

# **City Life: Balancing the Needs of the Local Community Scrutiny Review**

## **February 2010**

### **1. Introduction**

The City Life Balancing the Needs of the Local Community Scrutiny Review was set up in September 2008 as part of the city council's scrutiny programme. The review was commissioned by the Executive and overseen by the Scrutiny Sub-Committee which is responsible for the scrutiny programme.

The review has been undertaken by a panel of five elected Members supported by an officer team.

The review panel consisted of:

#### **Scrutiny Review Members**

- Councillor Alex Perkins (Chairman)
- Councillor Dixey
- Councillor Jackie Perkins
- Councillor Reuby
- Councillor Windsor

#### **Scrutiny Review Officers**

- Velia Coffey, Director of Community Services (Lead Officer)
- Charlotte Hammersley, Senior Scrutiny and Improvement Officer
- Nick Hughes, Democratic Services Officer

Many other council officers also gave their time as witnesses and provided data for the review. The broad spectrum of witnesses who gave evidence to the panel is set out at Appendix A. Information was also gathered outside of the panel's formal meetings and written evidence provided.

#### **1.2 Information gathering from the public**

Publicity in the local press and District Life magazine and on the council's dedicated scrutiny website was used to publicise the review.

The Panel met on a total of 18 occasions including two site visits to the city centre to see the issues in the early evening and late at night first hand. They also visited the council's CCTV control room. The photographs illustrating this report were taken on the Panel's visits.

## 2. Reason for review

The purpose of the review was that, whilst the council has many different policies for the city centre, they are not co-ordinated effectively with an overall vision to guide the development and management of the city.

The scope of the review was agreed by the Scrutiny Sub-Committee at its meeting in September 2008. The scope is set out in full at Appendix B.

The importance of this issue is highlighted by the number of different key services and services users that have an interest in the city centre. For example, various services have a role to play in the city's public realm as the table below demonstrates:

<b>Council Services</b>	<b>Role in city centre</b>
Development Control	Planning permission
Regeneration & Economic Development	Tourism, conservation, town centre management, planning policy and regeneration.
Transportation	Parking and traffic schemes.
Environment & Street Scene	Litter, graffiti, bins.
Licensing	Licensing entertainment premises and activities such as live music and dance.
Culture	Festivals, street entertainment, museums.
Kent Highways	Roads, pavements, street furniture, lighting and subways.
Utility companies	Gas, water, electricity etc.

In addition to the residents who use and live in the city centre, there are also many other services and service users who operate in the area including:, tourists, higher education institutes and students, the Cathedral, businesses, shops and the police. This makes the city a complex environment.

The Panel were tasked with examining how the council and its partners currently operate in the city centre and to give guidance on a strategic approach for the future management and development of the city centre. Given the complexity of the topic, it was agreed that the review would take an in-depth look at all the issues.

The development of the city centre has previously been subject to a short topic scrutiny review. That review made recommendations for further work to be carried out, namely that a city centre policy should be developed by the council together with its partners and guided by Members. In addition, a concept study of the city centre "*Canterbury: city of imagination – the yellow book report*" was conducted in 2004. From the study, an action plan was devised. However, the study was never formally adopted as a council policy.

The panel aimed to consider and where appropriate take forward the recommendations from the city centre review and consider which of the outstanding actions from the Yellow Book report should be implemented.

### **3. Background**

#### **3.1 Canterbury City Centre profile**

#### **3.2 Review area**

The Panel decided from the outset that for the purposes of the review it was important to define the city centre geographically. The area was defined as:

*The Ring Road, within the City Walls, Palace Street to the Borough, Lady Woottons Green, North Lane, up to the railway crossing in St Dunstan's and Station Road East.*

The map on page 4 shows the review area:

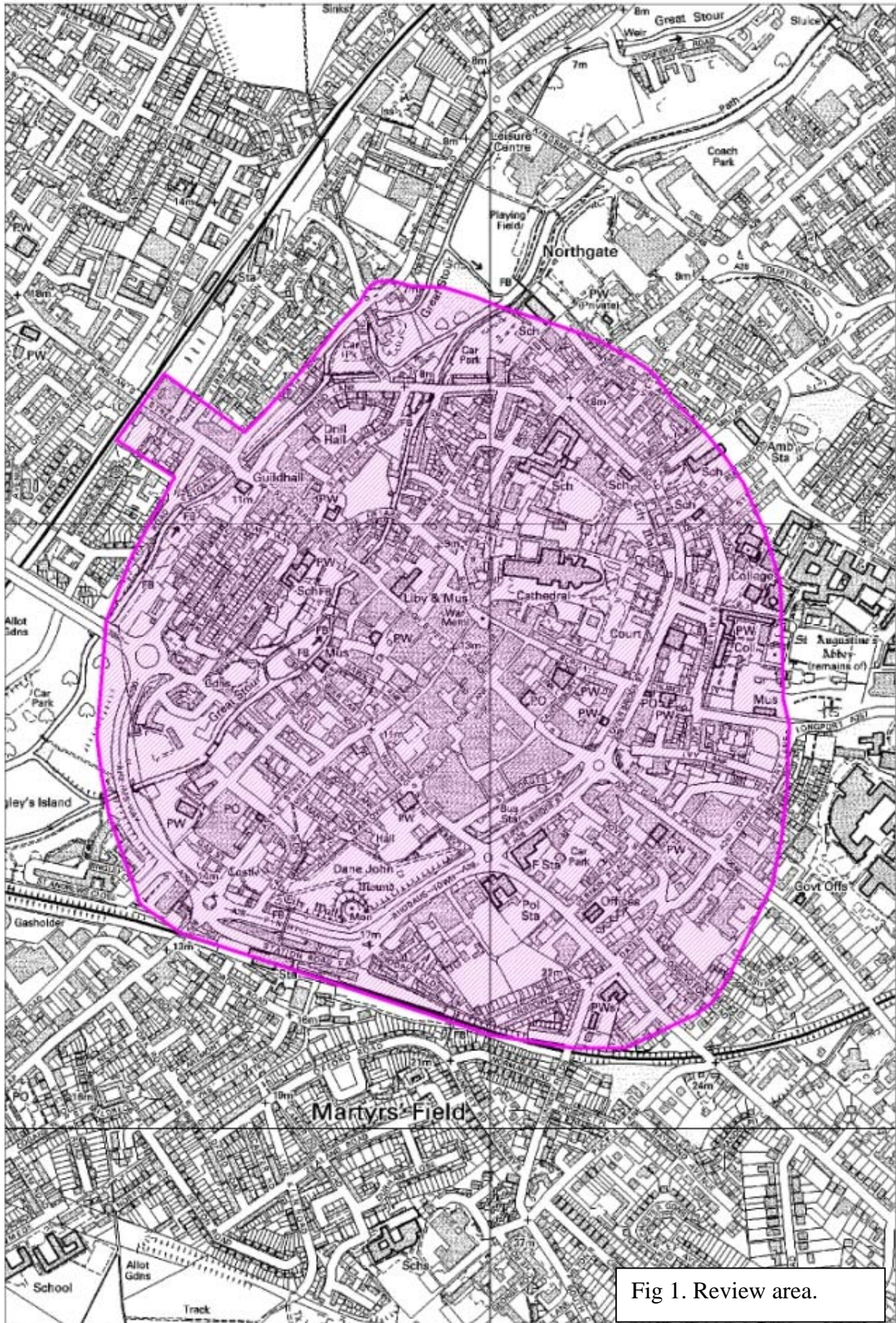
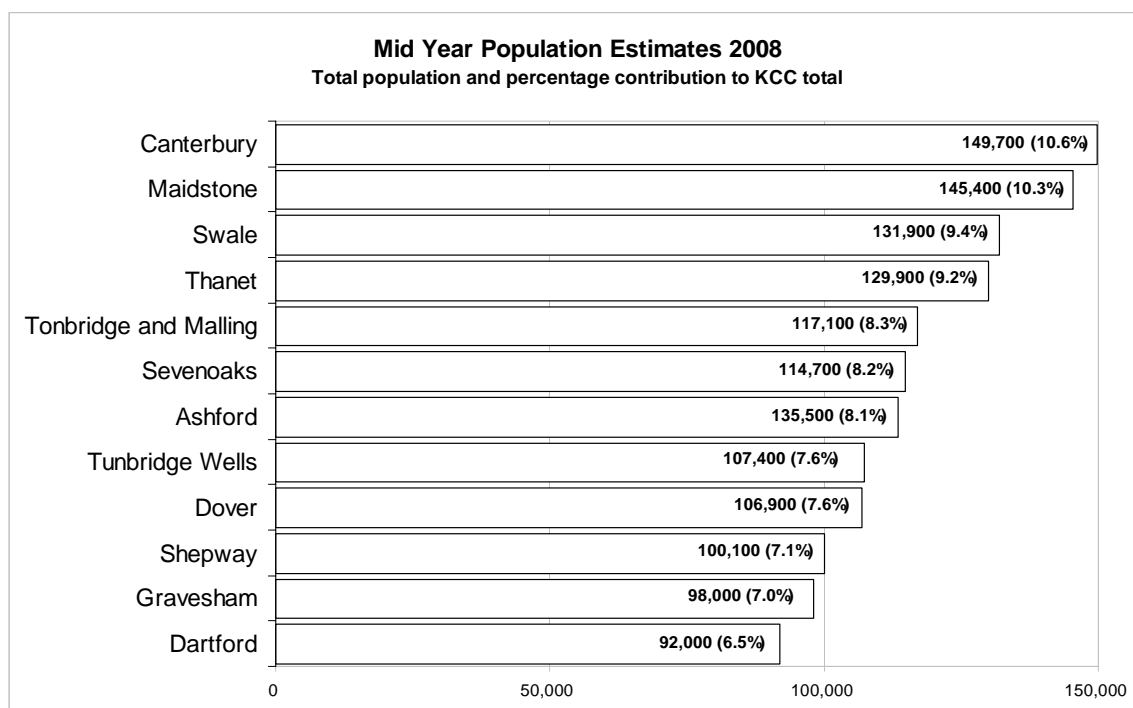


Fig 1. Review area.

