

Coventry City Council

Health Impact Assessment

Coventry Local Plan and City Centre Area
Action Plan 2016



January
2016

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The responsibility to improve and protect our health lies with us all. There are many factors that influence public health over our lifetime, and all these need to be understood and acted upon. It is important that health and wellbeing is integrated into local authority services such as planning to ensure the wider determinants of health are considered at the outset of development.

1.2 This is the first time that a Coventry Local Plan will contain specific policy guidance on health and wellbeing since the 1950s. It will promote active travel, access to healthy food, improved housing quality, and adequate provision of green spaces and improvements to air quality. Together these factors will help reduce health inequalities and improve life expectancy. The introduction of Health Impact Assessments will also be explored as part of significant new development schemes.

1.3 This Health Impact Assessment (HIA) considers the health impacts of Coventry's proposed Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan. These are both statutory local planning policy documents. The Council's planning policy team gave a commitment to working with public health throughout the development of the Plan's and ensured that health has been integrated. This report aims to critically review the proposed Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan using the Health Impact Assessment methodology.

1.4 A Local Plan is a statutory document which sets out the planning policies in a local authority's area. It contains strategic policies which will guide the future development of the city. All other documents within the Local Development Scheme must be consistent with it. In turn, the Local Plan has to be consistent with national policy and must be applied when considering proposals for development.

1.5 The City Centre Area Action Plan is a proactive planning tool to facilitate change and sets out how this change can be promoted and achieved. It allows us to plan and enable future development within the defined city centre boundary. Coventry city centre is a gateway to the city that represents the principal location for work, learning, leisure and shopping. It offers a fantastic opportunity to exploit our historic assets, our rich 20th century heritage and showpiece innovative 21st century buildings and public realm, which together will create a unique city centre environment.

1.6 Paragraph 171 of The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that *"Local planning authorities should work with public health leads and health organisations to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population (such as for sports, recreation and places of worship), including expected future changes, and any information about relevant barriers to improving health and well-being."*¹

1.7 In Coventry, this is implemented by a Public Health Practitioner leading public health input into the Local Plan and supplementary planning documents. This has taken place during the development of both plans and as individual policies are being developed.

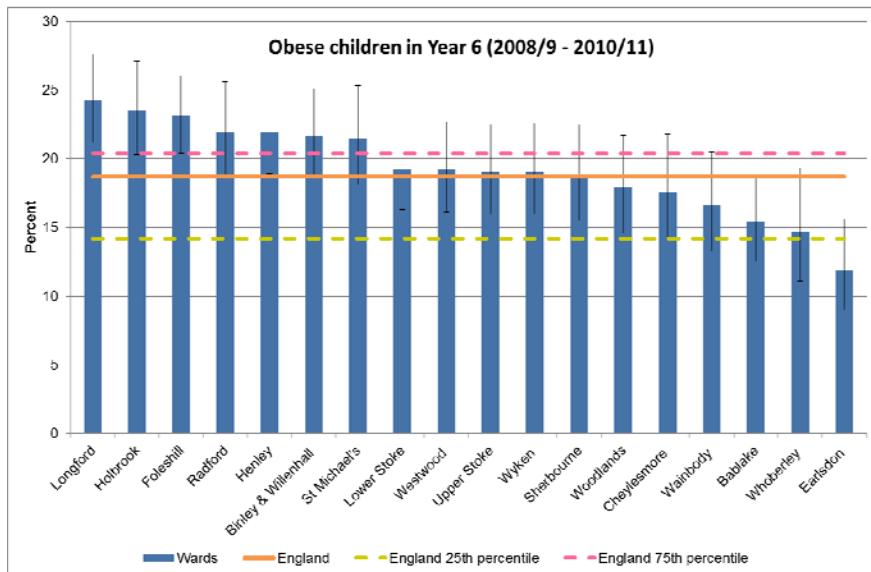
1.8 Health and wellbeing considerations have been embedded in the process and is demonstrated by this Health Impact Assessment which is a technical document. Its purpose is to ensure the policies in the Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan reduce health inequalities and do not actively damage health.

