a better quality of life for everyone, including better social inclusion and accessibility. The plan aims to reduce the need to travel by car and improve the range and quality of local facilities, employment, services and amenities. Gypsies and travellers have been consulted and considered through part of the process and policy HD10 has been formulated to consider planning applications for gypsy and traveller sites. This policy aims to ensure that the site is well related to or within a reasonable distance of local services and facilities therefore promoting social inclusion and equality. A Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document is in the process of being produced.

It is considered that the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have no adverse impacts on promoting good race relations or eliminating unlawful discrimination.

Faith and belief

It is considered that the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have no adverse impacts on faith / belief groups. The plan aims to promote social infrastructure and access to community facilities such as places of worship.

Disability

It is considered that the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have a positive impact on the quality of life of people with a visual or hearing impairment or who are physically and mentally disabled. The Local Plan 2014 will promote better social inclusion and accessibility and ensure 'access to all' to a wide range of services, and in the creation of new public spaces.

The Local Plan aims to improve the design of streets, buildings and public spaces to improve accessibility for all and has included a policy that will require developments to meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion.

It is considered that there will be no adverse impacts on people with a visual or hearing impairment, a learning disability or a physical or mental health disability.

Gender

It is considered that the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have positive impacts on the quality of life of both men and women, particularly for men and women who care for dependent children or elderly/disabled people by providing improved recreational, leisure and community facilities. Clear pedestrian and cycle routes will be provided as part of all new developments and new pedestrian and cycle routes will also be identified as part of the strategic site allocations with links into the urban areas and to the surrounding countryside to ensure ease of accessibility to all.

Gender reassignment

It is considered that there will be no adverse impacts on these groups of people.

Sexual orientation

It is considered that there will have no adverse impacts on any of the sexual orientation groups.

Pregnancy and maternity

The Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have positive impacts on this group of people as the plan will ensure that adequate provision is made for health care facilities arising from the impact of new development. Additional open space and

green infrastructure will also be provided which will help to contribute to health and well-being.

Age

Young people

It is considered that the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have a positive impact on young people's quality of life. In particular, access to additional affordable housing, the potential creation of a significant number of new jobs, support for the Universities, new and improved communities, recreational and leisure facilities will also be provided as well as additional health care facilities related to new development.

Older People

It is considered that the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have a positive impact on older people's quality of life. In particular, new and improved community, recreational and leisure facilities will be provided. Also seeking to ensure that appropriate housing for older and vulnerable people is made available. Additional health care facilities related to new development will also be provided.

Recommendations

This Equality Impact Assessment has identified that the Local Plan Publication Draft 2014 will have positive impacts on the quality of life of race groups, people with a visual or hearing impairment or a physical or mental disability, men and women, young people and older people. It is considered that there will be no adverse impacts on any of the equalities groups.

The Local Plan is aiming to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations.

The recommendations are to achieve this through the policy aims and objectives set out in the Local Plan to improve access to housing, transport including walking and cycling routes, employment, services and facilities, recreation, leisure and community facilities and outdoor activities. There will be provision, enhancement and protection of open spaces and improvement of the public realm. This should all improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to the District now and in the future.