### 3.3 Residential population

Canterbury City Council has the largest single authority population in Kent with 149,700 people (10% of Kent County Council's area population) as the table below demonstrates.<sup>1</sup>



The population grew by 1,800 people between 2007 and 2008, the greatest of all the Kent districts.<sup>2</sup> These figures are taken from the Mid Year Population Estimates at 2008, they have a base year at 2001 when the last Census was conducted.

Of the district's overall population, the breakdown of Canterbury's urban area population is shown at Ward level in the table below:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2008 Mid-year population estimates, Kent County Council Research and Intelligence, p6.

<sup>2</sup> 2008 Mid-year population estimates, Kent County Council Research and Intelligence, p6.

<sup>3</sup> Ward population estimates, Kent County Council, Research and Intelligence, p9.

Canterbury Urban Area Review Area Wards			2007	2008	2007-08 Change		Area (Ha)	2008 Density
					number	%		
			<b>48,395</b>	<b>49,223</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>3,659</b>	<b>13.45</b>
1	29UCGD	Barton	9,822	9,979	157	1.6%	876	11.39
1	29UCGS	Northgate	6,941	7,088	147	2.1%	192	36.89
1	29UCGU	St Stephens	10,541	10,623	82	0.8%	238	44.63
1	29UCHB	Westgate	9,675	9,965	290	3.0%	239	41.63
1	29UHC	Wincheap	8,829	8,992	163	1.8%	744	12.09

Our study principally covers the core of this area. There are 2779 residential properties in the review area as shown in the map in Figure 1. This is based on polling district information and is broken down at Ward level as follows:

Ward	Number of residential properties
Barton	550
Northgate	226
St Stephens	59
Westgate	1730
Wincheap	214
Total:	2779

These figures provide a snapshot of the residential profile of the city centre. There are currently housing developments underway which will increase this number of properties in the review area.

### 3.4 Town Centre Health Indicators for Canterbury – 2008

Kent County Council's 'Town Centre Health Indicators 2008' report for Canterbury considers the key indicators most commonly used to monitor town centres and includes amongst others: retail sector floor space, evening economy sector floor space, vacant retail property, retail sector employment, crime, transport, residential, cultural sector and cleaners streets.<sup>4</sup> Key points relevant to this review are:

- **Retail:** Canterbury town centre has a total of 125,860m<sup>2</sup> of retail and service sector floor space.
- **Evening economy:** Restaurants, take-away outlets and public houses are generally evenly distributed around Canterbury city centre and occupy a total of 27,517 m<sup>2</sup> of town centre floor space. This is the second highest of the Kent Authorities. Maidstone has the highest with an occupancy of 41,483m<sup>2</sup>.
- **Crime:** There was a reduction in all areas of reported crime for 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Town Centre Health Indicators Canterbury 2008, p1.

- **Cultural:** Canterbury has a number of cultural sites, including three sites comprising UNESCO World Heritage status.
- **Clean streets:** The Cleaner Streets Survey 2007 that was coordinated by KCC assessed two random city centre locations and scored them for litter, detritus, graffiti and flyposting with A being excellent, no litter and D having a lot of litter. The two locations scored A for all categories.

## 4 Key policies and strategies for the city centre

One of the Panel's first tasks was to review the various policies, strategies, plans and other council documents insofar as they related to the review area. They looked to see how they were co-ordinated and whether there was any conflict between them either at a strategic or operational level.

Outlined below is a brief description of the council's plans and policy documents that are applicable to the review area:

### Corporate Plan 2008 to 2012

The Corporate Plan sets out the council's ambitions and prioritises the actions to be taken over a four year period to meet the long term vision for the district. The Corporate Plan's vision for Canterbury is that it will be a:



Fig 2. Corporate Plan

*“cosmopolitan world heritage city for all ages with a strong knowledge economy, a diverse retail sector and national cultural reputation<sup>5</sup>.”*

### Canterbury District Local Plan

The Local Plan sets out a spatial strategy and vision for the Canterbury District. It shows how future development and land uses will be guided and controlled and it is a principal consideration in the development control process. The current Local Plan was adopted on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2006 and covers the period up until 2011. A new Local Development Framework will replace this plan (see below).

### Local Development Framework

The old system of local plans, structure plans and regional planning guidance has been replaced by a new planning system under the Planning and

<sup>5</sup> Canterbury City Council, Corporate Plan 2008 to 2012, p4.

Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the accompanying regulations. The new system consists of a Local Development Framework prepared by the local planning authority, Canterbury City Council and a Regional Spatial Strategy prepared by the regional planning body, South East of England Regional Assembly.

The Local Development Framework is the non-statutory term for the portfolio of Local Development Documents (LDD) which will comprise the spatial planning strategy for the District. There are two types of Local Development Documents – Development Plan Documents (DPD) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

### **Licensing Policy**

The city council as the licensing authority, is required under Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 to publish a statement of its licensing policy every three years. The council's Licensing Policy was last reviewed in January 2008.

The Policy seeks to reflect local requirements and recognise the need to encourage and promote live music, dancing, theatre and other forms of entertainment for the wider benefit of the Canterbury district in general.

At the same time, the policy pursues the four licensing objectives which are:

1. The prevention of crime and disorder
2. The promotion of public safety
3. The prevention of public nuisance
4. The protection of children from harm.

### **Local Economy and Tourism Strategy 2008-12**

The Local Economy and Tourism Strategy seeks to:

- Establish a plan for economic development activity in Canterbury district over the next four years
- Provide a mechanism to begin to take forward key areas of the Futures Study (a report setting out scenarios for the district in the future)
- Combine key tourism and economic development actions and activities in a single economic plan
- Provide a clear strategic direction as to where the council and its partners should be deploying its resources and activity to best deliver economic development.

### **Cultural Policy**

The policy sets out aims for creating a dynamic, strong economy and distinctive cultural and visitor experience and how this will be achieved. The focus of the policy is to:

- Have a range of good quality leisure and cultural facilities for the local community
- Provide opportunities for existing and new audiences to participate in culture and sport
- Enhance Canterbury's reputation as an international tourism destination.

### **City Centre Development Scrutiny Review 2006**

The scrutiny review considered how development in the city centre could produce a conflict between the needs of residents and the council's aim to create a diverse cultural offering and vibrant late night economy. The review made a series of recommendations, including that a group be established to implement the relevant recommendations in the Yellow Book report. Also, that a policy for the future management and development of the city centre be developed.

### **Entertainment Economy Scrutiny Review 2009**

During the course of this review, a separate scrutiny panel was formed to consider the Entertainment Economy across the district. The scope of the Entertainment Economy review was geographically broader than this review, covering Herne Bay, Whitstable and the rural areas as well as Canterbury. However, there were areas of overlap between the two reviews. This review had regard to the findings of the Entertainment Economy panel insofar as they related to the city centre.

### **Yellow Book report 2005 – Canterbury: City of Imagination**

In addition to these formal plans and strategies, the council commissioned the Yellow Book report in December 2004 as a concept study for a proposed creative and cultural quarter in Canterbury. The report was never formally adopted by the council but its findings are relevant to this review. The study focused on an area centred on the High Street – St Peter's Street – St Dunstan's Street axis and much of the west side of the walled city. The report found that the creative industries were underrepresented in Canterbury and although there were some exceptions the 'Canterbury experience' was generally disappointing. Taking this into account the report concluded that it would be unhelpful to designate the study area as a cultural quarter.

An action plan was devised to implement the recommendations made in the Yellow Book report. Most of the actions are either complete or are in progress. The Panel's recommendations on those actions that are outstanding are set out later in this report.

