

Dear Sir/Madam,

DRAFT CANTERBURY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

I am writing, as a resident of Rough Common, to object to the proposal to allow the building of 2,000 houses north of the University, between Blean, Tyler Hill and Rough Common.

In the plans proposed there seems to be no consideration at all of the increased traffic through Rough Common – other than to say that Rough Common Road will be ‘improved’. The road is already quite dangerous to cycle along because of the volume and speed of traffic, and the relatively narrow width of the road. It does not allow a car to pass a cyclist safely if there is a car coming the other way. I see many adults cycling on the footpath!

The council states an ambition to increase the number of cycle journeys by 85%, which, given the number of cyclists at present, is a pretty pathetic ambition, but any increase in cycling is unlikely to be achieved with this plan. Improving the junction with the A2 at Harbledown, and building 2,000 new houses at the other end of Rough Common Road, will surely result in many more people driving through Rough Common.

There are stated ‘opportunities to improve cycling/walking access and safety’, but no cycle paths are shown on maps of the proposed development, and none is mentioned in the text. In fact one of the main access points for vehicles to the development appears to be along National Cycle Route 1 opposite Kent College. This would hardly ‘improve’ cycling safety. It is ridiculous to invite comments about such a vague and seemingly contradictory plan.

The City Council claims that it wishes to maintain the character of rural settlements through sensitive growth. This plan will fill most of the space between three rural settlements with more new houses than there are already in Blean, Tyler Hill and Rough Common, creating an enormous conglomeration of housing around the University. The buildings are not intended for students, since the University is selling the land to raise money not to support its own people. They will likely be of the more expensive type of house. How will 2,000 of them fit in the area allocated? Who will live in them and what work will they do? The district plan says new homes will meet the needs of the district, ensuring the right type of homes are delivered in the right places to improve affordability and support our communities. Has the council discussed with the surrounding villages if this is what they ‘need’? I think not!

If the new residents travel by car or train to work, the existing villages, as well as northern Canterbury, will suffer traffic jams at commuter times. Already there are jams at some times; do we want our villages snarled up with traffic even more? - certainly not. How will Whitstable Road cope with the extra traffic coming onto it by Kent College, where there are already three roads joining the A290 (Rough Common Road, Highfield Close and Giles Lane) as well as the cycle path and crossing.

The development proposed appears to cover the fields surrounding Blean Church which contain relics of earlier habitation, as well as surrounding the present cycle route between Canterbury and Whitstable which lies on the line of the old Salt Road (according to the notice by Blean Church). How will cyclists on this nationally important route be able to negotiate the new development? It is not made clear in the plans. It appears to have been ignored.

Rough Common Road has a 7.5 ton weight limit through the village. This must be preserved, and also obeyed during the building works. We cannot go back to the days of large vehicles being stuck on Palmars Cross Hill filling the air with fumes from burning clutches, or racing past the shop as children walk to school or playgroup.

'Improving' the junction with the A2 by Harbledown will give easy access to the Whitstable Road through Rough Common for traffic coming from the Dover direction as well as from London. This will most likely produce a great increase in traffic through Rough Common, which is not equipped to cope with it. As others have said it could reduce the value of properties in Rough Common, by making the village a less pleasant place to live. Crossing the road can be difficult even now, because of the traffic flow. It should not be made worse! We have tried to establish a zebra crossing in the village but the road was deemed to have too many side roads close together for there to be a suitable site for a zebra crossing. The one near Whitstable Road is mainly for Kent College students to reach their playing fields safely, although it does enable safer access to the buses from Canterbury to Whitstable. A crossing closer to the Village Hall, or near the shop, would make access to the shop, meetings and pre-school playgroup in the Hall safer for residents. Such considerations or provisions do not appear in the plans for this development. There appears to be no concern or consideration for the present residents, particularly of Rough Common, which is why I am strongly objecting to this proposal.

Beatrice Shire

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