

Chichester and District Cycle Forum (CDCF)

Response to Chichester District Council Local Plan Consultation

Date: 5th February 2019

CDCF should like to respectfully comment and respond to the current Local Plan Consultation being held by Chichester District Council.

For a start, the consultation papers and documents provided for consideration are without doubt, a 'massive' piece of work. The Chapters and text form a highly technical and complex piece of work covering the whole of the Chichester District. It is as if the district has been 'rolled out' flat or to put it another way, 'no stone has been left unturned'. The Planning Policy Team at CDC must be congratulated for their thoroughness and attention to detail.

With this in mind, it would be presumptuous of CDCF to 'drill down' into the document and request small changes here and there. CDCF have the interests of cyclists and cycling at heart and this response wishes to adopt a more 'broad brush' approach.

Without wishing to state the obvious, different cyclists have different needs and preferences. For some people, cycling is a way to travel from home to work whereas for others, it is a whole family leisure activity. Some cyclists travelling to work require a flat surface and a direct route (on or off road) to achieve a good speed and comfortable cadence. A cyclist on an off road leisure route, wishes to enjoy the safety, peace and fresh air away from vehicular traffic.

One size does not fit all and the Local Plan must reflect these differences. CDCF note that the Local Plan Vision for 2035 includes a reference to residents 'pursuing a healthy lifestyle with good access to leisure facilities and open spaces' and to 'move around safely and conveniently with opportunities to choose alternatives to car travel'. Under the heading of Objectives for the Local Plan (3.19) the document lists the need to 'achieve a sustainable and integrated transport system through improved cycle ways and links to public transport'. CDCF would endorse these statements.

CDCF note that the Local Plan sets out those areas within the Chichester District where new housing would be most suitable and appropriate. According to the Local Plan, the East/West corridor from Tangmere to Southbourne is the most favoured location for the majority of these new dwellings, circa 10,056 with a further 1933 new dwellings being built on the Manhood Peninsular.

CDCF have very recently been working on a cycle project known as CHEMROUTE. This is an abbreviation that describes our aspirations for a decent and useable cycle route between Chichester and Emsworth. In addition to following the A259 corridor, this vital section of cycle route forms part of the National Cycle Network Route 2 ie Dover to St Austell. NCN2 passes through West Sussex and into Hampshire and we

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have a duty and responsibility to ensure that our section is clearly marked, engineered and designed to national standards. Our work on this project has taken us to meet with representatives of the Parish Councils along the route and it has been encouraging to see the unanimous support for NCN2. The Parish Councils are writing this support into their own Local Plans and the hope is that, when certain sites become the subject of a planning application for new housing, contributions will be sought through the Community Infrastructure Levy process to require developers to finance this important cycle route. CDCF are pleased to see that CDC's Local Plan sets out a commitment to improve the highway infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. In simple terms, if the residents of each new household along the A259 corridor ran two cars, this would result in an additional 20,000 cars using the A27 and A259. The traffic jam would be spectacular! Sustainable transport, such as cycling, buses and trains are the only solution and for the former, a decent cycle route must be put in place to encourage the population to leave their cars at home.

One of the frustrations of our current planning process is that planning officers can only make a determination on the development site. In other words, the area of land inside the red boundary line that extends around the whole site. Many developers put in place cycle paths within a new housing area but very often, these paths reach the 'red line' and stop. In other words, these paths do not link in with existing cycle paths or long term plans for a cycle route. The A259 corridor is already seeing and will see in the future, new development sites being identified and it makes sense to require developers to finance cycle infrastructure improvements to encourage their 'new residents' to cycle or walk.

The same argument may be applied to the Manhood Peninsular only here; the current road networks are even more difficult. It is encouraging to see that Policy 18 acknowledges that there is a need to 'improve the infrastructure to support sustainable modes of transport, especially cycle ways, bridleways and footpaths'. In recent months, the Selsey Community Forum has been planning for a Selsey Greenway path to link Selsey with Chichester. It is well known that the B2145 is not a good place to be on a pedal cycle and at the time of writing this response, the first stage of the Greenway ie Selsey to Pagham Nature Reserve is nearing completion. There are advanced plans to progress the pathway further north towards Hunston and Chichester. Further west, the Salterns Way is a considerable community asset and is well used by walkers and cyclists alike.

It is worth noting that the Local Plan points out that CDC are updating their Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan and under Green Infrastructure (DM32) the text reads, 'planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that the following criteria have been addressed: the proposals do not lead to the dissection of the linear network of cycle ways, PROW, bridleways and ecological corridors'.

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Therefore, developers will have to incorporate measures to avoid harm and mitigate effects.

It must also be pointed out that the National Planning Policy Framework that came into force in July 2018 (para 98) directs that, 'planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails'.

CDCF note that the Chichester District forming part of the South Downs National Park will not become the focus for any major new housing developments. The Centurion Way follows the old railway line that was once operated by the London and South Coast Railway Company. To date the Centurion Way extends from Chichester to West Dean and a planning application is currently under consideration to extend the path to the top of Cocking Hill where the South Downs Way crosses over the A286. The ultimate aim is to extend the Centurion Way to Midhurst. CDCF have recently established a Centurion Way User Group to protect the route from unreasonable changes and to offer light maintenance along the route.

In summary, Highways England have published a Cycling Strategy, West Sussex County Council have a Walking and Cycling Strategy, Chichester District Council have a Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Planning Policy. For any of these 'policies' and in particular, this Local Plan, to make any sense whatsoever, CDCF must urge the relevant authorities to put their words into actions. When our communities can actually see real change happening, then and only then, shall we feel satisfied and confident in the knowledge that our thoughts and comments have been applied to everyday, real life situations. CDCF should like to wish the CDC Planning Policy Team well with this project and the eventual publication of the final Local Plan.

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Chair CDCF