

Canterbury Triangle

Vision Statement

**Kent County Council
Canterbury City Council
Dover District Council
Thanet District Council
Pfizer Ltd
South East England Development Agency**

Llewelyn Davies, 2000

Introduction

The Canterbury Triangle

The Canterbury Triangle is a distinctive area of Kent - encompassing the districts of Canterbury, Dover and Thanet, it is the nearest part of mainland Britain to continental Europe. It may be seen as part of the international corridor between London and Paris, Brussels, the Rhine and Ruhr and the Netherlands.

The area is bounded by the lower Thames Estuary, the Channel, and the rail and road routes from Dover to Canterbury. The sides of this almost equilateral triangle are each some 32 kilometres (nearly 20 miles) in length and encompass some 450 square kilometres. The Triangle is a rich and varied area - in its coastline and countryside, in its towns and villages, and in its extraordinary heritage. Its main coastal settlements, Whitstable, Herne Bay, Margate, Broadstairs, Ramsgate, Sandwich, Deal and Dover, form a fan arrangement of which the Cathedral City of Canterbury is the pivot.

The Triangle has particular dynamics. These include the extra-ordinary growth of Pfizer Ltd and its pharmaceutical complex just north of Sandwich, the emergence of London Manston Airport on the Isle of Thanet as a focus of growth in air transport and air-related industrial services, and the repositioning and revival of the Dover ports and port related industries. These in turn are complemented by Canterbury as a world-class cultural, heritage and tourism destination. Canterbury also functions as a sub-regional centre for retailing and professional commercial services. It is a complex region, with a population of 300,000, with the area characterised by its geography and the functional relationships and linkages that exist.

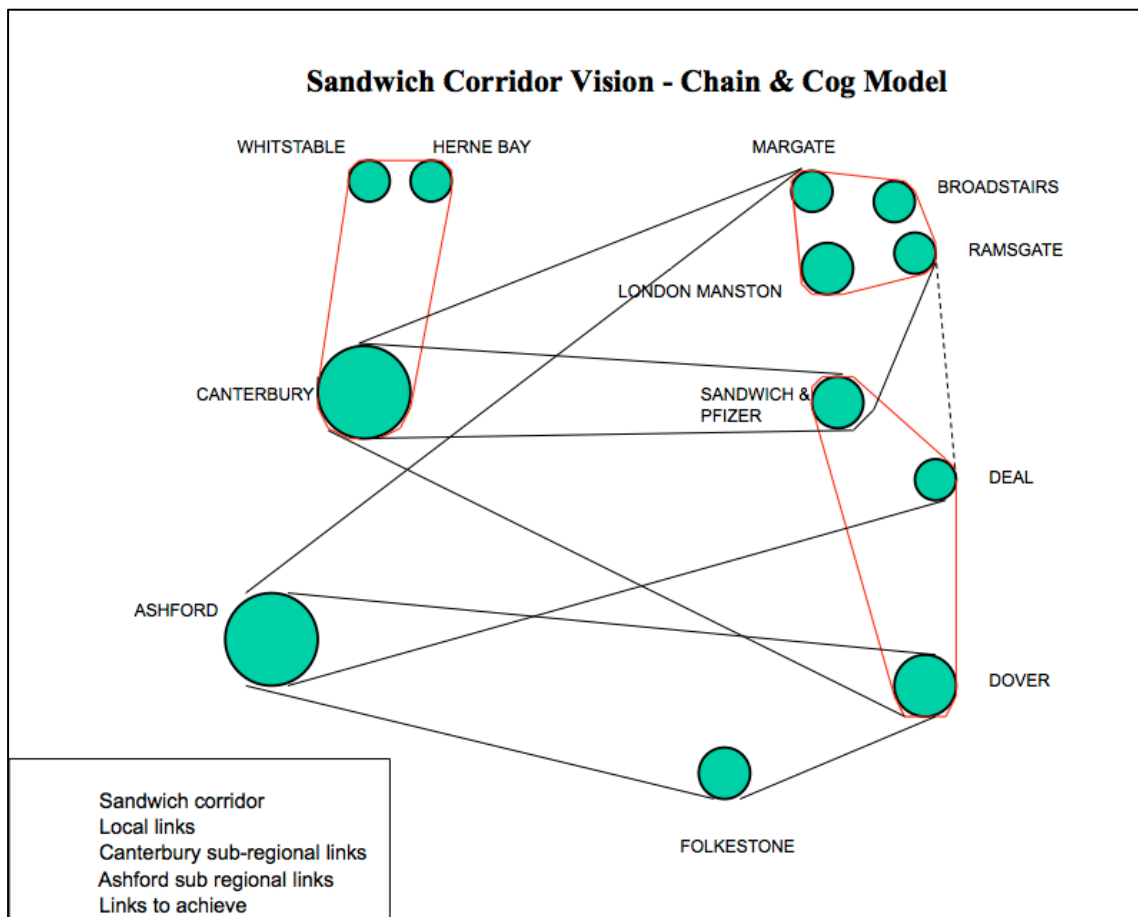
Each district within the Triangle has a distinct identity and policies and programmes addressing district-wide responsibilities. In parallel, there are important issues to be addressed over the Triangle as a whole which include:

