

## Alexander Gunyon

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**From:** Mike & Pam Battson [REDACTED]  
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### --Email From External Account--

Good day.

As a resident in the district I wish to make comment on the Draft Local Plan and SLAA in so far as it affects Whitstable, Chestfield and the rural area North of Canterbury.

### **Vision and growth.**

I strongly object to the use of the agricultural land throughout the District, which you describe as being 'high grade' yet are prepared to use for the building of houses in total disregard of the national need for the production of food, both animal and vegetable. This is again in contravention of SLAA clauses 1.14 and 1.15, i.e. '...the intrinsic value of countryside and contribution to rural character and increase in biodiversity and connectivity'. By covering vast acres/hectares in concrete your vision is flawed and unacceptable. Flora and fauna require natural land, not concrete and the numbers will decrease, because their habitat has been permanently removed. Biodiversity is not in a good state at present.

### **Town Centre Strategies.**

Mostly unachievable for those of us who do not live in the town or city, but have to use Whitstable and Canterbury for household needs and leisure. The idea of healthy cycling or walking might be fine for 'townies', but residents cycling or walking from Chestfield to carry out the daily or weekly shopping trip isn't practical. Far too dangerous to cycle loaded with shopping bags, a struggle walking and the bus service is limited and limiting and none of these 'healthy options' can replace the car journey to the out of town supermarkets for speed and efficiency. The extraordinarily high cost of parking in town and city deters all but the very essential social visits resulting in a preference to use those out of town shopping facilities encouraged by easier and free parking. A new Park and Ride service for Whitstable is pointless for rural/out of town residents as there is very little choice for shopping in Whitstable at present as it is mainly, coffee bars, wine bars, barbers and charity shops. Tourists arriving by vehicle say that they do not like to be constrained by distant out of town parking and will turn around and travel elsewhere. We notice this every weekend and holiday period with long queues from the A299 down Borstal Hill with those finding nowhere to park leaving. It is doubtful there will be much enthusiasm for the Park and Ride unless there is a very much reduced parking charge. We have seen your red tee shirted representatives in historic cities in France in the past, but haven't noticed that you have implemented anything you might have learned. I could park all day at the historic hill town of Vezelay for 2 €, in the shade under trees with nearby picnic benches, free toilet and shower facilities and free electricity for motor caravans. Not likely anywhere here in any Park and Ride. A view across the Thames Estuary with similar facilities might be more encouraging, but you've built on everything. C'est la vie en Angleterre!

### **Housing, housing needs, new communities, and supporting infrastructure.**

Whilst it is appreciated that government house building targets have to be met by local authorities, the proposed developments – already under way – are large and you say these will necessarily be close to ‘service villages’ which have most facilities without really specifying what these facilities are. There are few available in Chestfield or Swalecliffe in terms of medical and dentistry, all of which are currently already overstretched and face to face GP’s appointments almost always full up before 8.30 am. The lists for NHS dentists are closed. Unless these ‘new communities’ are supported by and with their own infrastructure the residents cannot be accommodated by present ‘service village’ facilities. The Swalecliffe Post Office is small and already busy most days and the local pharmacy is already finding it difficult to cope at present with the new regime of pharmacists appointments to ease GPs. The whole of the Whitstable district has badly needed another A&E since the closure of KCH. The existing gifted Whitstable and Tankerton Hospital should be brought back again into operation and surgically upgraded for this purpose and the NHS required to do it, or better, build a new one for our coastal region. All developers of new estates must be required to contribute towards the cost of these facilities. Even now, the QEQM hospital at Margate is far too far away and any closure, emergency or otherwise, of the A299 forces traffic on to the Old Thanet Way which severely affects the ability and time of the ambulances to travel there, as well as to attend in the first place along with other emergency services. It is relevant to quote the NHS for attending a cardiac arrest when every minute of delay lessens the chance of survival by 10%. There is already a need for more widely available emergency resuscitation packs and these must be made available on all new housing developments.