## **5. Operational Groups**

There are a number of partnership groups and council officer groups that have a role in the operational management of the city centre:

## **Canterbury City Partnership**

Canterbury City Partnership is a town centre management company which is part funded by subscriptions from member businesses with match funding of £25,000 provided by the city council. Any business can become a member and the partnership focuses on a range of city centre activities including business growth and prosperity, the public realm, cleanliness, events, marketing, tourism and other city centre management issues.

## **City Centre Action Group**

The City Centre Action Group was set up in response to the City Centre Development Scrutiny Review. Council services including Licensing, Street Scene, Regeneration and Economic Development and Community Safety are represented on the group as well as Kent Highways. The group co-ordinates the day-to-day management of the city centre in areas such as the public realm and night time economy.

## **Night Time Economy Group**

This Group has recently been established to improve the co-ordination of community safety issues in the night time economy. Key partners are represented on the group including amongst others the city council, Kent Police and Trading Standards.

## **6. Conduct of the review**

### **6.1 Witness sessions**

In order to gather evidence for the review the panel interviewed both council officers and external witnesses. Written evidence was also submitted to the panel and information was gathered from some stakeholders outside of the formal panel meetings.

The following council services or organisations participated in the witness sessions:

#### **Council services**

- Environment and Street Scene  
(Licensing entertainment premises, litter, graffiti, bins)
- Regeneration and Economic Development  
(Tourism, conservation, town centre management, planning policy, regeneration)
- Development Services  
(planning permission)
- Culture and Communications  
(festivals, street entertainment, museums)
- Safety and Wellbeing  
(community safety, CCTV).

## External organisations

- The Cathedral
- Kent Highways Services
- Canterbury City Partnership
- Residents Associations
- The University of Kent Students' Union
- Canterbury Christ Church University and its Students' Union
- Kent Police
- Kent County Council's Urban Regeneration department.

The full list of witnesses is set out at Appendix A.

## 6.2 Panel Survey

A postal survey was issued to the council's Community Panel and available online asking for peoples' views on the city centre area. The survey was sent to 2400 residents and 637 responses were received.

Through the survey, the Panel wanted to gather people's views on:

- How people use the city centre
- Transport priorities
- Housing priorities
- The retail offer
- Entertainment, culture and leisure priorities
- The night time economy
- What needs improving in the city centre.

The results revealed that the top three modes of transport used by people to travel into the city centre are: car (49%), bus (29%) and on foot (21%). People primarily use the city centre for shopping (89%), accessing services such as banks (54%) and leisure (35%). The cost of parking can be deterrent to using the city centre for 53% of those surveyed and improved road networks for accessing the city centre is a top priority.

When asked what type of housing development should be prioritised for the review area, 43% stated that housing should not be a priority. Of those who supported housing as a priority, older people (36%) and family accommodation (25%) were most important.

The questionnaire also sought the comments of those surveyed on issues relating to the review area. These comments were used to inform the panel's findings and have been incorporated into this report.

## 7. Good practice

The Panel also looked at good practice in city centre management. The Government's recent strategy for improving quality of place states that bad planning and design and careless maintenance of the built environment encourages crime, create poor health, undermine community cohesion, deters investment, spoils the environment and, over the long term, incurs significant costs.<sup>6</sup>

The strategy sites four elements that contribute towards a good quality place. The four elements are:

- Good range and mix of homes, services and amenities
- Sensitive treatment of historic buildings and sites
- Well designed and maintained buildings and spaces
- Ample high quality green space and infrastructure.<sup>7</sup>

'Locate in Kent' have also conducted a review of the factors that influence the prosperity of town centres. Their findings were that in addition to an attractive retail sector, other positive impacts on town centres include the need for them to have a unique sense of place and to be attractive public realms, to be accessible and safe and to be secure.<sup>8</sup>

The Panel also sought good practice in the night time economy and drew on guidance from the Institute of Licensing and the Civic Trusts 'Night Vision – Town Centres for All' report which examines how town and city centres can become inclusive towards the whole community in the early evening and night time economies.<sup>9</sup>

The Panel examined how well the city measured against some of these factors. Finally the Panel examined other local authorities approach to city centre management.

## 8. Main findings

### 8.1 Document review

In its review of the council's key policy documents, plans and strategies, the Panel found the

Yellow Book report to be the most directly relevant document for the city

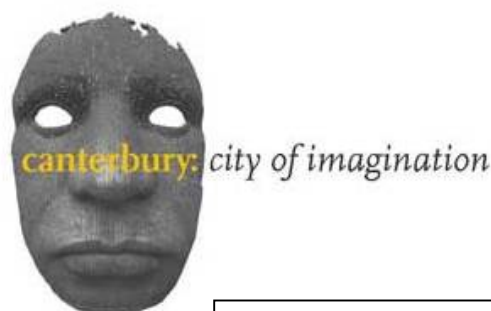


FIG 3 Yellow Book

<sup>6</sup> HM Government, World class places, The Government's strategy for improving quality of place, 2009, p6.

<sup>7</sup> HM Government, World class places, The Government's strategy for improving quality of place, 2009, p12.

<sup>8</sup> Locate in Kent, Factors that Influence the Prosperity of Town Centres: A Review

<sup>9</sup> The Civic Trust, Night Vision – Town Centres for All.

centre. The Panel welcomed the actions for the city centre recommended in the report and considered the progress that has been made against them. The majority of the actions have been or are being implemented. In some cases, work has been carried out in response to the recommendations, but commercial interest is needed for implementation. Those that are outstanding include:

- The development of Pound Lane as a major redevelopment opportunity (action 2.1)
- Development of Stour Street to increase its attractiveness of the area (action 2.2)
- The redesign of the area around Westgate to include a new traffic management scheme (action 3.2)
- The creation of a network of key routes through the city centre for residents and visitors (action 3.4).

The Panel considered that of these outstanding actions, the redevelopment of the area around Westgate is the highest priority as it is an important approach to the city centre and even more so since the introduction of the fast train link to London from Canterbury West Station.

## **8.2 Witness sessions**

Based on the witness sessions information gathered and examples of good practice, the Panel identified clear themes that contribute towards a successful city centre. The Panel's main findings are therefore presented under the following broad themes:

- **Cleaner and greener city**
- **Safer city**
- **Accessing the city**
- **Promoting the city**
- **Managing the city**
- **Developing the city.**

The Panel have set out under each theme, current practice in Canterbury city centre and areas that need attention.

Finally, the Panel drew together these themes to create a vision for the future management and development of the city centre. The Panel's vision is presented towards the end of this report.

## **9. Cleaner and greener city**

The majority of people who attended the witness sessions cited improved maintenance and cleanliness of the city centre as a top priority.

The public realm is the space between and within buildings that are publicly accessible, including streets, parks and open spaces. Elements of the public

realm also include street furniture, railings, bollards, light standards and subways. As outlined in the introduction, many council and external services have a role in maintaining and developing the public realm in the city centre.

The responses to the Panel's letter in the press and the results of the survey highlighted that a clean city is a key issue for members of the public. When asked what most needed improving in the city and why, comments included:

*“Condition of some of the buildings - boarded up shops, rundown appearance detracts from the fine buildings/history of the city.”*

*“Empty shops, graffiti and rubbish (look at the new centre at Whitefriars at 6pm). Also a lack of flowers, trees, fountains, lovely places to sit and chat.”*

*“Improve street cleaning, ensure buildings above shop level are properly maintained/painted. Insist on better quality shop fronts/displays...Plant more street trees. Provide better, smoother paving in the city centre.”*

Poor environmental cues also give rise to the perception that an area is uncared for and anti-social behaviour is acceptable.<sup>10</sup>

The good practice mentioned in Section 4 cites well maintained, designed buildings and spaces and ample high quality green spaces and infrastructures. The Panel and the witnesses respectively, saw and mentioned good examples of where the city centre accords with these elements of good quality place but the general consensus was that there is room for improvement. This was highlighted by the responses to the Panel's survey:

*“More trees, plants. Benches in public places.”*

*“Lack of flowers, trees and sitting areas. Its dull and concrete.”*

*“More tree and flowers, more open spaces.”*

## **9.1 Neglected land and buildings**

On the Panel's visit to the city centre, pockets of neglected open spaces were observed such as cracked paving and vandalised or run-down buildings. The Panel also noted examples of high quality areas in the city centre such as the recently developed Kings Mile and the Whitefriars development. Also, the city's parks and gardens are well maintained. However, this high standard is not consistent across the city.

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<sup>10</sup> BRE Trust, 'Creating Safer Town Centres at Night – A toolkit to assess the problem' presentation at the Institute of Licensing conference on promoting the Night Time Economy, 8 July 2008.

An area of particular concern to the review is located next to the Odeon cinema to the south of St George's Place as shown on the plan below:



Figs 4,5 & 6: land adjacent to cinema showing broken and irregular paving.

