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From: C Bell [REDACTED]
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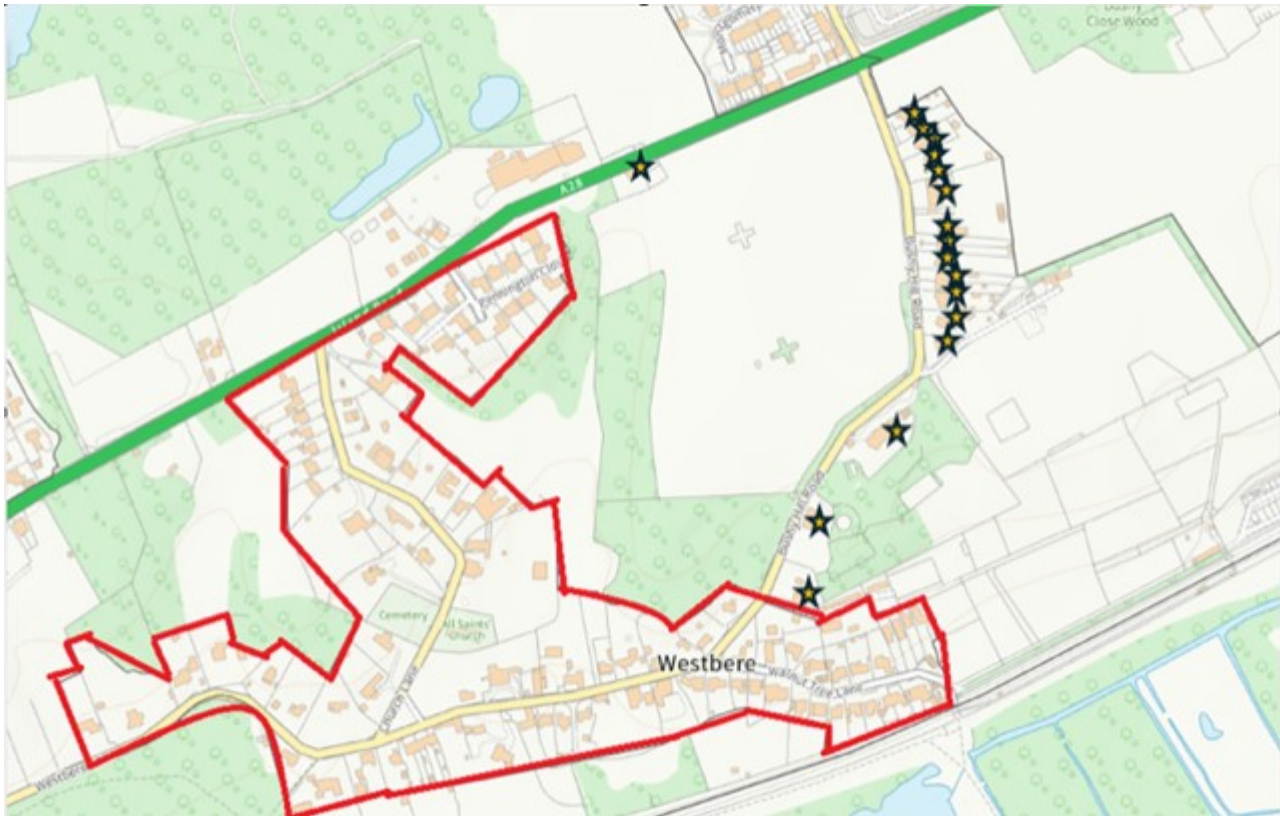
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Colin Bell. [REDACTED]

As a resident of Westbere and a member of the Westbere Village Preservation Society, issues surrounding the heritage of the village and its future are of paramount importance to me. We are currently facing challenges that, if implemented, would have an extremely damaging effect on the integrity of the village and the cohesiveness of its community.

In my response to the Local Plan Consultation Process, I would like to focus, primarily, on the proposed Settlement Boundaries for both Westbere and Hersden settlements as they have a direct bearing on the proposed development of the Field and, secondly, on Policy R5 of the Local Plan, which proposes the development of 152 homes on the Bread and Cheese Field.

