



Chichester City Council

Response From Chichester City Council to the Draft Regeneration Strategy.

The City Council have read the draft regeneration strategy and recognise and appreciate the intentions of the District Council in commissioning this piece of work. There are many areas and aims in the strategy that the City Council supports, and we are encouraged that the needs of the City are being considered as a discrete entity.

General comments on the Overall Strategy

- 1) We would like there to be a description of the overarching vision for the future development of the City.

We acknowledge that the document presents a list of tactical interventions that may be delivered and a list of brownfield city centre sites that could be developed for housing or commercial uses. These are combined with some very specific tactical projects (e.g. improve the public conveniences in Priory Park), which are arguably not going to drive meaningful regeneration and are possibly misplaced in a strategy document. The strategy is reliant upon commercial developers and other externalities and seems to contain very few deliverable actions that can be quickly and effectively implemented by the district council.

- 2) The document notes that it's successful adoption will lead to the growth of 2,500 additional jobs, with over 20% of employment being in the professional services sector (including IT and digital, finance and insurance and professional, scientific and technical sectors). However, the document implies these jobs will be delivered largely by the expansion of mixed commercial floorspace. Do you think that the strategy should consider factors such as workplace skills and active interventions around skills and workforce development?

The document does not make any recommendations on restricting use classes of new floorspace to ensure units are let to high value, high paid sectors such as professional services rather than traditionally low-paid sectors such as retail and hospitality. Do you think this needs to be considered to deliver the 20% high-value employment target?

Similarly, reliance on new and additional commercial floorspace to create growth ignores other equally important factors and risks delivery of the strategy as it will be dependent upon commercial developers bringing forward projects within the strategy lifetime.

The document does not outline many initiatives that take a more proactive hand in supporting economic growth from new or existing businesses in the wider community. We would like to see more approaches considered even if they were ultimately discounted during further investigation. These include, but are not limited to,

- providing professional office space, below market rate rent for new businesses
- helping businesses to develop their workforce skills
- ensuring local supply chains are created and supported

Such interventions are far less reliant upon external factors such as the property development market and could be implemented much more swiftly by key partners,

including the District Council and other key large institutions (e.g. WSCC, Chichester College, Chichester University, Rolls Royce, etc).

- 3) We wonder if there needs to be more evidence of community involvement (or consideration) in the strategy development and if there should be an assessment of the needs for community facilities and how these may be developed in order to support the future economic development of the City.

We note that one of the key priorities identified is “A greener, healthier and safer city”. This priority theme does not propose a single public health intervention to help or assist residents in remaining healthy and productive as they face longer working lives.

An ageing population that is currently experiencing ill health which affects the ability to work at an ever earlier age is a nationwide demographic issue. In Chichester, with its already older than average population, it is especially acute. Providing facilities to enable residents to access help and support so that they can stay in their existing work or reskill to alternative employment will be critical to future prosperity. Active consultation with the many voluntary sector groups working with our residents to understand and develop programmes and facilities to support these future needs is essential to ensuring a healthier city and delivering economic growth.

Similarly, the success of the Chichester Community Development Trust, following its establishment in 2009, has been pivotal in the successful growth and development of the North of the City. The Regeneration Strategy document does not acknowledge the role that well-resourced and well-run community organisations make to the regeneration of the City and includes no proposals on how this proven model of success can be expanded or rolled out in other areas of the city.

Specific Comments on the Key Priorities

The City Council agree with all the priority objectives identified.

We would, however, like to express our unease with the amount of direct consultation that has taken place with the elected City Council members, as opportunities to engage with the stakeholder interviews and workshops were limited to City Council officers and many of the draft documents were confidential and so could not be shared with elected members.

We would like to note that in future instances, it would be beneficial for the City Council to nominate an elected member as well as an officer to be involved in the stakeholder consultation process and for CDC to allow permission for documents to be shared with members (on the understanding that they will remain confidential until CDC confirm that they can be shared publicly).

