

## **Chichester Neighbourhood Plan: Guide on structure and content**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the Town Planning system in the UK is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, defined as development which provides for the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Economic, social and environmental interests must be protected and decisions made in the public interest.

The Planning system is Plan-led, with all decisions required to be taken in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan comprises the Local Plan and any associated adopted documents, developed by the Local Planning Authority, Chichester District Council, and, once adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan, developed by the residents of the parish of Chichester.

The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a Vision of what residents want their area to be over the 15 year plan period, objectives setting out how the Vision will be achieved, and planning policies specifying the types of development allowed within the area, which will shape local development to ensure the objectives are met. The policies must be based on evidence showing that they are justified in the public interest and they must be in general accordance with the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan Strategic Policies. The Plan may also contain infrastructure projects and aspirations for the area; these may not be delivered solely through the plan but their inclusion acts as a statement of general public consensus which may help to bring about implementation through influencing the relevant decision makers.

### **The Vision (drafted here as a guide) – sets the overall picture of the city residents want.**

Chichester will be an accessible and attractive place to live, work and enjoy. Chichester will have safe and accessible streets and housing, excellent educational provision for all ages, a vibrant city centre, thriving businesses and centres for culture, the arts and theatre, all within a network of green spaces supporting local ecology and for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

### **Objectives (drafted here as a guide) – sets out what we must do to achieve the Vision.**

#### **Economic**

Chichester will be a prestige city where entrepreneurs, employers and employees connect, thrive and want to be. Chichester will be a leading visitor destination, being a centre of artistic, cultural and heritage excellence. Chichester will have a thriving city centre offering a variety of retailers and other businesses and services, and an attractive evening entertainment offer for all ages. To achieve this Chichester will:

Protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the city centre by ensuring an appropriate mix of retail, entertainment and other uses within the city centre.

Enhance our evening and night time economy with a range of activities and uses.

Ensure that appropriate commercial and industrial uses are permitted in suitable areas with good access to the transport network.

Ensure that the use of sites approved for industrial or commercial use is not impeded by permissions given on surrounding land.

## Social

Chichester will be an expanded city with homes for all. Embracing distinctive design, Chichester will be an increasingly well connected community with people-centred streets, easy to access on foot, by cycling, by public transport and through digital connectivity.

To do this, Chichester will:

Ensure provision of a range of dwelling types and sizes to cater for people of every demographic.

Ensure that new housing developments are attractive, accessible, affordable, and well designed, encouraging social interaction and integration.

Ensure new and existing communities are well served by local services, and that community assets are protected in the interests of the local residents who use them.

Encourage attractive and safe cycle- and pedestrian-friendly streets in new developments.

Prioritise access by walking, cycling and public transport, rather than by private car.

Encourage provision of access for the elderly and the less abled.

Protect and enhance the character and appearance of the public realm, historic assets and public open spaces.

Encourage more city centre living with a range of accommodation for all demographics.

Encouraging digital connectivity to support residents, businesses and visitors.

## Environmental

Chichester will be a green city, with a network of trees and green spaces throughout and around the city connecting the countryside beyond, serving to preserve and enhance our local ecology and biodiversity. Chichester will be a green city with clean air, and pleasant, verdant streets which encourage and prioritise walking and cycling. Chichester will work towards carbon neutrality by 2030.

To do this, Chichester City Centre will:

Encourage carbon neutral new developments, and the provision of environmental measures such as micro-renewables, high standards of insulation and electric vehicle charging facilities.

Ensure provision of new, safe and attractive cycle paths and facilitate connectivity to the existing cycle path network.

Ensure new developments offer attractive, well designed streets which encourage walking and cycling.

Preserve and enhance trees and green spaces.

## **Planning policies – specify what development would meet the objectives and contribute to achieving the Vision**

Following further evidence gathering to be carried out by a number of working groups and consultants, we will develop appropriate planning policies in due course. These will follow the same format as those in Local Plans, specifying what type development will be allowed where and subject to what criteria. Each planning policy should support a relevant social, economic or environmental objective by allowing (or preventing) development in a way that contributes to the achievement of the Vision. For example, you could specify “changes of use to residential on the upper floors of retail units within the primary shopping frontage area shall be permitted subject to the ground floor retail unit being retained”. This should help to achieve the Vision through the social objective, specifically “Encourage more city centre living with a range of accommodation for all demographics”.

At this early stage, issues which may be covered by policies in the Chichester Neighbourhood Plan include green measures to reduce the environmental impact of new development, and protection of the special character of Summersdale as well as city centre vitality and viability and other issues to be explored with residents by working groups during this next phase of evidence gathering.

Chichester District Council advises that the Local Plan no longer provides a 5 year housing land supply. At the inception of the Neighbourhood Plan, sufficient housing land was allocated within the Local Plan to provide the government’s required 5 year supply and the intention was therefore not to address this issue. Now that the situation has changed, and the Local Plan has fallen out of date with regard to housing allocation sites, we may wish to reconsider. Not having an allocated 5 year supply means that developers can apply for housing on any land and huge weight must be given to the urgent housing need, which means permission is much more likely to be granted to undesirable sites which would otherwise never be given permission. To prevent this, and to retain control of where housing is permitted, we can allocate sites within the Neighbourhood Plan. This would involve a “Call for sites” where landowners advise if they have any available land for housing, and we then assess each site for suitability and allocate if appropriate.

## **Infrastructure projects and Aspirations**

The Neighbourhood Plan can also include infrastructure projects such as bridges or cycle paths, and aspirations such as achieving carbon neutrality or being a plastic bag free city. Note that the Neighbourhood Plan alone will not implement these but may influence the relevant decision makers by expressing the residents’ wishes on these matters.

## **Current Stage**

We are at an early stage in the plan process. Some consultation has already taken place both formally through a survey and formal consultation period, and informally through continuous discussion with residents over social media and through residents’ associations. The Steering Group has also been set up. A further phase of public engagement is about to take place, with working groups shortly to be arranged. This will explore the issues, options, preferences and priorities of Chichester residents, and these will help to shape and change the draft Vision and Objectives above which are provided as a temporary guide at this point, and then we will develop planning policies from there. The planning policies we write must

be comprehensive on the issues residents wish to cover and carefully worded to ensure that the development they allow (or prevent) achieves the objectives and the vision that the residents want to see.

Training for the working groups was originally planned as a group session within the Council offices. This was prevented by the public health situation, however online training materials have now been produced and working groups can be set up. This is being handled by Fera Urbanism.