

DRAFT LDC PLAN 2016 – 2020

Comments of the Friends of Lewes Society

The Society is the civic society for the town of Lewes, has been in existence since 1952 and is affiliated to the national organisation Civic Voice. It welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft plan although its comments are related solely to the town of Lewes and its immediate surroundings.

The draft plan is clearly aspirational and contains many objectives which the Society can support particularly those related to conserving or enhancing the natural and historic environment. It would be strengthened by having firm targets so that progress on achieving them can be measured at the end of the plan period. It notes that the plan envisages that LDC's office support functions will be merged with those of Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC), even though the two Councils will still be separate legal bodies. It believes that more details are needed on how this will work in practice. For example LDC currently have an arrangements with the National Park Authority (NPA) to deal with all but major planning applications on the NPA's behalf in its area, whereas EBC have relinquished a similar arrangement.

The draft plan is deficient in not mentioning that a proportion of the District is within the National Park and clearly any objectives that come within the functions of the National Park Authority need to be agreed with them. The plan is also deficient in not mentioning tourism as an activity which is improving the economy of the District and particularly the town of Lewes, which is a tourist 'hotspot'. The Society considers that LDC has a role to play in promoting and facilitating tourism and this would include improving signposting for tourists in the town particularly for those arriving at the railway station, ensuring that there are adequate coach parking facilities, keeping the streets clear of litter, improving the public realm and providing an accessible, high-quality information service for tourists.

Whilst working to increase investment in towns and villages is welcome, the word infrastructure should be added to this statement. In the section on resilient, healthy and engaged communities all physical and mental leisure facilities should also be encouraged.

As far as customer service is concerned this should include the planning function both in relation to the validation and processing of planning applications and also the enforcement of planning conditions.

The Society agrees that there should be a 40% target for affordable housing in all new development but considers that this figure should also contain an element of social housing. It has supported the joint Santon/LDC development of the North Street Quarter and the improvements that this should bring, but questions whether the figures shown for new commercial space and parking are those provided by this scheme or are additional to it. It agrees that flood defences in Lewes should be completed. As far as LDC's new homes scheme is concerned, it reserves its position until details are available on the locations to be developed in the town of Lewes and the design of the buildings proposed for those sites,