

Alexander Gunyon

From: Jim Showler [REDACTED]
Sent: 01 June 2024 09:40
To: Consultations
Subject: Draft Local Plan

Categories: Blue category

--Email From External Account--

Good Morning.

Please see below my response to the City Councils Local Plan.

Firstly let me acknowledge that you are not acting in isolation and I appreciate that you are held to account by both Kent County Council and Central Government. However, I strongly believe that your Local Plan has serious flaws that will unfortunately, strongly diminish much of what we love about our beautiful, historic city and its surrounding areas.

My following comments relate to Chapter 1, Q1 & Q2 and Chapter 2 C12 of your plan.

I believe the house building targets are excessive but are also based on an over estimated figure of what the population is likely to be in Canterbury in the coming years. As a resident of Rough Common, I have great concern, as to the impact that the 2000 targeted homes on the University land and also the proposed 1500 homes at Brookland Farm will have on the area.

As an under estimate, it is reasonable to assume that 3500 new homes will accommodate at least 5000 cars. The Tyler Hill/Chestfield road is already one of the most dangerous roads in the area, so to add considerably more traffic onto this road will just increase the dangers on this road. Alternatively, to reduce this risk by altering the road layout, will involve removing valuable woodland, with associated negative impacts.

As part of this plan the Council intends to demolish the current 'outstanding' Blean Primary school to build an access road onto Whitstable Road and similarly, to build another access road on part of the Crab & Winkle Way that goes past the The Oaks Nursery School and comes out, opposite Kent College. The Council previously shelved a plan to make Rough Common Road a bypass road, it appears this is being totally ignored. This would have been a retrograde step prior to the plan to build 3500 houses but this would now make Rough Common Road an undesirable residential area, with a considerable negative impact on the value of the houses in that road. Currently, Rough Common Road is already heavily congested in the morning rush hour, I dread to think what this would be like with the huge increase in traffic your plan will produce. I understand that part of your plan to resolve this congestion problem, is the the removal of the parking bays on the road and I presume you also intend to prohibit any parking on the majority of the road. Simple question, where will these cars park, as they only park on the road, as they have no alternative? This actually re-enforces my suggestion that my estimate that 5000 cars is a conservative estimation of the number of cars that 3500 new homes will produce because the reason many of the cars park in Rough Common Road is because they are multi-car owning households that don't have sufficient driveway space to meet their needs.

I would ask the council to consider much smaller developments that do not have such a huge negative impact on the local environment. Brownfield sites are highlighted in your plan and Wincheap is referenced as a priority. At the meeting I attended at Westgate Hall on Tuesday the 21st May, reference was also made to the old BT building, Becket House. I support wholeheartedly these plans but it does lead me to challenge why the most obvious brownfield sites in the city aren't being developed. Currently the sites that present the most undesirable image of our beautiful city are: the old Debenhams, Nasons and Curry's buildings. I believe it was previously the intention to convert Debenhams into a combination of apartments, retail units and green areas but this has been delayed/dismissed because of sewage problems at Stodmarsh. Sewage problems are an ongoing issue in the Canterbury area, as any of us know too well if we swim at Whitstable. This cannot be an unsolvable issue and more time and effort needs to be dedicated by the Water Authority first and foremost but also the council authorities into solving this problem. I can only imagine that building such large developments will make this problem much worse.

The building of apartments in the city would come with numerous benefits, such as removing empty buildings which do nothing to encourage shoppers into the city, whilst people actually living in the city centre are obviously more likely to support the retail units in the city, which can only enhance the overall commercial viability of the city centre.. I understand a similar development is planned for the Nason's site but as yet no work has commenced. The demise of this area has inevitably had an impact on other retail units. For example, it is my understanding that the Oscar & Bentleys restaurant closed because the footfall in the Guildhall fell dramatically as a result of the Debenhams closure. I recently followed a large group of people, who were on a guided tour of the city and the walk from the Abode hotel up to the Nationwide offices is really quite depressing and I was actually asking myself, what do these people think of our city? Moving forward with these two developments will totally change this expanse.

I also believe that your transport plan runs the risk of further discouraging people to shop in town and this may well prompt even more people to hop in their cars and go the Ashford outlet or Bluewater instead.

One also has to ask, how the building of so many houses in the area will not have a further negative impact on water quality, sewage and of course the ongoing sea water issues in Whitstable. Whitstable has grown in popularity in recent years but failure to address the sewage problems is likely to have a negative impact on its appeal to day trippers but also on the health and safety of local residents who swim in the sea on a regular basis.

I have to say, somewhat ironically your plan refers to tackling climate change and biodiversity and yet you are planning to build 3500 houses with as mentioned, an horrific impact on one of the most ancient areas of woodland in the country, a dreadful impact on a multiple species of wildlife, some of which are endangered species, the removal of potentially high quality farmland and demolishing part of the historic Crab & Winkle Way. Canterbury and its surrounding area has a huge heritage history your plans without doubt will diminish part of our glorious history and current day appeal. Indeed your plan to build these 2000 houses North of the University will effectively merge Tyler Hill, Blean and Rough Common into one area, as opposed to three separate areas.

This brings me onto the University, without doubt the students and the University bring some commercial benefits to the City but it should not be our responsibility to bail them out of a financial problem and certainly not at the huge cost it is going to have on our environment.

Your plan references the need to address the infra structure challenges that will be created by the building of over 9000 houses in the area. Many of these issues have been prevalent for many years, so why should I have confidence that you will now deliver on these requirements?

Finally, I implore the Council to take a more robust approach in challenging the number of houses that are needed to be built in this area. I do not believe that Canterbury with its heritage history and the fact it has UNESCO status does not have very strong credentials for special treatment and it is also my understanding that the standard methodology calculation that you refer to in your plan is not a mandatory positioning but merely a starting point. Are you as a Council really pushing back hard enough?

Can you please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Yours faithfully,

Jim Showler