2.0 Key Health Issues for Coventry

2.1 In order to carry out a Health Impact Assessment, a review of the key health status for Coventry is provided below in line with requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. These issues are taken into account when assessing the Local Plan. The 2014 Health Profile for Coventry reveals that the health of the people is generally worse than the regional and England average.²

2.2 There are many lifestyle factors contributing to the high premature mortality rates in Coventry. Life expectancy in the city continues to lag behind England as a whole and there are above average numbers of people who die at a younger age in some parts of Coventry. Life expectancy is 11.2 years lower for men and 8.6 years for women in the most deprived areas of Coventry than in the least deprived.² In other words people who are living in the most deprived areas of Coventry are living the shortest lives and have the most ill health. More than a quarter of our children are living in poverty.

2.3 In Coventry there is evidence of an association between obesity levels and deprivation, where children going to schools located in the most socio-economically deprived areas have Obesity levels of 24.7% in Year 6, compared to 12.6% for those children going to schools in the least deprived areas. Figure 1 below shows the percentage of children in year 6 who are obese by MSOA (2008/9 – 2010/11)



2.4 The weight profile of adults in Coventry with Obesity at 25.7% also compares unfavourably with the national average of 24.2%, and only 5 in 10 of Coventry's adults do enough physical activity.²

2.5 A set of supporting public health indicators grouped into 4 domains will help focus our understanding of progress, and will be monitored and reported by Public Health England through the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

2.6 Coventry's Public Health Outcomes Framework Indicators allow us to compare how Coventry is performing against other local authorities and to benchmark against the England value. The most recent profile shows that Coventry has a number of indicators relevant to the built environment where the performance is worse than the rest of England.³

3.0 The links between planning and health

3.1 There is evidence that the environment in which people live greatly influences their physical and mental health. Factors such as open space, an active lifestyle, access to social community and leisure facilities, community cohesion and good quality housing all impact on people's health and wellbeing and can all be influenced by planning policy. These issues are known as the wider determinants of health and are represented in Figure 2 below.

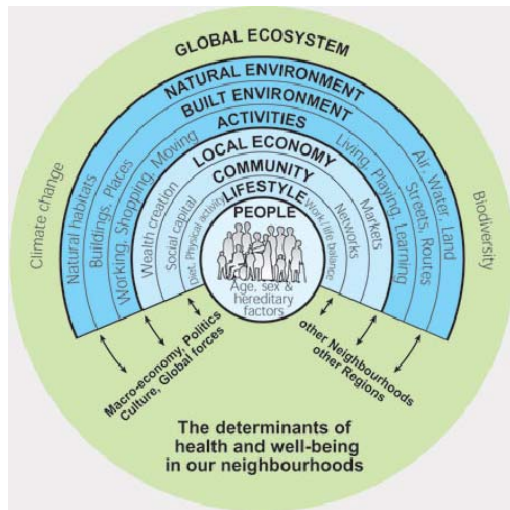


Figure 2: The Health Map. ⁴

3.2 Addressing health inequalities in Coventry requires a comprehensive approach working collaboratively with a number of organisations. Equally the design of buildings and places, and the quality of the public realm are all known to be factors which can have a significant influence on health.

3.3 Planning policy plays an important role in creating healthy communities from the design and provision of infrastructure which supports healthy lifestyles through to the need to provide access to decent housing, sports facilities, recreation, cultural and community facilities and health care facilities.

3.4 When assessing the health impacts of a policy, it is important to take into account the wider determinants as well as the direct determinants of health (such as smoking, diet, alcohol). Some factors are closely under the control of an individual, whereas other factors are not, such as buildings and places. The influence of these social factors of lifestyle choices may explain some of the differences in health seen across Coventry.

3.5 Of critical importance is that the health issues in the city are addressed by policy interventions. The Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan will have a significant influence on the physical development of Coventry over the next 15 years, therefore it is crucial to ensure that development will impact positively on the health of Coventry citizens.