- The demand and supply of housing;
- A transportation system serving the whole area effectively;
- The realisation of the cultural, heritage and tourism assets;
- The conservation and enhancement of the environment;
- Enabling a strong quality of life for the different communities and
- Nurturing the employment and business development opportunities to ensure the widespread and sustainable economic regeneration of the area.

These have been addressed in a concerted manner over recent years as the District Councils have been working together with the County Council, the private sector, infrastructure agencies and others.

This 'Vision' for the Canterbury Triangle is a further step, responding to and building upon a momentum that already exists. It is concerned with policy direction in the medium to longer, as well as short, term. It is a framework within which more detailed policies, programmes and projects can be defined for funding and implementation, and for partnerships between the main bodies active at governmental, private sector and community levels.

The Vision is for a common understanding and an integrated cross-District and County frame of reference that allows the area's strengths to be optimised and the weaknesses addressed. It recognises the important, complementary and distinctive roles that the different parts of the Triangle provide towards its collective identity and social and economic life.



The Need for a Vision

The area is one of economic, social and environmental contrasts. Economic growth in one sector sits alongside decline in another. Prosperity exists alongside social deprivation and exclusion, while strong demand for new housing contrasts with the marked decline of some of the housing areas in the towns. There is therefore something of a mismatch between demand and supply over the whole area and generally in the linkages between housing, employment and transport.

There exist superb leisure, culture and tourism resources which include a wonderful heritage, countryside, coast and village and town environment. Yet, despite the extra-ordinary level and variety of amenity and the quality of the environment, the many projects and programmes underway in the Districts and considerable economic dynamism on several fronts, in overall terms something is missing. A wider regeneration effort remains necessary.

There is strong recognition that the individual Districts do not exist in isolation. **The continued growth of Pfizer, the emergence of London Manston Airport as a potential economic force, the rejuvenation of port activity, especially in Dover, and the need for widespread regeneration, highlight issues that are relevant to the Triangle as a whole.** These issues include where people may live and work and how they travel, where they choose to visit for education, leisure, cultural and shopping purposes, and the maintenance and enhancement of the area's environment and heritage.

The Triangle provides an identity, a common set of themes for the partners and presents a logical unit as a framework for preparing plans, programmes, projects and funding bids.

Principles

By **co-ordinating activity** across the three Districts, the residents and workforce can benefit from a full complement of facilities, services and opportunities (albeit not provided directly on their doorstep). An important aspect is to recognise what each place has to offer, where the comparative advantages lie and to ensure good accessibility so that the full range of jobs and other facilities is available to all. Future strategies must recognise those attributes of each District that cannot be located elsewhere in the sub-region, or where there are already significant levels of investment. This could be formalised within a strategy for the Canterbury Triangle. The strategy could use as its building blocks the functional relationships (physical, social and economic) that currently require attention and the economic drivers of the area. Such cross-boundary working, however, requires an appropriate decision-making structure that fits well with existing structures.

There is a need to focus on the relationships between homes, workplaces, leisure, cultural and education facilities. Where facilities are currently unconnected, they need to be **linked up**; where new development occurs, the principles of **proximity and accessibility** by a range of modes of travel must be the backbone of the solution. Putting the **sustainability agenda** into practice in the Triangle is important to improving the quality of opportunities on offer, as well as contributing to international environmental goals. Mixed-use development is one technique for delivering sustainable development that should be widely implemented.