These pictures show a badly cracked pavement made of a variety of different materials. The planter containers, which are made from concrete, are also in a poor state of repair. Whilst this area represents a small part of the city, it is a main pedestrian route to the city centre from New Dover Road and the Dover Street car park. The Panel established that the land belongs to two different owners and considered that steps should

be taken to require improvements to the area.

The Panel also noted poorly maintained buildings for example in St Margaret's Street and St Dunstons there was evidence of blocked guttering, leaking drain pipes and open windows that could lead to long term damage of the fabric of medieval buildings in the city. The Government's good practice guidance states that the treatment of the historic environment of an area is one of the four elements that contribute to a quality place.<sup>11</sup> The Panel felt that the state of repair of historic and listed buildings in the city centre should be closely monitored and action taken if appropriate.



Fig 7: Property on St Dunstan's Street

Section 215 (s215) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables the council, as the local planning authority to require land to be cleaned up when its condition adversely affects the amenity of the area.<sup>12</sup> Under s215, the council can serve a notice on the owner requiring remedial action. These notices set out the steps that need to be taken, and the time within which they must be carried out. The council also has the powers under s219 to undertake the works themselves and to recover the costs from the building or landowner if action is not taken.<sup>13</sup> The best practice guidance on s215 explains that the use of s215 powers can be an integral part of regeneration and improvement programmes. Based on experience, those authorities that interpret the scope of s215 widely also tend to be more proactive and

<sup>11</sup> HM Government, World class places, The Government's strategy for improving quality of place, 2009, p15.

<sup>12</sup> Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215, Best Practice Guidance, p5.

<sup>13</sup> Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215, Best Practice Guidance, p5.

successfully at wider regeneration objectives. The guidance states that regular monitoring of the quality of the environment is key to using s215 successfully.<sup>14</sup>

Taking into account these research findings, the Panel considered that the city centre should be regularly reviewed to identify areas of neglected land and buildings and their owners. Steps should then be taken to encourage improvements to buildings and land and where appropriate s215 powers used.

***Recommendation 1: That the city centre be regularly monitored by the City Centre Action Group and where areas of neglected land and buildings are apparent, the council actively use its Section 215 powers to initiate improvements.***

## 9.2 Night time waste

As well as specific sites and buildings, another key factor for improving the public realm, for both the witnesses and members of the public who provided information to the review, was the cleanliness of the city centre at night.

The council's Environment and Street Scene service is responsible for cleaning, refuse collections, recycling, clearing rubbish from public areas and the maintenance of parks and toilets in the city centre. They work in partnership with the contractor Serco. However, are not empowered to remove commercial waste, which falls to the individual commercial premises to arrange. The standard and level of the council's services is set out in a programme of works between the council and Serco.



Fig 8: Commercial waste for collection

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, businesses are required to put their waste out on the day of collection. However, as most shops do not employ staff early in the morning, they regularly put waste out in the evening ready for collection before the shops open the next day. On the Panel's late night visit to the city centre, large amounts of waste had been piled up outside shops ready for

<sup>14</sup> Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215, Best Practice Guidance p6.

collection. The volume of waste creates a potential fire hazard and can be disturbed during the night by revellers and vermin. Serco's street cleaning takes place between 6.30am and 6pm. Therefore the street scene can deteriorate throughout the night.

Finally, as shops and businesses are entitled to use the waste collection contractor of their choice there are as many as nine different companies operating in the city. The number of waste collection vehicles used and duration of disturbance caused to residents is therefore greater than if a single collection service was used.

To address this, Street Scene and Licensing services are working with the City Centre Action Group on an initiative to help keep the streets free from litter during the night. The initiative means that Serco now offer an evening waste collection service for businesses in the city centre. Whilst there is a charge, it is hoped the collection will be more compatible with shop opening hours. Shops that continue to leave waste out will be issued with a fixed penalty notice by the Licensing service when they are on patrol in the city at night.

Another issue regarding waste collections in the city centre is that shops do not always make or have sufficient provision for bins within the footprint of their premises. This means wheeled bins block the footways for wheelchair users and people with buggies.

***Recommendation 2: The Panel welcome the efforts made to provide a night time collection service and encourage the Environment and Street Scene service and the City Centre Action Group to take all possible steps to implement new initiatives to minimise the negative impact of commercial waste.***

### **9.3 Maintenance of Highways and pavements**

Good highway design and maintenance standards form an important part of the visual appearance of the city. However, the Panel considered there were areas in the city where the maintenance of the highways and pavements could be improved and this was reflected in the response to the Panel's survey:

*“ Canterbury like so much of England is covered with cheap brown brick not even proper dry brick, [sic] broken concrete paving, cracked tarmac and pot holes.”*

Kent Highways Services (KHS) is the Kent County Council service that is charged with looking after the county's roads, pavements and cycle paths. Consequently the service plays a key role in the appearance of city centre.



Fig 9: example of neglected highway

The Panel considered there to be a lack of local focus and knowledge by KHS of repairs and maintenance works required in the city centre. KHS operates on a county-wide basis and is structured according to service groups rather than geographical areas. For example, the Signs and Lines Team are separate from the Traffic and Transportation section. This leads to a blanket approach being taken across the county for the maintenance of the highways that takes no account of local concerns or priorities.



Fig 10: Highway reinstatement.

A protocol exists between the city and the county council for highways maintenance and improvements within the city's conservation sensitive areas and adjacent to historic structures. However, this protocol is not always adhered to. There are examples of temporary repairs being made using inappropriate materials,

which are then not replaced with the correct material at a later date. 'Black top' is sometimes used for highways reinstatements, which is not in keeping with the historic fabric of the city, and not in accordance with the protocol, which states that, repairs should be undertaken using as much of the "*existing historic or traditional material as possible*".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Protocol between Kent Highways Service and Canterbury City Council, Conservation Sensitive Areas, p3.



Fig 11: Broken paving.

***Recommendation 3: That the city council insists Kent Highways Service to have full regard to the protocol that exists for highways reinstatements in the Conservation Sensitive Areas.***

***Recommendation 4: That the city council ask that Kent County Council move from a functional to geographical organisation of Kent Highways Services to take better account of local concerns and priorities.***

#### **9.4 Street furniture**

Evidence was also presented to the Panel indicating that poorly sited street furniture and a lack of public seating did not create an environment that was appealing or encourage the use of open spaces for social interaction or entertainment. This was supported by comments made by those who responded to the Panel's survey:

*"I overheard some visitors a few weeks ago complaining about the distinct lack of benches to sit along the High Street – I agree."*

*Needs more seats, there are not enough in the High Street."*

The Panel considered that quality street furniture should be used to create social and user friendly spaces.

Currently Kent Highways are responsible for licensing street furniture on the highways such as tables, chairs and A-boards. However, it is intended that from April 2010 the city council's Licensing department will take on the responsibility of licensing tables, chairs and A frames on the street. The Licensing department will be working with the Canterbury City Partnership on the best approach towards locating tables and chairs in the city centre. The

Panel welcomed this transfer of responsibilities as a way of ensuring local priorities are met.

The Panel also noted comments made about the quality and appearance of the market both in the survey results and by some of the witnesses that participated in the review. The Panel considered that steps should be taken to encourage the style and appearance of the stalls to be improved.

## 9.5 Public realm improvements

Well-designed buildings are one of the elements cited in 'World Class Places' as key to a quality place. The new Marlowe Theatre development and Beane Library, Museum and Art Gallery refurbishment are important capital projects that are



Fig 12: Augustine House

underway in the city centre. Canterbury Christ Church University's Augustine House library and resource centre, which opened in 2009, is also a significant contribution towards the city's built environment. To maximise the opportunities from these projects, it is important that there is investment and plans for the design and maintenance of the public spaces surrounding these buildings from the outset.

The Kings Mile is an example of a comprehensive approach towards public realm improvements in an area. The environmental works help to attract pedestrians and reduce traffic through quality repaving, new street furniture, better lighting and the installation of trees and planter boxes. The Whitefriars development also demonstrates how the design of the built and public environment can be linked to create an integrated environment. However, this high quality approach to the public realm is not consistent across the city.

It was reported that improvements to the public realm could be funded through Section 106 agreements if a clear policy and programme of works was identified through the Local Development Framework process. Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows the local planning authority to enter into a legally-binding agreement or place planning obligations on developers when granting planning permission. The agreements are a way of delivering or addressing matters that are necessary to support the provision of services and infrastructure such as highways, recreational facilities, education, health and affordable housing.

There are competing priorities for Section 106 monies. However, the Panel considered that given that public realm improvements were repeatedly highlighted during the course of the review as the top priority for the city centre, this should be reflected in the allocation of these funds.

***Recommendation 5: That the new Local Development Framework enable Section 106 agreements for city centre developments to be used to finance public realm improvements.***

## **10 Safer City**

### **10.1 Licensing**

A key challenge for creating a safe city centre is the impact of the Licensing Act 2003.

In accordance with the Act, any premises may apply for a 24-hour licence and local authorities must set licensing objectives that include the prevention of crime and disorder and the prevention of public nuisance.