3.6 Through the local development documents, Coventry City Council seeks to improve health and wellbeing by promoting healthy lifestyles, creating safe and inclusive living environments and delivering community facilities which are accessible to services. The policy documents have a key role to promote health and wellbeing.

3.7 The Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan can help create healthy and sustainable communities through ensuring that planning fully considers the impact on the health of the population. Providing a high quality walking and cycling network to promote active travel helps to increase physical activity and social interaction. Access to healthcare, social community and leisure facilities has been shown to have a positive effect on the physical and mental health of local people, enabling them to lead an active lifestyle and participate in community activities.

3.8 Health is a cross cutting theme across both the proposed planning policy documents. The plans:

- Ensure potential health impacts of development are identified and addressed at an early stage in the planning process.
- Address health inequalities through accessibility to facilities, open and green spaces, social community and leisure facilities.
- Encourage physical activity through the provision of opportunities for walking and cycling in the design of new developments
- Provide high quality sports and recreational facilities including open and green spaces
- Design new developments appropriately to reduce crime and the fear of crime

4.0 Health Impact Assessment Process.

4.1 The statutory planning policy documents require that new development will promote, support and enhance health and avoid negative health impacts. Each policy theme will be assessed in the form of a Health Impact Assessment.

4.2 Health Impact Assessment (HIA) can be defined as: "*A combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, programme or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population.*"⁵

4.3 The Local Plan is a high level document which means that very precise details for specific communities cannot be addressed through this report. Once the Local Plan has been adopted, it becomes possible to look at matters in more detail.

4.4 An HIA is an important tool used to assess how developments contribute to the health and wellbeing of the local population. Local authorities and developers need to consider how developments will impact on health and health inequalities. This HIA will help to identify the potential positive and negative health impacts of the proposed Local Plan.

4.5 There is no fixed way to conduct an HIA. However, there are five sequential steps as follows:

1. Screening
2. Scoping
3. Appraisal
4. Reporting
5. Monitoring

4.6 Step 1 Screening. Short process to determine if a HIA is required.

The Council considers that the Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan are important strategies that can influence health and wellbeing. Therefore it is deemed essential that an HIA is carried out to maximise the benefit to health that planning can offer.

4.7 Step 2 Scoping: Determine the size and method of the HIA

Coventry City Council has benefited from a Public Health Practitioner seconded to the Planning Department from the public health team, and this has resulted in health becoming a crosscutting theme of the planning policy documents. Specific policy guidance on health and wellbeing are included. Due to the short time scale available, a desktop HIA was identified as the most appropriate method. Due to the size of the Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan, the time and the resources available, it was not possible to appraise every aspect of the document. A more general approach was taken.

4.8 Step 3 Appraisal: This is the key stage of the health impact assessment.

This stage of the HIA gathers information about the potential nature of the policy's impact. It also provides a opportunity to suggest possible ways to maximise the health benefits and minimise the risks. The strategic nature of the document and the number of people affected makes it impossible to consult with all relevant stakeholders at this stage.

4.9 Step 4: Reporting: The format of this report

This report seeks to be suitable to a wide audience, and will be based on the potential health impacts of each policy theme. Recommendations are made in the conclusion of the document.

4.10 Step 5: Monitoring and evaluation

The aim of this Health Impact Assessment is to inform decision making. An evaluation will be carried out to assess whether the policies were influenced and whether recommendations are taken into consideration. Data will be collected within the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which will refer to the progress of health impacts through the Public Health Outcomes Framework Indicators. This reporting will show changes being made across Coventry to assist in the reduction of health inequalities.

5.0 Health Impact Assessment Findings

5.1 Physical Activity

Improving levels of physical activity in Coventry will have a significant impact on the health of the population. People need to be able to incorporate physical activity into their normal daily routine. A strength of both documents is the opportunity for improving physical activity as part of the normal lifestyles across Coventry.

