



Feat

Food environment assessment tool
www.feat-tool.org.uk

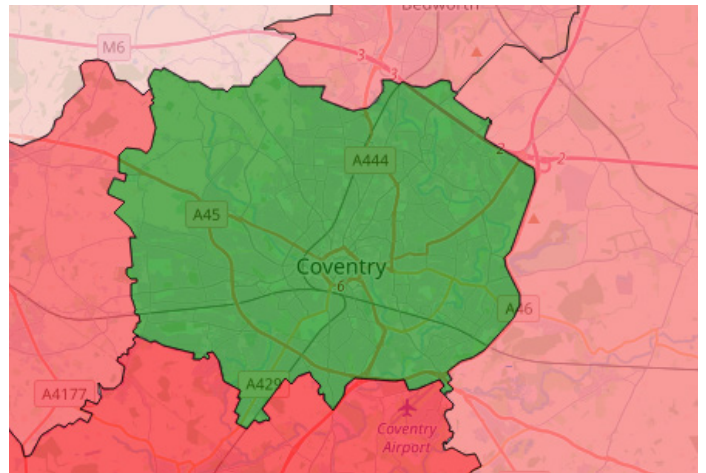
Feat case study: Coventry City Council

Coventry City Council is using the Food environment assessment tool to support their bold ambition to improve public health through restricting the opening of new hot food takeaways. *Feat* is helping the Council make real impacts on the ground in the city.

Interview with: **Karen Lees, Programme Manager – Inequalities, Coventry City Council**

What was the problem you were trying to tackle? What data did you feel you were missing?

Coventry is a city with a population of roughly 366,800, within which over one in five (22.6%) of Year 6 children are classified as obese. This is worse than the average for England. The city has significant health inequalities and differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are closely aligned with deprivation. In 2012, inequality in male life expectancy at birth was 11.7 years between our most and least deprived areas, whilst inequality in female life expectancy at birth was 7.9 years.



We wanted to be bold with our ambitions to improve public health. So we decided to restrict the opening of new hot food takeaways through use of the planning system. No new takeaways in areas that already had high concentrations. We knew this approach could be controversial, and likely to be challenged by prospective takeaway owners if it wasn't underpinned by solid local data. So we needed clear, validated evidence as to where takeaways were concentrated and where they weren't.

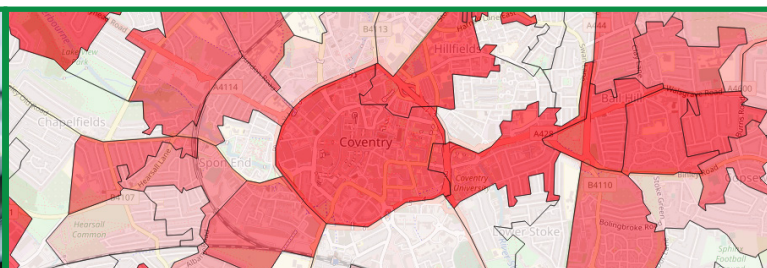
We also wanted to be able to compare and rank each district in the county. But this sort of data hasn't traditionally been available, so this approach wasn't possible – until we discovered *Feat*.

What were the unique data or features of *Feat* that you couldn't find elsewhere?

Feat is the only available resource that we know of that shows the concentration of hot food takeaways per 1,000 head of population, for small areas.

It allowed us to zoom into lower super output areas (LSOAs), which was particularly relevant for the policy we were working on. Being able to identify the correct LSOA for the address of the proposed takeaway, and hover over it see the current concentration of takeaways was invaluable.

The interface and interactivity of *Feat* was particularly useful for those who are more visual and who don't like statistics. The data in *Feat* were up to date, too. The latest PHE data were at least a year older and were limited in other ways too. We would struggle to put together our own dataset that was as current – and as regularly updated – as *Feat*.



How were the data from Feat used? Was there a formal output?

We adopted a policy in our Local Plan to help manage the delivery of new Hot Food Takeaways. This policy is now supported by dedicated guidance in a supplementary planning document (SPD), which forms a material consideration in the determination of the outcome of any new planning application. The guidance states that if an application for a new takeaway falls in an area that has a higher than national average level of hot food takeaways per thousand population, according to *Feat*, the application is unlikely to be approved.

We think that Coventry was the first local authority to take this approach of looking at concentration in an area using up-to-date *Feat* data when considering a planning application. This approach was approved as part of the Hot Food Takeaway SPD adoption process.

We also showed data from *Feat*, including a map, and recent trends in takeaway numbers in Coventry, in our Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2019. This demonstrates our strategic vision and priorities for health improvement in Coventry.

What has happened as a result of using Feat?

Feat is helping us to make real impacts on the ground in our city. Recently, an application came in where there was an existing high concentration of hot food takeaways. In accordance with the SPD, and underpinned by *Feat* data, we in Public Health were able to recommend to our Planners that it wasn't accepted due to the potential negative impact on obesity in the area.

As a result, the application was refused. An appeal was submitted by the applicant, which was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate.



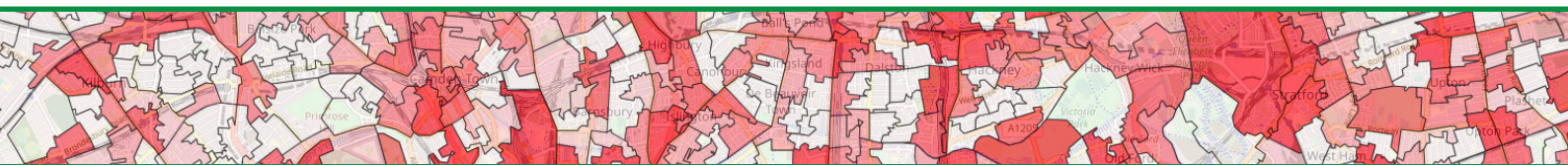
The Inspector cited in their Appeal Decision letter, that the area was already over-concentrated with hot food takeaways according to *Feat* data, and that our decision to deny planning permission should be upheld as per the requirement in the SPD.

Do you have future plans for use of Feat?

We will continue to use *Feat* to assess whether planning permission will be granted for all future hot food takeaway outlet applications, including those that are completely or contain elements of the A5 use class ('hot food and takeaway').

Why do you think others should use Feat?

We looked at other data sources to try and get this information and found nothing else like *Feat*. It's unlikely we would have been able to justify the time and resource to collate the data ourselves, or to create a map ourselves – even if we had the relevant skills in-house. Without *Feat* there wouldn't have been the evidence we needed, and without the evidence, this policy on hot food takeaways would likely not have come into effect. I think this is likely to be the case in other local authorities. *Feat* really does unlock a huge amount of planning potential.



- Access the **Food environment assessment tool (Feat)**: www.feat-tool.org.uk
- Contact the Feat team: feat-tool@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk
- Coventry City Council Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): tinyurl.com/ww94q2l
- Coventry City Council Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2019 tinyurl.com/qwj7k2
- Contact: Karen Lees, Programme Manager – Inequalities, Coventry City Council: Karen.Lees@coventry.gov.uk
- This case study is an output of the research: *Evaluating the use and acceptability of, funding mechanisms and demand for online spatial data visualisation tools for local public health decision-support: learning from Feat 2.0 and PCT*. Funded by NIHR School for Public Health Research sphr.nihr.ac.uk