#### **W4 Brooklands Farm development**

This is a large ‘green fields’ development, which should not be allowed given your statement of high grade agricultural land, and will impact severely upon the current inadequate infrastructure of local facilities, fresh potable water supply, foul and waste water treatment and drainage in an area already subject to flooding. Waste and foul water treatment should be carried out on site and thought given to the storage and treatment of rainfall to prevent runoff into the Brook.

Little thought has been given to the increased traffic through Chestfield to the Old Thanet Way and to Canterbury via Radfall Road, because of your severe underestimate of likely vehicle ownership per new household in this rural area. With very limited local employment and public transport, many 2/3 bedroom households with three/four working adults currently own at least two cars and very often three or four. The congestion at Borstal Hill is already very bad with the traffic from the large new Whitstable Heights Estate not helping and with more houses planned it is going to be horrendous. Two additional slip roads at Chestfield Road to the West bound and from the East bound A299 carriageways are necessary, otherwise all traffic from the estate West or London bound or returning will need to use the Old Thanet Way junctions at Borstal Hill. Not everyone wants to go only to Thanet.. Extremely poor vision and planning. When, and if, the additional Secondary and SEN schools will be built is a matter of conjecture and Grampian Conditions must be made for the land set aside for these so that the land can never be used for further house building if these schools are not built.

#### **W6 Bodkin Farm.**

Again, a green field development on high grade farm land in contravention of your ‘visions’. This development will place more loading on the already overloaded drainage/sewage, waste disposal and treatment plant at Swalecliffe, with some already coming from Herne Bay’s new estates. Grampian Conditions must be made as a requirement to first upgrade the undersized drainage pipes and to build on site waste water treatment plant prior to any house building. Reduction in water use per household is unlikely given the prevalence of automatic washing machines and dish washers installed in all new houses, however water and energy efficient. Similarly Grampian Conditions must also be made on the planned land set aside for schools, so that, if they are not built, then such land cannot be used for further house building. Traffic access and egress to and from the Old Thanet Way at this point is currently dangerous and should really be dealt with by another roundabout. During Summer months and most weekends the road is extremely busy with tourist traffic and in the event of the frequent closures of the A299 it becomes even

more congested. Far more thought is needed on this. With regard to pedestrian use, there is no DD Access to the railway station and the footpath under the bridge to Swalecliffe is too narrow with only a pavement on the eastern side. During term time, children are already at risk here and traffic is at a pinch point. More thought is needed to alleviate these problems. Perhaps a pedestrian tunnel under the overhead railway track would be the answer.

### **C12 University land.**

Once more, with 2000 houses planned on high grade agricultural land it will be a disaster for wildlife and completely ruin the character of open countryside. Two routes for traffic into Canterbury and Whitstable via Blean and Tyler Hill are going to conflict/join with that from Whitstable Heights et al, Grasmere Gardens, Bodkin Farm and Brooklands Farm, all ending up at St Dunstons via St Johns Hill and the Broad Oak Road roundabout via St Stephens Hill. Chaos is the result. Infrastructure of the 'service villages' is insufficient to cope with the envisioned population increase and if it proceeds developers must be required contribute to all of this. Whilst this land is SLAA available, it seems like a money grabbing opportunity for the cash-strapped university which can do nobody any good on a long term venture. It is finite – when the agricultural land is gone, that's it. Land set aside for new schools must be subject to Grampian Conditions and similarly for drainage and foul water treatment plant. When Blean School is closed for the development of the estate, where are the children going to go?

### **Employment and local economy.**

The Local Plan vision is totally city centered and there is no mention of new industry in the Whitstable district, so where is the employment for the thousands of new residents? The mention of new offices isn't enough and the local economy seems to be all about tourists using the coffee shops, pubs and wine bars on sunny weekends. Much more is needed and they plainly won't be agricultural workers.