The accessibility chapter within the Local Plan includes proposals to improve the walking and cycling environment through enhanced highways and off road routes. Future developments should provide suitable facilities for the safe, secure and accessible storage of bicycles, along with showers and locker space for employees. Improvements to the walking and cycling infrastructure are a common theme throughout the City Centre Area Action Plan, which may also lead to a positive impact on health.

Enhancing green infrastructure is also encouraged through the Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan, and both provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, increased physical activity and improved mental health. Easy access to high quality green space is also known to have a positive impact in both physical and mental health.

To support an increase in physical activity it is also important for public buildings to be designed to encourage the use of staircases by making them more visible than lifts. Building design is considered in both planning policy documents.

5.2 Housing

The Local Plan is a high level document for growth and development in Coventry. The requirements for new housing are described, and specific proposals for new homes and employment land are identified. The plan includes analysis of the current housing supply and the projected demand for housing in the coming years. The proposals will lead to an increase in population within Coventry. It is important that the impact such an increase will have on health facilities is considered.

The City Centre Area Action plan provides more specific details about where new housing may be situated and takes into account the new Health and Education Area.

An important focus for future health and social care provision is for older people to be able to live independently. In order to support people as they age, new housing should incorporate the lifetime homes standards. The City Centre Area Action plan has acknowledged the Age Friendly City Project hence recognising the expected increase in the population of older people.

The need for energy efficient homes is expressed within the health and wellbeing chapter of the Local Plan and within policies of the City Centre Area Action Plan. This can improve thermal comfort and consequently reduce the likelihood of accidents in the home, and reduce the impact of extreme temperature changes.

5.3 Employment

The employment and economic growth policy theme of the Local Plan will help to provide accessibility to employment and training opportunities in Coventry. Employment and education has an important influence on health and wellbeing. It provides both social and psychological benefits and can have a positive impact on the long term health of the population. The Local Plan has the potential to contribute to improving health and wellbeing through education, job creation and retention, and reducing health inequalities over the long term. The opportunities and locations for employment have been considered in more detail within the City Centre Area Action Plan.

Coventry's two Universities offer an opportunity to improve people's educational attainment and consequently their chances in life, leading to enhanced health and wellbeing. This has the opportunity to make an important contribution to reducing health inequalities. The proposals will provide a diversity of employment and may lead to fewer journeys as jobs will be available locally.

It is recommended that childcare facilities should be considered as part of such developments.

5.4 Accessibility

The Local Plan has the potential to provide opportunities for social interaction through promoting housing development close to existing transport links, local centres and employment. The loss of green belt land to development will have some impact on loss of green space, however, through development, new more accessible spaces will be created whilst the most sensitive and highest value green spaces will be protected. The ability to walk or cycle to local services is addressed within several chapters and throughout the City Centre Area Action Plan i.e. health and wellbeing, housing, town centre provision and communities. Policies will be amplified through the emerging transport strategy.

There is a growing evidence base to show the health benefits from easy access to high quality green spaces. The green environment chapter of the local plan makes allowances for improved access to green space, including outdoor recreation. This chapter also protects parks, gardens allotments and tree planting. Specific proposals for improving access to green infrastructure are included in the City Centre Area Action Plan which will also help to ensure improvements in the population's health are realised.

It is recognised that there is a need for some car parking within a development. However, this needs to be balanced with encouraging public transport and active travel. The use of public transport will encourage walking and cycling and therefore support prioritisation of public transport over road use.

5.5 Access to healthy food

There is a growing amount of evidence to show that there is an association between the density of hot food takeaways and levels of obesity. It is noted within the retail and leisure chapter of the Local Plan that consideration will be given to public health with regard to the concentration and mix of restaurants, bars and hot food takeaways. Proposals include the development of a supplementary planning document on hot food takeaways which will provide guidance on the proliferation of hot food takeaways, proximity to schools and controlling densities & concentration of such premises in some locations. This will help enable people to make healthier food choices.

The City Centre Area Action Plan has recommended that due to over concentration, no further hot food takeaways will be permitted on Far Gosford Street and Spon Street, and will only be permitted in primary and secondary frontages.

However, the creation of an accessibility standard for fresh food such as fruit and vegetables would be helpful, to increase the healthier food options for consumers.