The intention of the 2003 Licensing Act was to encourage more flexible opening hours to avoid problems such as noise and anti-social behaviour that are associated with a single closing time. The underlying presumption of the legislation is that a licence will be granted unless there are objections either from local residents or responsible authorities such as the Police, the planning authority or environmental protection.

Although the council as the licensing authority has granted later licences since the introduction of the Act, they are rarely fully operated and the reality is that premises usually open just an hour or so later than their previous licence allowed, due to a lack of demand for much later opening times. Whilst staggered closing times does relieve the pressure on the city at a single time, residents living in the city centre have reported that the disturbance and anti-social behaviour is now more intermittent and prolonged:

*"We are often woken at 2am or later by people going home after drinking in some late night venue or other. They bang on our doors and shout and sing."*

Current planning policy, set out in the Local Plan 2006 - 2011 states that the promotion of evening or night-time uses or activities needs to be balanced with impact on residents and the need to provide a safe environment. Through the Local Plan the city council promotes the city centre as a place to live.<sup>16</sup> Whilst it recognises that late night noise, disturbance and anti-social behaviour can deter people from living in town centres, it states that it helps to provide natural surveillance.<sup>17</sup> This is based on the experience of other areas and is reflected in the government guidance mentioned in Section 4 above

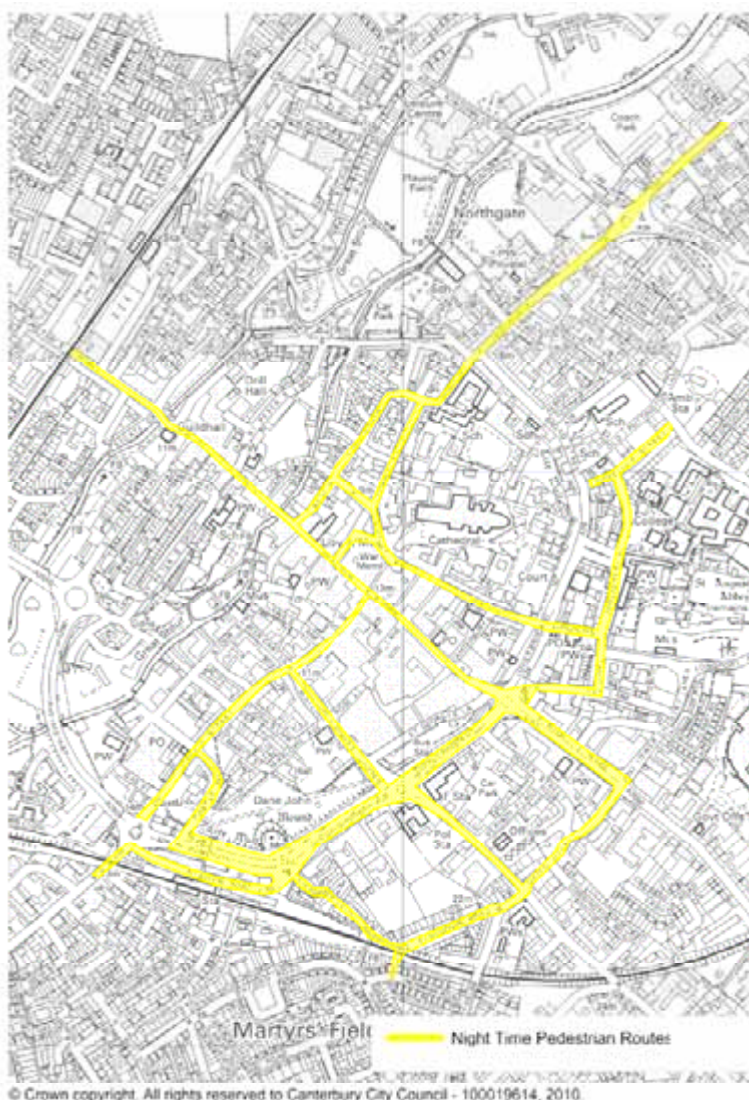
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<sup>16</sup> Canterbury City Council Local Plan, Public safety and crime prevention, section 4.34.

<sup>17</sup> Canterbury City Council Local Plan, Public safety and crime prevention, section 4.34.

which states that good quality places include a good mix and range of homes, services and amenities.

The Licensing Policy identifies these challenges and also seeks to encourage responsible drinking. The council along with other district councils, the county council, Police, Retail of Alcohol Standards Group and members of the On Trade are signed up to the Kent Community Alcohol Programme (KCAP) which is an on-going partnership initiative aimed at encouraging responsible drinking and preventing underage drinking. KCAP was set up in 2005 in response to the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003.



Nevertheless, there are community safety issues that arise from the night time economy. The relatively small size of Canterbury city centre and the fact that there is no public transport after midnight means that people tend to walk across the city either home, to taxi ranks or to late night clubs and eateries. This disturbs people living in the city centre particularly along the most commonly used routes such as St Margaret's Street, Orange Street and Oaten Hill, which are highlighted on this map.

In addition, an unintended consequence of legislation to ban smoking in public premises is that residents are now also reporting increased noise break out from pubs, clubs and restaurants. The Licensing Act does enable the number of people allowed outside of a premises at any one time to be limited if disturbance is caused. However, since the smoking ban, there are generally more people moving to and from premises. This means that music and other noise permeate the street as people go outside to smoke. Noise is also caused by the smokers themselves. On the Panel's visit to the city centre,

they experienced areas of good practice and different types of management of licensed premises.

The narrow streets in parts of the city centre amplify the noise caused by pedestrian movement at night. Also, many of the city's buildings were not designed for their current use. Households with single glazing can be affected by noise from people either walking home or standing outside premises to a greater degree than those with double- glazing. However, some types of glazing are not permitted in the conservation area, which demonstrates a conflict between the council's role in preserving the fabric of historic buildings, and reducing noise levels for residents living in the city.

The Panel considered that a residential population in the city centre should be encouraged. However, measures were needed to reduce the impact of the night time economy on people choosing to live in the city centre. The Panel felt that the initiatives below could help to balance the conflicting policy of encouraging the city to be used for both 'going-out' and residential purposes:

### **1. Location of late night venues**

- Any future late night venues must be located away from residential areas of the city centre
- Landlords of late night venues must in all cases encourage responsible behaviour beyond the immediate vicinity of their premises. This could be promoted through the licensing process. For example, landlords can be issued with guidance on being a good landlord when granted with a licence.

### **2. Planning**

- Where noise is a problem in residential areas of the city, the use of noise reducing glazing and materials should be considered. The Panel considered that the current policy on the use of double and triple glazing in conservation areas should be reviewed if noise pollution could be prevented. This is an examples of a policy conflict that has can affect the quality of life for residents in the city centre. Conservation policies should be reviewed in light of modern day living.

### **3. Pedestrian routes**

- Key pedestrian routes through the city should be identified and resources deployed to manage them. These routes could change depending on current patterns of movement. Students from the higher education institutes could be encouraged to marshal the identified routes as part of their volunteering programme. 'Street Angels' operate in other towns across the country including Bradford and Guildford. They work in partnership with the Police

and Local Authorities to provide a positive impact on the atmosphere of the town at night.

#### **4. Resident population**

- At the same time, there needs to be an acceptance by residents that a degree of noise and disturbance is inevitable when living in a city. Awareness should be raised of some of the features, both good and bad, associated with a city centre location. Information about city centre living could be made available on the council's website.

***Recommendation 6: That the next review of the Local Development Framework and the Licensing Policy must have regard to the Panel's findings outlined in points 1 to 4 above.***

#### **10.2 Public toilets**

The current policy is for one 24-hour public toilet facility in each of the main towns. In the city centre the 24-hour public toilets are located in Tower Way opposite St Peter's Place and Canterbury Lane

. At night the facility is frequently subject to vandalism and occasionally for sleeping in. The opening hours and damage caused to these facilities are therefore reviewed by the Environment and Street Scene service on an annual basis.

Toilets would ideally be situated on the key routes used by pedestrians at night when walking either home or between venues and late night eateries. However, as the location and popularity of venues are subject to change so are the routes people use. Also, due to cost of running toilet facilities, only a limited number can be provided.

Instead, people could be directed along designated routes either by marshals or through signage to where toilets are available. In addition, existing or new development opportunities could be explored to meet the demand for public toilets at night. The new Beaney Library and Museum is located on one of the key routes used by pedestrians at night and its toilet facilities could be designed to open 24 hours a day to address the lack of toilets in this area of the city centre at night.

The Panel considered that the location of any new toilet facilities should take into account the footfall and the recommended designated dispersal routes. Also that comprehensive signage directing people to toilet facilities should be incorporated into the current signage system.