### **Town centres and local facilities.**

Mostly already covered under Housing and new communities, with the same restrictions in Whitstable. Nothing new is planned. Under DS6 Development Strategy, you mention the provision of fibre broadband facility to the new premises, which begs the question why are we, who already live in the area, not being upgraded first? Last, but not least, we need many more active Police Officers, living, working, walking around and interacting locally - as they once were in the 1960s. PCSO's do not have the same powers and in all honesty I haven't seen a Police Officer or PCSO visit our area to make themselves acquainted in the decades since we lost our Chestfield village Police Officer. I appreciate this is a matter for KCC, but surely must form a major part of any Local Plan involving an increased population. In all essence, the three emergency services are a necessary 'facility' and part of the infrastructure.

### **Movement and transport**

This is going to be the biggest problem as a result of the planned large housing estates in the Whitstable area and the failure of the Local Plan to sensibly forecast the number of vehicles per household expected. Very few households with both adults and some with adult children living at home and all employed, only have one car, so it needs a completely new forecast based on current area car ownership, not just town/city centres. Any survey carried out in Winter months does not properly reflect the amount of additional tourist traffic during the warmer months. The new housing estates vehicles will severely impact on road use and, when coupled with tourist traffic, can only increase congestion and cause absolute mayhem at Borstal Hill. Traffic through Chestfield to the Old Thanet Way will cause increased congestion at the Swalecliffe roundabout and the Radfall Road and Hackington Road to Canterbury already needs widening as there are currently places where buses and goods vehicles are forced to encroach over the centre into oncoming traffic. It is dangerous to cycle along this route and tail-backs behind cyclists are frequent and will not improve. The bus service is expensive and cannot replace or reduce car journeys. For instance, how will someone travel by bus from Brooklands Farm Estate to go to the eastern out of town Sturry Road industrial

estate? Walking and cycling are for the majority a leisure pursuit and not an option for movement between town and city. The progressive upgrade of the Crab and Winkle cycle track is a good idea, but won't encourage very many more people to healthily cycle or walk/run to work. The public transport network is feeble, too expensive and time consuming when compared to journey by car. Again, European methods work far better, are interlinked and much cheaper. Holland is by far the best example.

**Historic and Natural.**

Historic Canterbury certainly needs better treatment of tourists. Plagued by 'down and outs' and rough sleepers asking for handouts. The bus station is particularly bad along with the St George's Square pedestrian area.

The historic town of Whitstable cannot be further enhanced as there isn't much left. Most is preserved in the WCMG (museum) and the harbour occasionally blessed with a sailing barge. Duncan Downs has gone and the view over Whitstable with it. Wildlife? What wildlife? Town Foxes and seagulls, I suspect is about all. Green corridors along the Old Thanet Way verges for wildlife were tried once before. The result was that Kestrels died out as a result of their diet of traffic fumed and polluted rodents causing infertile eggs. Check with the RSPB. Hedgehogs all squashed, butterflies species almost non-existent as a result of wide pesticide use and very few small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Kindly explain how you are going to increase biodiversity in all these new estates without parks and ponds, or is it that the latter are 'too dangerous and a drowning hazard'?. Green Gaps to the South of Chestfield really are a waste of space and of no practical use whatsoever when there is already the perfectly good 18 hole Chestfield Golf Course and the vast Blean woodland to the South, which is all SSSI protected and cannot be further built upon – at least, not just yet.

**Sustainability Appraisal.**

I can find nothing encouraging in this other than the building of the long awaited Broad Oak Reservoir. Any sustainable economic growth is centered upon Canterbury with little benefit to the coastal area and the district wide strategy is based upon tourism. Little account is taken of the flood risks from heavy rainfall with no suggestion of runoff being saved and treated for sustainable reuse. Sothern Water and the environmental authorities need to get to grips with dredging of water courses and create more ponds. Classification of all the new housing estates as 'sustainable' is based purely on the fact that they will be built and permanent – sustainable because they have to be, but by whom or what?

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Thank you for the opportunity to present you with my opinions about the Draft Local Plan and SLAA.

Kind regards.

Michael Battson.