5.6 Crime Reduction and Community Safety

Urban design principles are encouraged within the design chapter of the local plan and will reduce the likelihood of crime within the area. In turn this will help improve wellbeing as the fear of crime will potentially be reduced. Any changes to the movement of people within new developments needs to be considered to allow for the perception of safety to be improved. This is also considered within the City Centre Area Action Plan.

The Local Plan accessibility chapter acknowledges the recent 20mph speed limit introduced within the ring road, as does the City Centre Area Action Plan. Evidence suggests reducing the speed limit within the city centre has reduced the number and severity of road traffic accidents. However, the local plan does not currently include any specific discussion of 20mph limits or zones in residential areas. Evidence suggests that more children from deprived areas are killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents than those living in more affluent areas. Guidance should be included regarding measures to reduce road traffic accidents and therefore reducing health inequalities, and may be considered as part of the future transport strategy.

5.7 Environmental Impact

There are provisions within both planning policy document to ensure all new developments will take into account air quality, and suitable mitigation put in place where necessary. This is incorporated into the environmental management chapter. An increased population may lead to an increase in air pollution and noise, and lead to associated health impacts, but technological enhancements may support longer term improvements.

The Council's Environmental Protection team holds responsibility for such matters and should be part of future policy development. This will ensure noise and contaminated land is also incorporated into future planning policy, and has been acknowledged in the City Centre Area Action Plan.

Improved thermal insulation as proposed in the housing policy theme may help reduce noise. There will be opportunities through the Local Plan for green active travel routes which may lead to a reduction in noise and air pollution.

5.8 Social Cohesion and social capital

Engagement with communities affected by developments can have a positive effect on social cohesion. The local plan will undergo a period of public engagement which allows residents to find out more on the future of Coventry's built environment.

Improved social cohesion and social capital can benefit health and wellbeing through the provision of community facilities, areas for play, and increased opportunities for walking and cycling. This is incorporated into several policy themes of the Local Plan including health and wellbeing; green environment; design; communities; retail and leisure. Providing suitable shops and centres for people to meet will help to build social capital, as will supporting accessible community facilities such as schools, healthcare and places of worship. The city centre will continue to be the focus for major community and social facilities which will allow accessibility by public transport and will be enabled by the City Centre Area Action Plan.

Public transport will be improved according to the both planning policy documents. This will help those without a car, particularly the young, elderly and mobility impaired, to socialise and interact. In turn this will help to reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing. It may also contribute to reducing pollutants from excessive car trips which impact on air quality.

Social cohesion is supported by opportunities within green infrastructure which also includes play areas, school grounds, allotment sites and public realm. These areas will need to be well designed to encourage their use and for increased social capital. In larger office developments, it is recommended that there is provision for social interaction.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Coventry's Local Plan and City Centre Area Action Plan have the potential to positively influence the health and wellbeing of our population along with a potential to reduce health inequalities.

6.2 The Health Impact Assessment has not highlighted any major impacts on health and wellbeing. Each document incorporates aspects which promote health, and allows for an increased quality of life for the population.

6.3 Clear channels of communication have been maintained between the planning policy team and public health to maintain the standard of planning policies in relation to health and wellbeing. Coventry's public health team is keen to continue the collaboration with the planning department to allow for health and wellbeing to be embedded within future planning policy documents.

6.4 The report will be published alongside the proposed Local Plan as part of the public engagement process for consultation and comments invited from a wide range of stakeholders.

6.5 Recommendations

- Investigate the possibility of incorporating the Lifetime Homes standard into a proportion of new developments
- Consider the integration of physical activity into the design of buildings and social spaces.
- Have regard to possible childcare facilities within new developments for education and employment sites
- Ensure there is a process for considering the impact of population increase on healthcare facilities
- Explore options for including 20mph zones or limits within new residential developments.
- Consider the creation of an accessibility standard for fresh food
- Agree future projects and work programmes with public health to ensure continued collaboration in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.

7.0 References

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