***Recommendation 7: That any new toilet facilities be located on designated routes and available for late night opening.***

### 10.3 CCTV

The pattern of CCTV in the city centre reflects crime and disorder patterns apparent when government capital funding was available to support its provision. The Panel visited the council's central control room where the CCTV service is operated. There are 20 cameras in the city centre. The Panel established that there are areas of the city where there is inadequate coverage to capture the main areas of night time activity and associated problems.

CCTV will not stop anti-social behaviour or criminal activity. However, it is a useful tool to help the Police detect crime and secure convictions. It also provides a useful monitoring tool to highlight areas that are becoming problematic and to help the Community Safety Unit direct its resources. The majority of the Panel felt that comprehensive and flexible CCTV coverage should be encouraged and seen as a way to support the deployment of community safety staff to tackle problems and where possible defuse and prevent these becoming endemic. The Panel welcomed Kent Police's initiative to deploy more police personnel in the area.

***Recommendation 8a: The council welcomes the recent decision by the police to increase the patrols in the city centre and trusts that this will be maintained.***

***Recommendation 8b: That the local crime and disorder reduction partnership – Canterbury District Safer Community Partnership be requested to support the provision of permanent cameras in sensitive locations along with the deployment of mobile cameras.***

The council welcomes the recent decision by the Police to increase the patrols in the city centre and trusts that this will be maintained.

### 10.4 Graffiti

Graffiti was highlighted in the comments of those who responded to the Panel's survey:

*"Graffiti is getting worse and needs sorting. Its not even creative graffiti".*

*"Canterbury has much to offer but the levels of graffiti and litter makes it unattractive."*

The Panel also saw first hand examples of graffiti in the city centre.

Graffiti is a form of criminal damage and an anti-social activity that creates negative impressions of an area and contributes towards people's fear of crime. It can also lead to an increase anti-social behaviour such as fly tipping and litter. If graffiti is not removed immediately it can encourage more graffiti in an area.



Fig 14 & 15: Graffiti

There is a two-person Serco crew of 'Graffiti Busters' funded by the council, working across the district. Racist and offensive graffiti on council property is treated immediately. The Environment and Street Scene service also removes graffiti from private property free of charge for the first two hours of work. Despite this, graffiti is an ongoing persistent problem in the city centre. The Head of Environment and Street Scene explained that 'tagging' accounts for approximately 90% of graffiti across the district. On the Panels visits to the city centre in the evenings they noted that graffiti and in particular 'tagging' was prominent in and around the subways as well as on some private properties that adjoin public paths and pavements.

The Panel heard how the 'Community Payback' scheme was an initiative that could be explored further to achieve public realm improvements in the city centre.

Community Payback is a punishment handed out by the courts. Approximately 1,000 offenders carry out nearly 6000 hours of unpaid and supervised work each week for the community across Kent. Between 2008 and 2009 275,000 hours of unpaid work was provided to local communities as offenders pay back for the crimes they have committed. At national minimum

wage, this would equate to £1.5 million.<sup>18</sup> Community Payback projects can include litter removal, environmental projects through repairing and redecorating community centres or removing graffiti. Local people and community groups are encouraged to help with the selection of projects that will help make their community a better place to live.<sup>19</sup> However, there are still resources required for the scheme such as training, supervision and the equipment.

Another Home Office initiative is 'Community Cashback' which gives local people a say in how recovered criminal assets (for example confiscated cash or property) should be spent in their communities. Projects should relate to nuisance, anti-social or criminal behaviour or its impact on the community to qualify for funding. Public realm improvements are included in they types of projects that could qualify for 'Community Cashback' such as restoration and renovation projects e.g. removing graffiti. 269 projects nationally have been successful in being allocated funding this year, five of which were from Kent.<sup>20</sup> The Kent projects were located in Tunbridge Wells (2), Deal, Margate and Dartford.

***Recommendation 9: That the council's Environment and Street Scene service explore with the Safer Canterbury District Partnership the feasibility of using Community Payback and Cashback Schemes to increase resources for the removal of graffiti.***

***Recommendation 10: That the council notes and supports the Safer Canterbury District Partnership's work to deter graffiti and anti-social behaviour as set out in their action plan.***

## **10.5 Lighting**

The Panel and some witnesses were concerned that lighting in some parts of the city was inadequate and may adversely affect peoples' feelings of safety. However, the Panel's site visits found that lighting levels were generally good. The members welcomed the opening of the new Beaney and the opportunities that affords to increase lighting and activity in the early evening.

## **11 Accessing the City**

Well designed and maintained approaches to the city centre are a key element towards making an attractive environment for visitors and residents arriving in the city.

### **11.1 Subways**

Throughout the review the appearance and cleanliness of the subways was highlighted as the being in need of improvement, particularly as they form an

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<sup>18</sup> [www.kentprobation.org](http://www.kentprobation.org)

<sup>19</sup> [www.kentprobation.org](http://www.kentprobation.org)

<sup>20</sup> [cashback.cjsonline.gov.uk/](http://cashback.cjsonline.gov.uk/)

important gateway to the city centre. There are five subways leading to the city centre: Rheims Way, London Road, Wincheap roundabout, St Georges and Riding Gate.



Fig 16: Subway

The subways are in the ownership of KCC who maintain the drainage and lighting. However, the city council cleans the litter and graffiti from all highways street furniture including the subways on behalf of KCC under a contract arrangement. The city council receives £5,300 each year from KCC for this work to be carried out across the whole district, which is insufficient to ensure a high quality of cleanliness. For example, rather than removing all graffiti, the graffiti busting team focus on offensive and racist graffiti.



Fig 17: Subway railings awaiting repair.

The poor state of the subways was highlighted on the Panel's visit to the city centre and by the responses to the survey:

*"I work at the Ebury Hotel on the New Dover Road. We have visitors from all over the world. They ask me how to get into the city centre. On the visitor guide I try to direct them to stay over ground at the end of the end of New Dover Road, turn right and use the crossing at Burgate because the pedestrian underpass is disgusting, does anyone from the council ever use it?"*

Figure 16 on the previous page shows the extent of graffiti in the subways and Figure 17 shows the railings next to St George's subway, which were left, in this state of repair for several months before being repaired.

Canterbury Christ Church University's Augustine House library and resource centre opened 2009 and is a significant contribution towards the city's built environment. One of the main routes to Augustine House is via the Riding Gate subway under the ring road. Whilst the new building is visually impressive, the subway is poorly maintained. A project for improvements to the subway was considered. However, the cost has prevented any improvements being made. This demonstrates how the interface between the built and public environment is not always planned for.

***Recommendation 11: That Kent County Council be asked to resource the appropriate level of funding to ensure the continued maintenance of the subways to the best possible standards.***

***Recommendation 12: That the Canterbury City Partnership and the city council explore ways of securing funding to improve the subways particularly St Georges.***

## **11.2 Car parks**

The Panel noted that the city centre car parks were the main destination for car users accessing the city. The car parks are generally in good condition, well served with CCTV, clean and welcoming. The main comments made by those who responded to the Panel's survey related to the cost of parking at city centre locations.

## **11.3 Canterbury West**

Managing the expansion of Canterbury West Station and the impact of CTRL through the development of a public realm project which links the station to the city centre is identified as an objective in the council's Corporate Plan. It is also an action in the 'Yellow Book' report to redesign the area around Westgate with a new high quality public space and traffic management scheme to improve the route between the station and city centre. Finally, the Westgate Towers Scrutiny Review made recommendations for this area.

The Subways at Canterbury West station are poorly maintained. This is recognised in the local plan, which states that the city council is keen to work with rail operators to enhance and upgrade them.<sup>21</sup>

The Panel considered that the potential impact of the fast train service meant that improvements to the public realm supporting the station should be prioritised. As an important gateway to the city it was important the area between the station and the city centre should be inviting to visitors.



Fig 18: Poorly maintained signage

The council should implement the outstanding recommendation from Yellow Book report regarding the redesign on the area around Westgate with a new traffic management scheme.

***Recommendation 13: That the outstanding recommendation from the Yellow Book report regarding the redesign of the area around Westgate be implemented in response to the introduction of CTRL.***

### 11.3 Signage

Clear and attractive signage helps to welcome and navigate residents and visitors around the city. It also contributes towards promoting Canterbury as a tourist and World Heritage destination. However, it was reported that there is no clear route to direct visitors from the coach park to the Cathedral. Also, the Panel found that signage at the gateways to the city centre was poorly maintained as Figure 15 demonstrates. The differing types of signage was also noted. The council's Local Economy Team will be reviewing the council's approach to signage as part of the next review of the Local Economy and Tourism



Fig 19: City signage

<sup>21</sup> Canterbury District Local Plan, Section 4.47 Canterbury West Station

Strategy. The Panel considered the implementation of a signage strategy has been a long-term objective for the council. Any future strategy should ensure that a coherent approach to the use of signage in the city centre is adopted. As part of this signage strategy, tourist interpretation trails should be developed.

