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1 June 2024

OBJECTIONS TO POLICY C12

Comments and objections to the proposed development on agricultural land and ancient woodland by University of Kent as shown in policy C.12

I am writing to provide my objections to this development.

1) Reasons for the development,

Rumours abound that the UOK has got itself into a dire financial mess, owing the banks in the region of £100m but why should the villages of Blean, Tyler Hill and rough Common villages, ancient woodland, wildlife, protected species, birds, agricultural land desperately needed to grow crops etc. all be sacrificed due to a lack of or bad financial management by the University? Indeed when the UOK purchased the land it was assumed that it would start to offer degrees in agriculture/ farm management etc. and the land would be used for educational purposes but this has sadly not been the case. However it has been reassuring to note that over the years it has been leased to farmers both for the purpose of crop growing and the rearing of cattle. It now seems that the University will become, or indeed already is more of a property/land investor.

2) Destruction of ancient woodland/farmland etc. and damage to wildlife, birds and protected species

The site comprises of either agricultural land or ancient woodland. Indeed, despite what I perceive to be Avison Young/the University authorities' attempts to downplay the significance of the ancient woodland within the site (e.g. in their anecdotal claims cited by CCC as "evidence" in relation to Policy C12, the woods in question unambiguously show as significant on Magicmap, the national mapping resource made available via DEFRA, and so this is of national significance (because DEFRA is a central government department). There, both Long Thin wood ("Sarre Penn Shaw") and West Triangle wood are categorised as "ancient and semi natural", (as well as other woods nearby of course, including some not currently regarded as part of the Blean Wood Complex). Magicmap/LUC are knowledgeable experts on landscapes, and especially rural, natural and semi-natural ones. It was LUC who wrote the systematic and impressive 2020 Canterbury Landscape Character Assessment & Biodiversity Appraisal which confirms highly relevant sensitivities etc relating to the landscape of the Policy C12 setting and its proximate environment. Avison Young, on the other hand, are relative newcomers, who seem to have much less knowledge of rural, including woodland related, issues. They claim to specialise, in "commercial real estate" and urban planning issues, and although they say on their website they have supported "higher education" bodies in "managing" the planning system, I can see no evidence that those universities or colleges have the same rich rural heritage and countryside issues as central to their planning process. There is a significant amount of ancient woodland on the site, and the LUC woodland management report, which in combination with the magicmap

related resources, is of significant really importance, including in terms of the biodiversity and landscape aspects.

3)Land quality

Most of the land that is proposed for housing is not suitable for such use and this is evident from an earlier study commissioned by UOK.

This will inevitably lead to severe drainage, flooding and sewage issues, houses could suffer subsidence.

Drainage and sewage will be a tremendous issue (I attach evidence of the flooding that has occurred for the last 25 years on Tyler Hill Road and also around the junction of the Crab & Winkle Way with Tyler Hill Road whenever there is heavy rainfall.)

4)Increase in traffic

It is proposed to build on some land to the north alongside Tyler Hill Road. This road is already at capacity, has a weight limit that is often breached when being used as a "cut through", is prone to flooding during periods of heavy rainfall or snow, has no pavement, any time there is abnormally large vehicles the traffic is at a complete standstill (photo attached of an incident 3 weeks ago when traffic was completely stopped in both directions due to a few tractors, photo also attached showing the flooding that occurs during heavy rainfall on the road and on the cycle path.

Indeed under Policy C12 a "community hub" is proposed that will have "commercial" and "local shopping and community uses", "office and business space", a "mobility hub" and a "new 3FE Primary School (3 ha) adjacent, "higher density development will be encouraged within and around the community hub", it appears that this is also the "new mixed use local centre", though this is not clear, which will be in the "format of a high street or village/town square containing flexible outdoor space".

On the "concept masterplan" this community hub, high street, or village/town square with high density development within and outside it and a school alongside is hemmed in by Tyler Hill Road to the north, and two "opportunities for green corridors" east and south, and surprisingly two "open space/biodiversity corridors" go through it, the latter are hedgerows. It appears that the only scope for the high-density development and the school is to build next to the church somehow avoiding the north/south "opportunities to improve cycling/walking access and safety".

In addition, there will be a "water/sewage treatment plant "in this area too- the disgusting stench that will arise, together with increased traffic will have a severe negative impact on where I live and many others.

Tyler Hill Road will be completely impassable during the school run; the chances of pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, dog walkers being hit by vehicles will increase tremendously.

Traffic will be horrendous, a sewage treatment plant, works lorries and other vehicles, not to mention noise, dust over at least 15 years will be a severe violation of my basic human right under the Human Rights Act 1998 (I refer to Article 8-respect for personal and family life including my home)

As stated above, the road can just about cope with cars in both directions, but not when it is being used for diversion of traffic.

Rubbish collection is already bad as any time there is a broken-down vehicle or minor road repairs the trucks cannot access or turn on this road.

Can CCC please explain why these pink arrows (below) are on my home?

5) Requirement of new houses /new school

Who will actually buy these new homes? They will not be affordable to first time buyers, not many who are likely to afford will chose to live a raise family right next to a busy University. Similarly, many students do not wish to live on a campus, not least to enable them to feel that they are not “students” 24/7, plus they like to be in the City of Canterbury itself. The safety of children going to and from school will be a huge concern.

Will these houses be sold to investors to be used as Airbnb’s just like many Kent coastal towns? Or be used to be “flipped” i.e. bought and sold on at a profit?

6) Overall access is ill thought out and will lead to hundreds more cars attempting to get in and out of Canterbury on roads that are already over full capacity including the A 299 and have been for the past 25 years. Traffic on this road is at a complete standstill from the junction with Tyler Hill Road all the way into Canterbury already during the hours of 8am and 9am.

7) Loss of leisure amenities.

It seems that the ancient Crab & Winkle Way will be destroyed, meaning that pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists will no longer be able to get from Whitstable to Canterbury in a safe traffic-free environment.

Tourism will suffer. Hundreds of day trippers from e.g. London take the train from London to Canterbury and walk to Whitstable (or the other way round) and enjoy drinks and lunch etc. before returning to London by train.

Canterbury parkrun, which has been held every Saturday for at least 10 years, will no longer be available.

Various local races, including may raising charitable funds will no longer be possible.

8) Nor do I understand the sudden urgency of this new plan particularly in view of the fact that such building ideas were both dismissed in the 2 previous but fairly recent plans.

9) Finally, I do not understand why there are pink, almost vertical arrows pointing onto my home and land?

Matthew Peter Connolly

