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Canterbury District Local Plan 2040

1. Local Plan overall

- The Local Plan 2045 contained provision for 13495 new houses. We are told that some of the proposals had to be withdrawn because they were found to be unsuitable, but that still left a significant number that could continue. However, we were also told that the proposals for delivery in the period 2040 to 2045 were also withdrawn. Surely, a simple response would be to take the 2040 to 2045 proposals and start then 5 years earlier, thus reducing the need to destroy the 3 villages of Blean, Tyler Hill and Rough Common.
- The strategic objective to “capitalise on our rich and distinctive heritage and culture, enhancing character, sense of place and quality of life ...” is put at risk by the huge increase in population (in the region of 70,000) based on agreed and proposed house building.
- The latest ONS Projected percentage change in number of households for local authorities in England, 2018 to 2028, shows a growth of 4,885 households for Canterbury in ten years. Assuming a similar rate over 22 years 2018 -2040 would imply a total of 10,747, many fewer than the already approved 15,168. It is odd that the Council has not seen it reasonable to challenge the required number.

- In terms of the strategic objective to “create a transport network with a focus on district-wide public transport and low carbon travel”, the road network is under huge strain already. Potholes are a continuous problem (despite the good work being done to mitigate the issue) with diversions constantly being in place and traffic jams in and around the city at many times of the day. The idea that public transport will be enhanced is outside the Council's control; private sector companies will only step in if the routes are profitable. Non-profitable routes will need Council continuing subsidies, which, at a time of reducing resources, is not guaranteed.
- The Council's optimism about additional GPs and Dentists is remarkable, given the nation-wide shortage of both.

2. Policy C12

- The strategic objective to “protect and enhance our rich environment and valued landscapes, creating a network of green spaces, protecting and enhancing green gaps between settlements, supporting nature's recovery” does not bear scrutiny if the first thing to be done is to concrete over the land in order to build 2,000 houses, together with the infrastructure needed to service them.
- The land proposed for the building of 2,000 houses has already been deemed as unsuitable for development. The pretence that the provision of an access point to the land makes it suitable is risible; there were a myriad of reasons for the land's unsuitability and the vast majority have not been resolved.
- It is clear that the University is pressing for the use of their land in order to help with their dire financial situation and their recent public relations drive claiming that this is “one of the best options locally to provide the housing stock needed while balancing the impact on both local infrastructure and the environment” is at best hypocritical and self-serving. I am sure that the Council does not need reminding that the University's recent 50-year “Masterplan” was full of commercial centres, business hubs , conference facilities and a 2,000-space car park for this same land. Not much altruistic concern for local housing needs there! In any case, the financial needs of the University can have no bearing on the Local Plan.

- Despite the welcome emphasis on walking and cycling in the Plan, the reality is that there will be an increase in cars and other vehicles (up to 5,000 if deliveries and visitors are included) which will seriously impact the roads around the scheme, especially on Tyler Hill Road, which is entirely unsuitable for any increased traffic flow. The road has no pavements, has several very sharp bends and already has to be driven at reduced speed to allow vehicles travelling in opposite directions to pass safely in the narrow spaces. The junction of Tyler Hill Road and Hackington Road is regularly jammed with vehicles going, ironically, to the University or onwards to Canterbury.
- It is intriguing that there has been no traffic assessment or modelling published (or commissioned?) before the expiry of the consultation period.
- It has not been explained how (based on national rates) the probable total of 3,400 children will be educated, beyond there being 2 new primary schools. Will there be no secondary education? Additionally, the idea that access to the building site for the new houses will be through the existing primary school seems to ignore the impact on the pupils of being in the middle of a building site. The same problems will arise when the 2 new primary schools are occupied while 2,000 houses are built.
- The Plan talks about waste water treatment works (or sewage works, as we lay people call them) being necessary, but fails to mention where they will be sited. It seems unlikely that they will be in the development itself, so one can only surmise that they will be in the remaining green areas supposedly separating the new development from the surrounding villages, thus not separating the new development from the surrounding villages. It also doesn't take account of the increased flood risk from the proposed house building, where there is a recognised high water table. In the winter months particularly there is expected to be higher rainfall than in the past due to climate change and that rain will either stay on the flat areas of the site or run down the hills to overwhelm the Sarre Penn.

In conclusion, I would recommend that because of the issues highlighted above (and others of which I may be unaware) the C12 proposal should be withdrawn from the Canterbury Local Plan 2040.

Graham Beasant

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