Specific Comments on the Proposed Interventions

	Description	CCC Comments
A Better Connected City		
1	Relocate Fire Station	CCC supports this in principle, but we would like the focus of any improvements to be better pedestrian and cycle access at Northgate rather than just enabling housing development.
2	Bring forward sites in Southern Gateway	We support this in principle but have concerns regarding the loss of the Bus Station and how piecemeal development of sites not in CDC

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		<p>ownership or control will work together in an overall scheme.</p> <p>We would still like to see an ambition to incorporate a full transport hub in the South of the City possibly on CDC owned land assets in Avenue de Chartres (e.g. the current coach park area, land in front of the College, etc) and a commitment to work with WSCC to see if the expanded powers in the proposed Better Buses bill will allow CDC to run this facility independently of a commercial bus service operator.</p>
3	Pedestrianise West Street	<p>We support this in principle, although have severe concerns on the realistic viability or deliverability of a scheme, as it has been featured in numerous strategies and plans dating back at least 20 years with no discernible progress or plan for funding or delivery.</p> <p>We also have concerns about how this is compatible with developing sustainable cycle routes that encourage modal shift, given that cycling is currently prohibited in North and East streets, leaving West and South Street as the only viable direct cross-town cycle routes. Any pedestrianisation scheme would have to incorporate dedicated, grade separated cycle routes.</p>
4	Create seating areas in high streets etc	We support this in principle and are working with WSCC as they incorporate 'key seating nodes' in their outline proposals for East and North Streets.
5	Create an event space at the Cathedral/West Street	Please see our comments above (2). Subject to our initial concerns being addressed, we support the principle of creating a space to enable city centre events/markets, etc.
6	Improve wayfinding, including making it visible after dark.	CCC identified this as a priority in our Council Plan and have already earmarked funding. We have concerns about the ongoing maintenance and funding liabilities of illuminated or electronic signs.
7	Repurposing car parking spaces following 2023 Parking Study.	Would like to see evidence base for this. We cannot support this until we see which car parks are being proposed for repurposing and for what specific purposes. Would also like to see park and ride schemes re-investigated for feasibility –

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		possibly located at either Barnfield Drive or Terminus Road.
A Greener Healthier & Safer City		
8	Events space at Cathedral	See comments above (2 & 4)
9	Improve pavements and pedestrian areas	CCC identified this as a priority in our Council Plan and have already committed funding to WSCC to help enable delivery.
10	Develop a lighting strategy and address dark spots in the city.	CCC identified this as a priority in our Council Plan and are already undertaking a multi-year project to address this.
11	Refurbish toilets and other buildings in Priory Park	<p>CCC supports this idea in principle, but feel it falls significantly short of what is required. A full review and strategy for developing <i>all</i> the open spaces should be prepared and all assets and buildings should be considered (for example the under-utilised pavilion & changing rooms in Oaklands Park, the Kiosk in Florence Park, the untapped potential of the historic amphitheatre site).</p> <p>Any proposed developments should be fully community-led and should incorporate both social as well as economic needs, drivers and value in their viability assessment.</p> <p>We have previously approached CDC about our ambition to deliver the community demand for an outside performance space in one of the City parks and have earmarked significant funding to deliver this, so are disappointed that it has not been included in the regeneration strategy. We would like to see consideration of this and other ideas (such as developing an adventure golf course in Oaklands Park) incorporated into the open spaces' strategy.</p>
12	Re-wild the River Lavant	The City Council supports this idea in principle, but would like to see that any proposals focus on the likely impacts of climate change, and so plan for the river being dry for extended periods (possibly for several years at a time) and particularly focus on how water can be held back in times of flood, for example by creating new water meadows and flood attenuation areas.
13	Better walking links between parks and green spaces	CCC supports this aim and sees this as a priority. An early focus needs to be on creating a safe