The definition of Settlement Boundaries (section 5) of in the Development Topic Paper (2024) states in clause 5.4 that they are drawn in line with the existing built form of the settlements. It is therefore inconceivable that the City Council proposes a Settlement Boundary in Westbere that excludes the majority (19 houses) of Bushy Hill Rd. These houses exist within the Parish curtilage and all households contribute to local taxes and are entitled to vote at Westbere Parish Council elections. (See map below). It is also inconceivable that the City Council proposes extending the Hersden Settlement Boundary beyond its 'built form' to include the Bread and Cheese Field, which is classified as agricultural land and therefore outside of the 'Built Form'.



By excluding the aforementioned houses and, in doing so, classifying this part of Bushy Rd as 'countryside' or 'Rural' the Council has incorrectly deemed it acceptable to extend the Hersden Settlement Boundary to include the Bread and Cheese Field. This is an extremely disingenuous way for the Council to justify the development but it is also a blatant and wrongful manipulation of the rules governing the application of these Boundary lines.

Policy R5 of the Draft Local Plan seems to be based on the premise that its inclusion within the Hersden Settlement Boundary permits the development of the Field. It is further supported by the creation of an artificial 'Green Gap' on Headley's Field located on the Southern side of Bushy Hill Rd. This argument is fundamentally flawed as Headley's Field sits firmly within Westbere and can only be classified as 'Rural'.

If the Settlement Boundary lines were drawn correctly, the true 'Green Gap' between the two settlements would be the Bread and Cheese Field. This is incredibly important as it would prevent the inevitable coalescence of the two Parishes of Westbere and Hersden. Both Parishes have very different demographic characteristics as well as historical backgrounds, the importance of which, cannot be overstated.

Any development, in any form, would be a travesty, and would conflict with decisions taken by previous City Council administrations. Contrary to the information contained in SLAA163, which incorrectly stated that there had been no previous development applications, there were two, in 1979 and 1984, to develop a part of the Field running alongside the A28. The risk to the identity of both communities was recognised by the City Council and both were rejected on the basis that they would also contribute towards ribbon development along the A28.

Through the 2040 Local Plan, the City Council has a real opportunity to improve many aspects of Canterbury District through careful planning and listening to the views of its communities. I would urge you to acknowledge the many concerns of Westbere residents and reject the inclusion of Policy R5 in the Plan.

Colin Bell

Cannot be considered just on face value as events preceding the Plan have a direct bearing on my objection to the Plan.

The main issues are:

1. The decision to include the Bread and Cheese Field in the newly created Hersden Parish. Westbere has had a historical relationship with the Field and its related Charity which has supported residents for over 300 years. I have accepted that Canterbury City Council had no appreciation of this relationship, an omission that could be levelled at the Parish Council at that time. Combined with the fact that following an FOI request to Canterbury City Council, they stated that the first communication with the developer was in 2020 following an SLAA request. The argument for retaining the Field in Westbere would have been compelling.

2. The proposed Settlement Boundary for Westbere has been grossly manipulated in order to create an artificial Green Gap (Headley's Field) and thereby open the opportunity to develop the Field. By this, I mean that 18 houses in Bushy Hill Rd have been inexplicably excluded from the Westbere Settlement Boundary, thereby avoiding the coalescence of the two settlements and the boundary lines abutting each other. In doing so it opened up the opportunity to identify the Field as suitable for development.

3. The Bread and Cheese Field was conveniently moved into Hersden in order to facilitate the incorporation of the Field along with two other developments in Hersden. This objective was highlighted in the recommendations of the 2045 Local Plan Working Group as it would encourage greater community cohesion.

Acra findings.

Bio diversity policy

Traffic

Lack of infrastructure

Current lack of demand will result in the Field not being built on for many years leaving a sword of Damocles hanging over the Field and suppressing the value of nearby properties