By focusing development (housing, employment and leisure) on **previously developed urban land** and redeveloping or refurbishing failing areas within the urban envelope, the Triangle offers a great opportunity to ensure that any benefits from new investment are available to existing, as well as incoming, residents and employees.

The outcome of any physical or managerial changes within the Triangle must be to deliver quality development. Quality should be judged not only in terms of local preferences, but also in terms of a wider contribution to achieving sustainability and environmental improvement. Given the likelihood of disparity between the local and wider agenda, it will be necessary for the three Districts and other parties to be closely involved in the decision-making process.

The Economy, Education and Jobs

THE VISION

*Businesses, government and communities have a **common understanding** of how their individual interests affect each other and the Canterbury Triangle area as a whole. They 'own' a **common frame of reference** which identifies issues that have a cross border dimension (be they land use, economic, social or cultural aspects) and sets out how best the area's many strengths can be optimised and weaknesses minimised. For example Canterbury, Thanet and Dover share a **network of first class further and higher education** institutions, offering a globally renowned set of academic and vocational courses.*

*An important strength is their **links with local business**, which generate appropriately trained high calibre employees and help to foster local business specialisms. Political leadership recognises the **role that different places play** in the social and economic functioning of the Canterbury Triangle and ensures that individual components play their part effectively. All in all, the business of making the area work better is well directed and a programme of short term and long term, low cost and high cost change is systematically implemented. Ad hoc and unconnected sub-regional working arrangements and initiatives have been consigned to the archives.*

The range and quality of work opportunities has grown in past years, driven by jobs with international connections, tourism and business links with tertiary education. The growth of the airport and rapid rail and road access to the ferries (along with the advantageous economic environment in the UK) is a major attraction for businesses and employers. The tourism industry in the Canterbury Triangle is an important employer of local people. The traditional product of cultural and pleasure activities has been enhanced along with a new product, green tourism.

TODAY

There are many economic drivers in the Triangle, scattered and shared between the three Districts. Some, such as Pfizer and Dover port, are expanding rapidly, others fall in the 'static but have potential' category. It is important to recognise and foster those attributes of each District that cannot be located elsewhere in the sub-region, or where there are already significant levels of investment:

- Canterbury's role as provider of world class education, cultural pursuits, regional retailing and an international tourist destination;
- Dover's role as a thriving port for freight and passengers, cruise destination, port and distribution related employment, conservator of coastal habitats;
- Thanet's potential role as an international airport for freight and passengers and aircraft maintenance, and existing role as a coastal

holiday and leisure destination, with significant amounts of well-located development land.

In order to generate benefits from the unique proximity of the Triangle to mainland Europe, links need to be developed and maintained, although the extent and nature of these links may change as the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union changes.

Co-ordination of tertiary education and businesses' needs remains important. As changes to education occur, it is essential to the future of the Triangle as a whole that the service is rationalised around a co-ordinated approach that balances the needs of population and businesses. The benefits of expanding the local tertiary education sector would be:

- More links between education, businesses and business innovation;
- Service industry growth – leisure, building services, construction, accommodation;
- Regeneration of urban areas if the campus is suitably located;
- To give the area a positive and progressive identity and demonstrate that it is place people value and want to come to;
- By training people locally for niche job markets, the integration of professionals into the area can occur earlier. This creates demand for a wider range of social and residential infrastructure as people move up the career ladder from an East Kent base rather than experienced people being brought in, creating demand only for executive houses;
- Helping to stimulate business clusters around key employment and education themes.

Tourism is a provider of jobs but its potential is undersold, despite revamped marketing and new attractions. The authorities must continue to enrich and sell a high quality package, which could include expanding the product on offer through a green tourism strategy. As more people are attracted to the area, the already strong pressure for high quality hotel accommodation will increase. Maximising this opportunity will require all authorities to jointly consider their District's needs to provide the best solution for the Triangle as a whole.