***Recommendation 14: That a signage strategy for the city centre be introduced with urgency.***

***Recommendation 15: That tourist trails for the city centre be introduced.***

#### 11.4 Pedestrianisation of the city

*“The High Street is paved like a pedestrian area, yet I find that pedestrians compete with lorries, vans and even private cars.”*

The Panel considered the current pedestrianisation scheme and whether its hours and geographical area should be extended. The current pedestrian area is shown on the map at Figure 16:

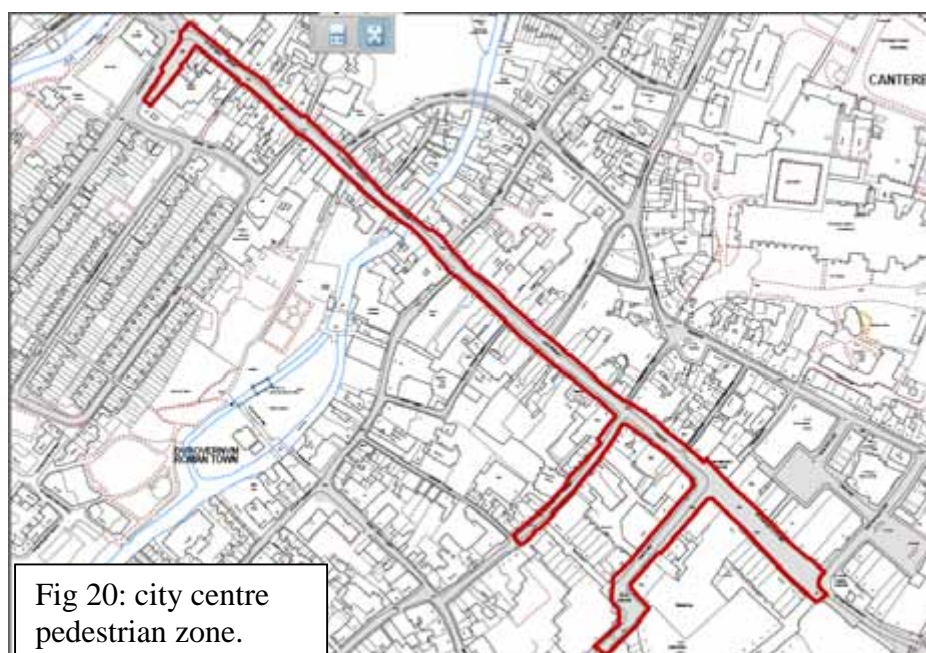


Fig 20: city centre pedestrian zone.

Vehicles and cyclists are prohibited from accessing this area between the hours of 10.30am and 4.30pm except for residents with a valid parking permit and emergency vehicles. Some of the witnesses that gave evidence to the review suggested that the High Street should be closed to traffic for longer, from 9.30am until 5pm to create a more attractive environment for city centre pedestrians. It was also suggested that the pedestrianisation zone should be extended to include areas such as Palace Street, St Margaret’s Street, Castle Street and Watling Street.



Fig 21: Vehicles in the city centre before 10.30am

However, the KCC Highways Partnership Manager considered that the city centre was an example of a successful pedestrian scheme. Although pedestrians and vehicles share the highways in the early morning and evening, the number of people in the city means that the scheme is self-regulating without the need for additional traffic calming measures.

The pedestrian priority scheme in Palace Street was cited as being a particular success as it balances the needs of pedestrians and traffic through the concept of 'shared space.' Without clearly defined boundaries between street users, it provides an improved pedestrian environment whilst encouraging vehicles to drive more carefully. This was achieved by narrowing the road and using highways materials that create the impression it is a pedestrian area. Drivers use an informal give way system and are able to mix safely with pedestrians.



Fig 22: Palace Street

The Panel considered that the traffic management scheme in the city centre could be better enforced, as there were examples of motorists and cyclists entering the pedestrian zone. However, they took the view that the current zone and hours were adequate and did not need extending further.

Night time parking infringements were noted in Palace Street, which have been brought to the attention of the Parking Services Manager. The Panel also noted that the prohibition of cyclists in the city centre was not always enforced.

***Recommendation 16: That the current hours of pedestrianisation in the city centre not be extended but better enforced.***

## **12 Promoting the city**

As mentioned above, one of the four elements cited in the Government's 'World class places' report as contributing towards a good quality of place is a combination of affordable homes and access to facilities including shops, pubs and restaurants and public services.<sup>22</sup>

The Panel considered it was important to encourage family and social groups to increase take up and use of the entertainment offer in the city centre.

Canterbury through the city and county councils, higher education institutions, shops, restaurants and other businesses offers a wide range of opportunities for formal and informal entertainment by both the local community and visitors. However, each of the sectors operates independently and has different levels of resources to publicise its offer to increase take up and benefit. This was also highlighted by the recent Entertainment Economy Scrutiny Review, which recognised that people were generally satisfied with the broad offer across the district, but were not always aware of 'what's on'.

Canterbury is currently a popular day-trip destination. To increase the number of short break tourists, increased hotel provision and effective marketing is important. The Local Cultural Strategy for the Canterbury District 2003 – 2010 identifies in its action plan the need to encourage the development of quality hotel and conference facilities in Canterbury. However, the Panel also considered there to be a need for greater communication of what's on when and where and better promotion of Canterbury's World Heritage status. This could be achieved through a more co-ordinated approach to marketing the offer in the city centre both on the council's website and also more traditional means such as information points, boards and tourist trails.

The city council is currently reviewing its website and the council's Curator of Museums and Galleries reported there were opportunities to look at how information for local people and visitors could be considered as part of this review. For example, an area of the website could be dedicated to promoting the wide range of activities on offer in the city centre. At the same time, more

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<sup>22</sup> HM Government, World class places, The Government's strategy for improving quality of place, 2009, p12.

traditional means of promoting 'what's on' in the city centre are still important. Notice boards are placed at sites in the city centre to advertise activities during the Canterbury festival. It was reported that these could be made permanent to promote the general offer throughout the rest of the year.

***Recommendation 17: That the communication methods used to promote the city centre be improved to extend the current opportunities.***

## **13 Managing the city**

The council and its partners have a range of needs and duties to connect and engage with communities.

As previously discussed in this report, many different departments within the council and external partners have a role in the city centre. A lack of co-ordination between these various agencies was recognised in the City Centre Development Scrutiny Review, 2006. The review recommended that a group should be set up to oversee operational matters that arise in the city centre. The City Centre Action Group was set up in response to this review and now co-ordinates the day-to-day management of the city centre in areas such as the public realm and night time economy. The inclusion of a representative from planning enforcement would be beneficial to strengthen the group and facilitate better co-ordination with regard to neglected areas of land and buildings. The Panel also considered that the group should continue to be led by a senior officer of at least head of service level.

The Canterbury City Partnership (CCP) also has a key role in co-ordinating a range of activities in the city centre including business growth and prosperity, the public realm, cleanliness, events, marketing, tourism and other city centre management issues. Finally, a group has recently been established to improve the co-ordination of community safety issues in the night time economy. Key partners are represented on the group including amongst others the city council, Kent Police and Trading Standards.

Whilst these groups have improved the co-ordination of operational issues in the city centre, there are still missed opportunities and policy conflicts that can arise from a lack of communication and shared objectives between interested parties.

The Chairman of the Canterbury City Partnership explained that the wide range of activities in Canterbury could still be better co-ordinated. For example, the Eurofair, which although successful, could have been co-ordinated better with other activities and retailers in the city.

The Panel also considered that opportunities could be missed through a lack of ownership of some issues. Where there are problems such as neglected land and buildings, the Panel noted on its visits to the city centre, the city council should use its powers to solve these issues as part of its community leadership role.

Chichester District Council has introduced a City Centre Management Development Plan and Action Plan, which identifies and creates a programme of works and initiatives and gives guidance on the strategic development of the city over a three year period. The Development Plan is owned by the city council and its Canterbury City Partnership and incorporates existing strategies and plans to create a more cohesive approach to the development of the city centre. The Action Plan is delivered under six themes that are key to a successful city centre including promotion, cleanliness, access, safety, business and communication and co-ordination of the work of city stakeholders.<sup>23</sup>

The Panel considered that the work of all the interested parties in the city centre needed to be co-ordinated better under a shared vision. This could perhaps be delivered through formalising the work City Centre Action Group so that it becomes a reporting body, or through the creation of an adopted plan for the city similar to the delivery plan adopted by Chichester. Whilst the Canterbury City Partnership does have an action plan, it is limited to the coming year, and a more longer-term view of the aspirations for the city could be beneficial. A plan specifically for Canterbury city centre could draw on the current plans and strategies and seek to address areas identified by this review, namely the public realm, community safety, the cultural experience and communication between interested parties in the city centre.

***Recommendation 18: That the City Centre Action Group led by a designated senior manager, and Canterbury City Partnership develop a shared action plan to be reported and monitored by the Scrutiny Sub-Committee.***

## **14 Developing the city**

A number of the witnesses cited that there is no shared vision for the city centre. The Panel identified in the scope of the review a need for a vision to guide the future management and development of the city centre.