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		route through Northgate Carpark and beyond to better link the city centre with the University and Festival Theatre.
A Diverse & inclusive City		
14	Consider relocation of CDC offices and redevelop East Pallant House for residential land	CCC supports this concept in principle, but we have concerns about the housing mix and how this may impact the City. Social housing should be a priority in any redevelopment. It is also important to ensure that the provision of significant additional residential housing in the centre of the City does not place undue operational restrictions on the many pub and restaurant businesses in the centre of the City.
15	Southern gateway	See previous comments
16	Re-purpose car parks	See previous comments
17	Mixed use development of vacant commercial properties on West Street	CCC supports this proposal in principle. However, we would like to see the focus of any redevelopment be on the provision of additional hotel/retail/hospitality accommodation in the city centre. We would be cautious about incorporating use classes (e.g. residential) that would inevitably conflict with the existing pub and restaurant business operating in West Street or impinge upon other priorities identified in this document (e.g. creating an event space by the Cathedral) from delivering on their regeneration potential.
18	Assessment of needs for business start-up units to share with landlords	<p>CCC are concerned that this shows a considerable lack of ambition. The approach is to let the market provide, but history has shown that markets are perverse and often deliver unintended consequences.</p> <p>There is no ambition to use existing, empty spaces (e.g. Northleigh, The Grange, the old CDC parking offices) which are currently mothballed and could be repurposed very quickly for use as start up space.</p> <p>Used in conjunction with local authority providential lending powers, these spaces could be offered on favourable terms with opening rents deferred for 6-12 months on 'loan' to very quickly facilitate new business generation or provide spaces for local artists and creatives.</p>
An economically prosperous city		

	Description	CCC Comments
19	Improve streetscape at Crane Street	<p>CCC supports the changes to the street scene in Crane Street and have provided both funding and planning officer support to Chichester BID as they try and progress this further.</p> <p>The policy does not go far enough in terms of supporting start-up businesses (e.g. by providing rent-free introductory periods, support and training). As a local authority, CDC have a responsibility to do more than just follow the market, they need to intervene and direct change.</p> <p>CCC also feels that CDC need to do more to revitalise the farmers market, which is lacklustre and diminishing.</p>
20	West Street	See previous comments
21	Car parks	See previous comments
22	Changes to Northgate Car Park Layout	See previous comments
23	Southern Gateway	See previous comments
24	Southern Gateway	See previous comments
25	WSCC offices not currently in use	See previous comments
26	Improve digital connectivity	CCC supports this priority and would like to see it go further and look at how digital inclusion can be expanded for all residents (e.g. access to skills, training and technology, especially for residents who currently have limited or no access).
	Support investment in innovative and high growth sectors	<p>CCC feels that this is not ambitious enough. At present the entire approach to attracting investment in key sectors is to produce a general report showing the current distribution of commercial units in the city and identifying potential gaps, to be shared with commercial property developers. It is not clear if this is seen as a one-off piece of work or if it will be dynamically managed and updated.</p> <p>This kind of research would be a fundamental piece of early due diligence completed by any major developer before undertaking a</p>

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		<p>commercial or mixed-use project and therefore seems a waste of public funds.</p> <p>The proposed outline investment approach is entirely reliant upon external forces and attracting inward investment. In this situation, the city will always be competing against other locations, many of which will have fewer structural disadvantages than Chichester (e.g. better national transport connections, cheaper land and greater local housing supply, less environmental constraints, a younger and larger working age population).</p> <p>There is nothing in the strategy to look at what CDC can pro-actively do to support local investment in preferred sectors to drive change (e.g. working with local education providers to provide access to skills and training, encouraging start-ups in target sectors by offering cheap or rent free space in council owned assets, developing local investment and credit unions to fund investment in target sectors, supporting growth in local small businesses via procurement practices)</p>
Attractive and vibrant City Centre Destination		
28	Community and market assessment into multipurpose arts and music centre and space for live music	<p>CCC tentatively supports this idea in principle, but the assessment needs to be community and grass roots level-led and should not be dominated by the handful of major arts organisations in the City who already take the lions share of both local authority and national arts council funding.</p> <p>Serious consideration needs to be made of the viability of such a venue in Chichester given the considerable economic challenges facing the live music venue sector.</p>
29	West Street Improvement	See previous comments
30	Canal Basin	CCC supports this idea in principle but needs more details on exactly what is proposed and how it will be funded/delivered – it is unclear at this stage if this is a vague aspiration or a firm proposal that will deliver economic regeneration benefits, particularly in an area where there are severe constraints on future re-development or

