

Objections to Blean Proposal

Whilst it is impossible to ignore the pressing need for more housing in the UK, it is also essential to ensure that new houses are of the right social mix, affordable for the people who need them and in the right place. This was emphasized by the Housing Minister, Lee Rowley, on 23rd January 2024, recorded in Hansard. He stated:

“It is the Government’s intention to indicate that cases for exceptional circumstances can be made, that local authorities should weigh up making them and that, if they feel that they have a strong case through the Planning Inspectorate process, they do so for the good of the communities they seek to serve.”

I feel that there is a strong case to be made for making an exception to the proposed development of 2000 houses in the Blean. My reasons are as follows: -

- 1) The Blean is an area of ancient woodlands, with rare and endangered species recorded by several wildlife agencies. It has been preserved for over two millennia by the Church and the Crown and deserves to remain preserved. To build a large housing estate in the middle of the Blean will have a detrimental effect on the biodiversity and ecological balance within it and will provide the excuse for further damaging infill.
- 2) The biggest problem that this project would face is adverse nutrient quality and the capacity of Stodmarsh Lakes to sustain the pollution that will inevitably result.
- 3) The demand for clean water for all these houses will be a serious challenge to the existing water supply which at present is often seriously challenged and fails.
- 4) Sewage is frequently discharged into rivers and the sea. This development will only make this problem worse.
- 5) The need for ground remediation, and the provision for services, which are not yet in place, such as water, sewage disposal and electricity and gas, will be a huge unknown expense for the developer and will have to be paid for from the sale of properties making affordable housing very unlikely.
- 6) The site will have limited access to appropriate roads, motorways and High-Speed rail links.
- 7) Traffic will have to access Whitstable Road both at the top of Tile Kiln Hill and opposite Kent College. The former already has poor site lines and has been the cause of several major accidents and the latter risks endangering pupils emerging from Kent College.
- 8) The Western Bypass that has been proposed to facilitate access for cars from the proposed development to Harbledown and the A2 would involve widening Rough Common Road, the requisition of gardens and the destruction of property along Rough Common Road, and further accidents in this residential community. This would be totally unacceptable to the residents.
- 9) Canterbury already has a major traffic problem. It is a small mediaeval city with roads historical to it. Recent housing developments along Wincheap have caused frequent gridlock. 15,168 new homes have already been approved. When these are built the traffic holdup will be even worse. It is impossible to see the sense of building yet another 9 thousand homes in the area, including the 2000 at Blean, in the vain hope that traffic will sort itself out. This proposal between Canterbury and Whitstable will inevitably adversely affect the flow of traffic in both and between both.
- 10) The availability of footpaths and the Number 1 National Cycle Track in this rural setting will be lost forever to the detriment of everyone.

- 11) Blean Primary School, which for over 50 years has been an excellent school and is currently rated by Ofsted as outstanding, will be re-built and re-sited within the development. This is proposed to be an opportunity for improvement. More likely, however, would be the common problems of large population movement. The large influx from outside the region could easily unsettle the current stability of Blean, Tyler Hill and Rough Common. The tripling of pupils at the school is more likely to be a threat to the quality of education than an opportunity.
- 12) Medical, dental and pharmaceutical services have already become stretched to the point of almost inaccessibility over the past 20 years, largely due to the increased demands from a larger population, running in tandem with a serious reduction in doctors, dentists and pharmaceutical practices. Since 2015 the number of patients per GP has risen by 10% and since 2005 by about 25%. This together with the traffic density has rendered home visits non-existent. The increased numbers of doctors in training minus those lost from retirement is unlikely to redress this imbalance. Building so many more houses will make this worse.
- 13) There is no Major Trauma Centre in Canterbury. The increased number of Road Traffic Accidents on roads through the adjacent residential districts will inevitably mean more deaths.
- 14) From the views expressed at all the parish meetings it is obvious that the Canterbury District residents are strongly opposed to this proposal and their views should be represented by the city councilors, who shockingly, seem to be at odds with their electorate. This is an affront to our democratic process.

This proposal must be rejected, to do otherwise would be irresponsible.

Yours faithfully,

Peter G Livesey Retired Canterbury GP, Past GP Regional Advisor to SE Thames, GP Sub-Dean to Guy's, King's and St Thomas's Hospitals, Head of the Department of GP at Kent Institute of Medicine and Health Sciences, UKC. Hon. Senior Lecturer at University of Kent. Course Organiser in GP for East Kent. GP to Kent County Cricket Club. Medical Officer for Kent College and Vernon Home.