Integrated land use and accessibility

THE VISION

*The Canterbury Triangle is an area where people's **homes, workplaces and activities are well linked** - "a place for everything and everything in its place". People do not have to travel far for their day-to-day activities, and are not encouraged or compelled to do so by policy or poorly located development. Everyone has the **opportunity to participate** in employment, leisure and other activities whether or not they have independent access to a car.*

*A clear housing and development framework at the Triangle level has enabled **shorter journeys**, thus enabling greater use of non-motorised modes. Activities and journeys between them are channelled along corridors that are well served by public transport. A high percentage of all trips are made by non-car driver modes, partly because of high occupancy rates of cars, and partly because of the popularity of walking and cycling, and incentives for using the high quality public transport system, including the maintenance of the traditional lower-than-average fares.*

TODAY

There is a need to shape the location of jobs to fit the existing and future settlement patterns, by focusing both homes, jobs and traffic-attracting facilities within the walking catchment of strongly developed public transport "spine routes". In a relatively low-density environment such as East Kent, demand for public transport will always be lower than in the big cities. It is therefore necessary to concentrate demand by focusing all significant new development activity along core routes. In areas of existing development accessibility is more heavily reliant on private transport. Outside core routes it is less easy to provide transport choice but innovative schemes can be important to sustainable living objectives.

Public transport should be seen as an important, but not the main alternative to the private car. (In small and medium sized towns, public transport rarely accounts for more than a 10% share of total travel, whereas walking and cycling together rarely account for less than 20%).

At site level, development should be designed to adopt the principles of "sustainable residential quality" e.g. direct pedestrian routes, direct access to bus stops, cycle parking etc. Such practical steps can help encourage more responsible travel behaviour.

There would be considerable benefit in producing a single Local Transport Plan statement for the Triangle, rather than the separate Thanet, Dover and Canterbury statements produced so far. Such a plan could identify and

ascertain the development potential of multi-modal interchanges. The Triangle has numerous locations where bus and rail, road and rail, road and bus, rail and rail interchanges would be appropriate, all of course linking with pedestrian and cycle networks. Such interchanges can help to create a convenient network, rather than a series of unconnected routes or services.

Another strategic transport issue is access to London Stansted Airport. At present the access is by a relatively minor road. If the potential growth of the airport for passengers, freight and air related business is to be realised, then substantial changes will be required to airport accessibility, maximising the contribution by “green” modes. Passenger operations at the airport must be accessible by public transport, as well as by private road transport. This can best be met in the short to medium term by a combination of direct coach services, bus shuttle link to rail interchanges, and taxi and bespoke minibus services.

For local or regional customers, and for employees of airport-related businesses, local green travel networks and travel arrangements should be encouraged by the airport operators and other transport bodies. In the future, air freight and non local air-related business travel that is not met by public transport will require good connections between the main road network and the airport.

Quality Transport

THE VISION

*The Canterbury Triangle now prides itself on the **quality of its public and private transport networks**, and the provision of safe and pleasant paths for walking and cycling, as well as its road network and public parking facilities. **Interconnections** between these local networks and national and international networks are convenient and cost-free, creating a seamless journey when people are travelling further afield.*

*The functional relationship between land use and accessibility lies behind all planning in East Kent. Development has been designed and located such that it is accessible by a **choice of travel modes**. The car remains an important aspect of personal accessibility, but people have real choices available in how they move around the area and how far they have to travel. People without access to cars, including children, have a high degree of independence because they can use **safe, high quality foot and cycle networks and public transport services**.*

TODAY

The quality of transport options in East Kent is varied. Road congestion is relatively minor with the exception of a handful of hotspots. Rail services in the north and the east of the triangle are poor (particularly to London), public transport is not rigorously co-ordinated and service frequencies are low during off-peak periods. Bus and rail services are not well integrated. For many journeys the car reigns supreme. However, this is not necessarily acceptable, particularly to those who cannot afford a car and those who are suffering the impacts of environmental pollution. Quality transport means greater choice, but switching from the car to more sustainable modes of travel is difficult to encourage, particularly where the impact of car travel on individuals is not onerous.

Quality transport is about seamless operations, appropriate services and high quality infrastructure.

Seamless operations in the Triangle's travel network will require multi-modal interchanges, integrated information, timetables and tickets for travel by road, rail, sea and air, public transport services that run on time and interconnect, and staff awareness of other travel modes.