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		events due to the proximity of large numbers of residential properties and the land ownership issues at the Royal Mail sorting office site.
31	Public realm improvements between the station & the Avenue de Chartres	Whilst CCC supports this aim, we would highlight our comments above (2) about the need to consider how to provide a proper transport hub for the City. We also think that the priority should be expanded to incorporate routes from the train and bus station into the into the City Centre, many of which are unclear, narrow and dark for visitors arriving in the City
32	Marketing & brand development for the City	<p>CCC supports this idea in principle, but development of the strategy is not the issue. Several strategies have been developed over the years; however, none have been adequately funded to implement properly.</p> <p>The problem for the last decade has not been lack of a brand, but rather the lack of a marketing and promotion budget – if CDC are serious about this, then they will need to commit to taking a properly resourced and funded tourism promotion, development and marketing function back in-house. Merely funding development of another strategy would be a poor use of public funds.</p> <p>Tourism provides a substantial part of the overall revenue to Chichester City and District. It must be recognised that Chichester has an exceptional product to offer to a wide range of visitors covering both short and long stays. Chichester must be marketed as a year-round destination. Certain objectives suggest themselves; to convert day visits to overnight stays, to deliver s strong destination brand, to increase visitor numbers outside of peak season. The document estimates that Chichester district attracts around 9 million tourists per year. The value to the local economy has been estimated to be more than £300 million and tourism supports around 8,000 jobs. Chichester must now actively seek to promote its tourism assets and create a year-round destination showcasing the natural beauty of the countryside and coast whilst celebrating the quality of the heritage and cultural experience of the city, towns and villages.'</p>

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33	Hotel market needs assessment	CCC support this proposal to help fully assess the viability and merits of any development proposals that come forward in the city, particularly the redevelopment of key sites in West Street.
34	Crane Street	See previous comments

Comments on the City Council Commitment to Delivery

The strategy identifies the City Council as a lead delivery partner on the following interventions:

15) Work with Key Stakeholders to create a brand and marketing strategy for the city

Whilst the City Council are happy to be a lead partner in the process, this is not an activity that we have identified as a priority in the City Council Plan, and as such we have made no funding allocations or budget provision for this activity.

The City Council is identified as the 'owner' of the following remaining interventions:

Underpinned by the existing Wayfinding Strategy, make improvements to wayfinding and signage with physical infrastructure and digital provision (visible after dark)

The City Council have earmarked £20K in the City Council Plan for investment in wayfinding and signage in the city centre. This is in addition to any funding we agree with WSCC for public realm improvements in North and East Street as a part of the pedestrian pavement improvement scheme. We have currently earmarked schemes for all of our CIL funds and are unlikely in the short term to be able to commit any additional funding to this intervention, so have some concerns about how significant roll-out of digital/illuminated wayfinding provision would be funded or maintained.

Develop a lighting strategy to improve the dark spots across the city to create a safer environment

The City Council have earmarked £16K per year in the City Council Plan for investment in improving street lighting – it is anticipated that improvements will be phased over 5 years, so a total investment of £80k is planned. We are currently beginning work on auditing and prioritising dark spots around the city and will then begin a programme of implementation.

Closing Observations

The City Council would like to reiterate our thanks to CDC in taking seriously the challenges facing the City and investing in producing a regeneration strategy for the future. The work undertaken so far includes many interventions that we support and hope to work with CDC in partnership to deliver.

Of the many initiatives within the document, the City Council feels that the foremost priority of the Regeneration Strategy should be to improve connectivity between the Northern and Southern Gateways to the City. This should focus on creating pedestrian access through the City and regenerating the gateways as hubs of activity and productivity with mixed use developments. Through this, the City Council hopes that the development and retention of young people and emerging talents in high value industries will be an outcome of the regeneration. This will ensure that the City improves its offering of opportunities for younger residents and graduates, increasing the chances for Chichester to retain the talent and skills that are produced by our educational institutions.

In the spirit of partnership, we hope that CDC will take on board our comments and criticisms with an open mind and continue to build on the work in the regeneration strategy. It provides many useful starting ideas for what CDC can proactively do to drive forward change and deliver economic growth.