The council and its partners already has a number of visions for the district and East Kent area through the various plans and strategies discussed at the beginning of this report. The Corporate Plan has an overarching vision for Canterbury, Herne Bay, Whitstable and the rural areas of the district. This vision is shared by the East Kent Sustainable Communities Strategy. Other plans and strategies are framed by the vision in the Corporate Plan including the current Local Plan, Local Cultural Strategy for the Canterbury District and the Local Economy and Tourism Strategy. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership sets out a vision for the delivery of the Safer Canterbury District Partnership. Finally, other documents such as the Licensing Policy and Yellow Book report do not have a vision as such but have clear objectives that could be interpreted as a vision.

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<sup>23</sup> Chichester District Council and Canterbury City Partnership, City Centre Management Development Plan 2007 – 2010.

These various plans and strategies are individually significant to the development and management of the city centre. However, there is currently no single vision for the city centre which draws together these existing documents and all the elements that affect the city.

The Panel considered that to achieve a cohesive approach to city centre issues, all the aspirations and plans of the interested parties for the city should be co-ordinated by one vision.

Following the evidence gathered from the broad range of witnesses and consideration of all the plans and strategies for the city centre, the Panel developed a vision for the city centre that brings together existing work and draws on the themes identified during the course of this review.

The Panel have consulted widely and believe the vision for the city centre should be:

*“Canterbury – a welcoming, lively, high quality, world heritage city where people want to live, work, visit and enjoy. A cosmopolitan place for all ages that embraces the future as well as protecting and celebrating its past.”*

***Recommendation 19: That the Council adopts the Panel’s vision for the city centre.***

Throughout the course of this review, the Panel identified a number of areas for the future development of the city centre that it considered should be addressed in order to deliver this vision. These areas of future work are summarised below:

### **1. Promoting and developing activities in the city centre**

The Panel considered that there is currently an emphasis towards enforcement of rather than promotion of activities in the city. For example, a policy for busking in the city was recently introduced which had limited consultation and aimed to regulate busking. However, the policy was considered by some to be too restrictive, allowing busking only at certain times of the day and for limited periods. It was also extremely difficult to purchase the permit required. Furthermore, council regulations on the use of banners and other temporary signs for cultural events sometimes led to a conflict between enforcement and the broader economic, social and cultural ambitions there are for the city centre. The council, as a community leader, should have a role in promoting and facilitating activities as well as the necessary control and regulation that it currently operates. There should be a more co-ordinated approach to facilitating events in the city lead by the councils cultural and tourism services and enforced by the licensing service.

***Recommendation 20: That the City Centre Action Group be consulted on any new policies and events in the city centre.***

The Panel heard evidence that historically there had been a 'dead' period in the early evening in the city centre. Some shops and coffee shops open later in the evening but not all participate, the opportunities in the city centre at this time of the day are reduced. However, the Panel did consider that the level of activity in the early evening had improved and this was supported by their visit to the city centre in the early evening.

The level of lighting in some parts of the High Street was also cited as a factor in deterring people from visiting the city centre in the early evening. In particular, the area between the Beane Museum and Library and Whitefriars development is poorly lit and consequently uninviting.

The Panel considered that a 'lull' at this time of the day was not unique to Canterbury. Also, that it was seasonal with more people staying in the city in the early evening in the summer months when attractions such as the Cathedral precincts are open later. However, there are opportunities for increasing activity at this time, which should be encouraged. For example, the opening hours of the new Beane Library and Museum and facilities at the Marlowe Theatre should be extended into the early evening to increase the number of attractions in the city and help make darker areas of the city centre more inviting at night. The use of the Beane as a venue for events should also be reviewed to promote greater activity in the city centre.



Fig 23: Canterbury Cathedral

Whilst there is a good range of activities in the city centre, the Panel considered there was a lack of facilities for young people and this was supported by the 2008/09 Place Survey.

The Place Survey is designed to find out what residents think of living in their local area and the services the council and other organisations, such as the police and health service provide. As part of the survey, residents were asked to choose their top five priorities for what most needs improving out of 20 issues. Through the Place Survey, residents ranked activities for teenagers as the third highest priority for the area. Activities for young people such as an improved cinema should therefore be encouraged in the city centre to

meet this need. The Panel welcomed the report of the Entertainment Economy scrutiny review in its encouragement of activities for young people.

***Recommendation 21: That later opening hours for the Beaney Library and Museum and facilities at the New Marlowe Theatre development be introduced.***

## **2. Higher education institutes**

Canterbury has three universities: The University of Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University and the University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury as well as Canterbury College. The institutes are significant contributors to the city's economy and in return, the city is important to attracting students to the institutes. In particular, Canterbury Christ Church University consider the city centre to be its campus connecting its facilities at North Holmes Road and Augustine House, the new library and resource centre. Of Canterbury's higher education provision, only Canterbury Christ Church University's facilities fall within the remit of this review. To recognise the potential benefits and impact the higher education institutes have for the city, a clear strategic and long-term approach to their future development is needed. Currently, new development is considered on a case-by-case basis. A longer term view to development would provide a clear, co-ordinated and positive mechanism through which the city council and higher education institutes operate. Therefore, the Local Development Framework, should capture the needs and issues relevant to the higher education sector.

## **3. Retail**

Some witnesses and survey responses indicated that there are too many chain stores and coffee shops in the city centre and that the High Street has lost the shopping diversity it once enjoyed. The Panel noted that the shopping experience was to a large extent, driven by national trends and market forces. It also noted that planning policies can tackle the broad types of uses in an area but are more restricted in their ability to determine uses at an individual shop level. The current Local Plan policies make provision for the overall retail capacity for the city and aims to protect the current level of provision.

The Panel requested that these concerns be fed into consultations on the new Local Development Framework to determine whether policies can be developed to encourage a more diverse retail offer.



Fig 20: Canterbury High Street

#### **4. Residential**

A number of issues concerning future residential accommodation in the city centre were mentioned earlier in this report. Those relating to the future development of the city include the sensitive location of entertainment facilities and the review of conservation policies to facilitate residents' quiet enjoyment of their housing.

#### **5. Public realm**

The cleaner and greener section of this report highlights the importance of a high quality public realm. In particular, the maintenance of public spaces and historic buildings and provision of open spaces were cited as vital in making the city an attractive place, encouraging community cohesion and preventing crime.

#### **6. Funding the city centre**

The vast majority of witnesses when asked what they would most like to see improved in the city centre, cited more expenditure on the maintenance and improvement of city streets and street furniture. People suggested that the city looks unkempt and tatty because of chipped paintwork, poor paving materials and graffiti. Current service budgets are not sufficient to raise the quality of cleaning, repair and decorating regimes to the standard witnesses want.

The Panel identified 'Community Cash Back', 'Community Payback' and Section 106 agreements as sources of funding to supplement current levels. However, it feels strongly that the council under its community leadership role, should dedicate specific resources to secure a better standard of maintenance in the city areas. Irrespective of responsibility, it is the city council that businesses and residents look to tackle these issues.

***Recommendation 22: That the City Centre Action Group prepare and manage a specific and ongoing budget for the city centre and included in the city council's 2011/12 Revenue and Capital budget.***

## 15 Conclusion

The purpose of this review was to ascertain to what extent the council and its partners operate conflicting policies, plans and strategies for the city centre. Through gathering information from a broad range of witnesses and considering best practice in city centre management and development, the Panel have established that examples of policy conflicts are in fact rare.

Instead the Panel found that policies and strategies were not always being delivered to their intended high standard due to a combination of insufficient funding, resources and a lack of a clear co-ordinated approach between the many different interested parties who operate in the city centre.

Canterbury does not feature in KCC's Spatial Strategy for the county, which instead focuses on the growth areas of Ashford and the Thames Gateway. As the strategy forms the basis by which KCC provides funding, Canterbury's absence is significant. The city council does not have a specific budget for the city centre, although it does contribute funds towards the Canterbury City Partnership. Instead, the city centre is funded indirectly through individual service budgets, which means that a co-ordinated approach between council services and partners towards initiatives is not always apparent.

At the outset of the review, it was anticipated that ambitious changes to the way the city centre is developed and managed would be welcomed. However, the general conclusion the Panel have drawn is that the way in which the city has developed is satisfactory but that it should be maintained to the highest quality standard. The council as community champion should use its role to improve the quality of the environment in the city centre and ensure that action is taken against areas of neglected land, buildings and street furniture. They also found that the city centre could be managed in a more proactive and co-ordinated way.

The council has an important enabling role through the co-ordination and facilitation of city centre activities as well as a role in the use of its own resources. Whilst groups do exist to manage these areas of city life, the Panel considered they should take a longer-term view of the aspirations for the city centre and work under one shared vision to deliver an action plan based on the themes and recommendations set out in this review.