Appropriate public transport services require:

- Service periods that cover all activities, not just 9 to 5 work journeys, or weekday shopping;

- Service frequency to be maintained at all times, with clockface timetabling throughout;
- Good destination coverage such that few places can be reached only by car or taxi;
- An appropriate distinction between highly accessible local services, and longer distance services;
- International travel to be easy with direct bespoke and public transport services linking to London Manston Airport, Ashford International rail station, and Dover and Ramsgate ports;
- Fast rail services for longer journeys, with bus and innovative “demand responsive collective transport” serving local journeys and rural areas;
- Interchanges between different services, and between public and private transport, using park and ride facilities

High quality infrastructure should be encouraged along with high standards of maintenance, and convenience of design for customers including those whose mobility is limited. Real-time information on traffic conditions and public transport services should be provided in many public places as well as in the home via digital TV, the Internet and mobile phones.

Encouraging local residents and employees by providing a choice of improved quality transport services will result in the car no longer being an automatic first choice for all journeys.

The varying levels of accessibility and travel demand within East Kent leave a role for all modes of transport. Rail for strategic long distance trips, buses for short local trips, cars for off-peak, irregular and quick journeys, cycling and walking for local trips. It is important that the role of each is recognised and used as a guide to prioritising investment and schemes. Clearly, the role of each mode of transport can be broadened, with more services and facilities.

Housing

THE VISION

East Kent has successfully met the challenge to provide the right type of homes, in the right location, at the right time without compromising the sustainability agenda. It is also a frequently quoted example of 'green' best practice in housing and neighbourhood design.

East Kent is a popular place in which to live. It has a housing market that is well related to work opportunities and leisure pursuits, all of which are accessible by a choice of transport modes. The predominantly urban development has helped to revitalise and redefine many areas of Dover, Deal, Sandwich and the Thanet towns. It offers alternative and modern lifestyles to newcomers, movers and existing residents within East Kent.

The housing on offer in the area is well built and incorporates high environmental standards. Not only has this minimised the energy requirements of each household, but investment in additional utilities capacity has been kept to a minimum.

The benefits of the housing boom are also being enjoyed by those who have not moved house. Focused planning gain agreements and a comprehensive strategy for community infrastructure improvements that link new and existing housing communities have minimised the sense of invaded territory amongst local people and given them a share of the development benefits.

TODAY

There will be growth in demand for quality family housing in the immediate future as economic activity increases. The expectation from the growth of Pfizer alone is for some 1250 homes by 2005, which may be over and above that expected to be met through the current identified planning pipeline and existing vacant properties.

Housing requirements need to be assessed on an East Kent basis, reflecting the fact that the housing market and employment patterns have little regard for administrative boundaries. Linkages between economic development needs and housing supply could then be explored, with housing targeted at those areas wishing to maximise economic growth.

Given land shortages in and around Canterbury, the focus falls on Thanet and Dover Districts to meet this demand, and it is additionally important that they do so to avoid increasing the volume of long distance commuting in the region. The issue of what type of housing to produce and where suggests that the authorities in the Canterbury Triangle will need to carefully balance the requirements of incoming residents with

the Government's new agenda for housing development. A local interpretation is required of policies about intensity of development, mixing housing with other uses, opportunities to minimise travel by co-location of working and living environments, "brownfield" development and proximity of quality public transport links and housing development.

Westwood could provide a large number of new homes in accordance with the principles behind these policies. It has the potential for a transport interchange, is close to major development drivers (airport and business parks), relatively close to Pfizer and has seen significant investment in retailing and most recently the Canterbury Christchurch Thanet campus. To date development has been predominantly commercial and piecemeal, albeit on sites chosen for the individual purpose. Future development in the area should be considered in the context of an overall plan for the area. A sense of place needs to be cultivated to create a coherent mixed-use settlement, which moves beyond the car orientation of much of the existing development.

Rural development should only occur in select villages with the greatest opportunities for choice in travel mode and shorter travelling distances to work, shops and leisure i.e. those settlements with a distinctive role in supporting more sustainable rural communities. The rural development strategy should resist pressure for general dormitory housing growth, or other settlement growth in areas with a high dependence on motorised travel. Appropriate settlements will have a greater degree of self-sufficiency than others. This should be the over-riding set of criteria, rather than the fact the location is a "brownfield" site. Without this filter, development would only exacerbate and extend the rural problems facing villages today.

