

Canterbury BID response to CCC’s Levelling up Fund – Canterbury Castle Keep and Grounds Survey

Canterbury City Council: We have a budget of around £2.6 million for capital works at the castle, its grounds and the surrounding public realm.

We anticipate at least half of this budget will need to be spent on the fabric of the castle to make it safe and to carry out the conservation work needed. The conservation work is the priority as this will unlock our key aim, to reopen the castle to the public.

How do you feel about each of these project aims for the castle and its grounds? Please tick one box for each aim

To open the site to the public

- Yes - I agree
- No - I don’t agree or think it is needed
- Neither or don’t know

To put in measures to increase the feeling of safety

- Yes - I agree
- No - I don’t agree or think it is needed
- Neither or don’t know

To enable a space for the community and events

- Yes - I agree
- No - I don’t agree or think it is needed
- Neither or don’t know

To make it more accessible for all

- Yes - I agree
- No - I don’t agree or think it is needed
- Neither or don’t know

To develop the site as an educational resource

- Yes - I agree
- No - I don't agree or think it is needed
- Neither or don't know

To celebrate its heritage

- Yes - I agree
- No - I don't agree or think it is needed
- Neither or don't know

Please tell us why

The restoration of Canterbury Castle will be key to ensuring we have enough experiences to keep our visitors in the city, both locals and tourists. Businesses in the castle area are keen to support this investment as a new quarter has just been launched for that part of the city (The Castle Quarter).

Businesses in the Castle Quarter area have said that having an attractive, well maintained and enticing offer in their area will help with recruitment and general footfall and dwell time, which will help with economic recovery post-pandemic and during the current cost of living crisis.

This much-needed investment will have a demonstrable impact on the lives of the people who work, live, visit and study here, and we believe that providing access to the Castle will help improve pride of place.

Wayfinding and interpretation is essential to make this work. Can you please clarify that this definitely part of the Levelling Up funded works in and around the Castle area and the city.

Overall, the levelling up funding has the potential to support the city's vision to position Canterbury as a world class cultural, heritage and commercial destination, making the most of the assets we already have and enabling us to tell new stories about the city's past, present and future in order to benefit the widest possible audience.

Are there any other aims that you think we should be trying to achieve in the castle and its grounds? Please tick one box only

Yes

Wayfinding and interpretation is absolutely essential and has been requested for many years. We appreciate that £20 million for all the projects involved in the LUF bid isn't necessarily enough to do everything that is desirable on the castle and its grounds (for example, trenching for electricity access), but if there is going to be investment into Canterbury's heritage and public spaces, we need to ensure people know about it and can find it.

Is there anything you would like us to consider about the design of the castle and grounds in terms of accessibility?

Physical accessibility and neurodiverse challenges should always be a consideration. Whilst Canterbury is a small, historic city with narrow streets and "cobbled" pavement, one of the most important factors with accessibility is communicating what people can expect before they arrive. This includes transport options and an understand of what can be expected when they arrive on site. This is yet another significant reason for wayfinding, signage and general communication (both physical and digital) to be factored into this project.

What other improvements do you think could be made in the castle and its grounds?

Power access. Consultation with event providers.
Improving links with St Mildred’s Church
Consideration of the wider Canterbury Tales of England vision for the area.

We understand that not everything is possible with the LUF funding, but ongoing communication and consultation with the CTOE group, which is representative of multiple stakeholders in and around the city, will help ensure that future funding opportunities can be maximised.

Story gardens

Canterbury City Council: Part of the wider LUF project is to develop a series of story gardens. These gardens along with accompanying routes will be used to tell Canterbury’s ‘Tales of England’, unlocking the heritage of the city and bringing it to life for new audiences.

We want the story gardens to achieve the following aims:

For residents:

- Improve pride of place
- Provide connectivity between local people and their heritage
- Help residents feel more secure in their open spaces

For all:

- Improve accessibility to open spaces
- Tell a story - be an educational resource
- Appeal to a wider audience
- Preserve our heritage

This can be achieved in a variety of ways. We expect the works to involve landscaping and interpretation, but each garden will be different and sympathetic to its individual space.

Do you think the grounds of the castle would be a suitable space for a story garden? Please tick one box only
yes

Please make any comments or suggestions regarding this here:
Public realm (streets, pavements, roads)

Wayfinding and interpretation!!!

Story gardens are important, but more important is funding for wayfinding and interpretation so the areas that receive funding from LUF are findable / accessible.

Are there any improvements that you would like to see made to the public realm that surround the castle grounds and between the castle and Dane John Gardens? P1

Wayfinding

Pavement improvements

Some of the LUF money can be used to enable events at the castle. Do you believe investment of this sort is needed? Please tick one box only

Yes

What events and community use do you think would be best suited to the castle and its grounds following the investment?

Live performance, community fetes, talks / walks (part of Canterbury Guided Tours, for example), wedding hire, outdoor art exhibitions and instalations, well being (yoga etc), Canterbury Festival location - the possibilities are endless.

Sustainability

We will need to ensure that management of the castle grounds and preservation of the keep remains affordable in the longer term in line with council budgets.

Whilst having regard to the repairability and longevity of any materials will go some way toward this we want to make sure we take this opportunity to think about other ways to achieve this.

Do you have any ideas on how this could be best achieved? This could be about how we do or don't spend the LUF investment, about fundraising ideas or anything else? If so, give details
Sympathetic and sustainable greening of the city walls and routes between the caslte and Dane John, and between the castle and the Castle Quarter (Castle Street in particular which is in desperate need of improved lighting).