Quality environment, quality culture

THE VISION

Design and inclusivity

The Canterbury Triangle has high quality centres that make the most of the historic fabric and its sometimes dramatic setting. Canterbury in particular continues to contribute to the development of English culture as well as that of the region. Within urban areas, strategies focusing on movement, structure, form, image, use and community have been able to deliver physical and socially desirable places. Content and presentation of places are well co-ordinated to offer culturally distinct, functional yet intriguing places, meshed with a grid of 'green' places in which to travel and enjoy leisure time.

Towns and villages in the Triangle sit well with their rural surroundings. The buildings and spaces enable businesses to flourish without compromising the local environment. Clear urban edges, landscaping and gateways create a strong sense of place and identity. Places and spaces are defined - by the shape, height, rhythm and grain of building patterns street and building lines - giving street patterns form and continuity. Economic and social variety within the town, district and local centres is encouraged by a mix of tenures and land uses, improving the convenience of many community services. Everyone feels welcome and safe during the day and evening, and each person adds to the friendly atmosphere. People move around their town directly and safely, enjoying the environment whether they are walking, cycling, driving or a passenger. As people move around, without conflict with other modes of travel, they readily recognise and like where they are.

Leisure

The distinctive formal and informal cultural features of each city, town and village are recognised and have been enhanced and preserved. These places are interesting to visit and live in, distinctively reflecting the local scale and setting within which they lie. A Green Tourism Strategy clearly defines those parts of the Triangle with special value for leisure purposes. The rural areas have been 'discovered' for their natural beauty whether it is wildlife, flora, or views you are seeking. The activities on offer, including cycling, walking, watersports and bird watching have been incorporated without damaging the areas requiring conservation and preservation.

TODAY

The 'cultural' offer of a place is a result not only of formal attractions, e.g. theatre and the quality of its programming, but also of the stringing together of a coherent set of experiences, ranging from a busy attractive harbour, to the level of activity on the street or the design of street lights.

Whilst Canterbury will continue to be a cultural focus within the Triangle, there are at least three significant cultural developments which are beginning to redefine urban areas elsewhere - Margate Old Town renewal, the Turner Centre and Ramsgate Harbour. The benefits of these schemes will impact further afield than their immediate location. The facilities may generate clusters of other businesses generating economic benefits. They may also bring an overall improvement in what the region has to offer, and they potentially offer a core idea around which arts programmes, leisure, education and a whole "Cultural Plan" can be structured. These high profile developments are particularly important because they lift the image of an area, which other than Canterbury, does not immediately shout 'cultural quality.' Without this sort of soft infrastructure, the area fails to compete as well as it could in the market for attracting new businesses and their employees to live locally.

The countryside in the Triangle is defined by its role and character. The area benefits from a range and quality of natural, cultural and historical environments. Take the contrasting and powerful scenery at Pegwell Bay: historically this has been a key point for the arrival of new ideas and cultures into Britain. Today the series of wetland habitats is internationally important for the wildlife it supports.

Integrating environmental factors within a common vision will sustain the high quality countryside and embrace and recognise its richness and role in enhancing people's quality of life. Future regeneration must be complementary, maximising opportunities to safeguard and enhance these positive and valuable resources without letting the economic regeneration potential of 'green tourism' slip away.

However, whether on the cliffs and beaches, in the rural areas and rich countryside, or in the many villages or the cores of the historic ports and towns and the Cathedral City of Canterbury, a quality environment exists. New and improved amenities are emerging at a District level that further enrich the area.

Within the Triangle there are however a number of quality of life challenges yet to be addressed; places inaccessible except to car owners, a lack of a vibrant youth culture, and areas of dereliction and poor quality development. In common with many other areas of Britain, there has been no qualitative vision for the spatial design of the environment. A key area for attention is a thrust towards design-led quality. This needs to focus on: the new areas of urban development, the architecture, public realm and place making; consolidating and giving form to areas of recent ad-hoc development; and encouraging the re-development of eye-sore sites.

Acknowledgements

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