

Canterbury Local Plan 2040 – Consultation response.

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This is my personal response to the Canterbury Local Plan 2040 as it affects Westbere village.

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. This is not the case in Westbere when 19 homes have been excluded from the settlement. This is despite 18 of these forming a majority of Bushy Hill Road which originates from the centre of the village and heads north towards the A28. These houses are very much part of the village and have been so for many decades. They should be in the Westbere settlement boundary. Clause 5.8 of the paper confirms that action was taken to adjust the settlement boundary of Broad Oak. Given this precedent, Westbere settlement needs to be redrawn to include all these homes and their associated gardens and land.

Because of the poorly defined Westbere settlement boundary, as evidenced in the interactive map. Policy R5 – Bread and Cheese Field infringes on planning policy by coalescing Hersden and Westbere. This action is unacceptable. Hersden and Westbere should be separated by an appropriate Green Gap. The Bread and Cheese Field should fulfil this function and should not be a site for housing (SLAA163). The Hersden settlement Boundary should be moved to the east so that it stops in line with the current Hoplands development site.

In the CDLP Headley's Field is being suggested as a green gap between Hearsden and Westbere, this is inappropriate given the field is surrounded by Westbere homes and residents. This field should be designated as rural.

Both The Bread and Cheese Field and Headleys field lay dormant and are not currently used as productive farmland. There is a terrible waste of precious farmland in the district. Landowners, encouraged by land agents are banking of future housing developments. The council have a role to play in encouraging the proper use of this land to grow local, high quality, organic produce. Canterbury City Council's economic development policy should include working with central government supporting farmers to farm their land and not to treat it as a property investment. The council should be championing local farms that grow local food for local people, while adopting best practices for supporting biodiversity.

The requirement for Green Gaps is stated in the CDLP. They "*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 and biodiversity and improving the health and wellbeing of our communities.*" I fully support the continuance of the Green Gaps between Sturry and Westbere (the two fields) and between Sturry and Hersden (the ex-council depot). It is the lack of Green Gap between Westbere and Hersden that stands out as an error of application of the policy guidelines. This needs to be corrected before the CDLP is approved and adopted.

The Bread and Cheese Field should be that Green Gap and should not be developed. It currently brings biodiversity and green space to an already over developed stretch of the A28. It should be retained as is and cherished by the district. The proposed development plan makes unsubstantiated undertakings to improve biodiversity with a net gain of 20% despite putting 152 houses on this field. This statement is ridiculous.

The housing numbers stated as required within the local plan are far more than the real demand and are an embarrassment of miscalculations and poor assumptions. The recent paper by the Alliance of Canterbury Residents Associations (ACRA) have separately commented on these numbers, and I fully support their analysis regarding the poor approach to housing targets and the funding of infrastructure.

Traffic congestion on the A28 as it passes through Sturry to Canterbury and vice-versa is unacceptable. Sometimes we have difficulty in getting out of Pennington Close due to traffic congestion. The bottleneck at Sturry level crossing, plus the volume of traffic on a relatively narrow A road, is compounded by parked vehicles and regular road works. The road is very much used by local school children and as well as adult pedestrians. These citizens are exposed to a significant risk to their health due to the air quality. This is bad enough when the traffic is moving but exasperated by queuing vehicles held at the level crossing. The implication of poor air quality of the local residents' health is significant, removing the traffic overload along the A28 should be prioritised. Less traffic, not more roads.

I have recently been diagnosed with late onset asthma, possibly due to the high level of pollution on the A28. This could be made worse with increased traffic from more housing developments and must not be allowed to happen.

The work to make changes to the Sturry railway station platforms to reduce downtime at the level crossing will give little relief in the short to medium term, as it is a project that will take decades. Some interim action is needed, including the stopping of further housing developments along this road. Traffic management of large commercial vehicles needs to be considered to ease congestion. Better active travel initiatives and public bus services are likely to help in the shorter term.

In Conclusion:

OBJECTION - The Westbere settlement has been incorrectly defined, excluding 19 homes. This represents 15% of the village. 18 of these houses are in Bushy Hill Road. All these homes should be included within the Westbere settlement.

OBJECTION - The inclusion of Policy R5 (The bread and cheese Field) as a housing development in the local plan will cause the coalescence of Westbere and Hersden. This is an infringement of the planning policy and should not proceed. The Bread and Cheese Field should be retained as farmland and form the green gap between Westbere and Hersden.

SUPPORT – The green gap between Sturry and Westbere (the two fields) is well placed and should not be compromised.

SUPPORT – The green gap between Sturry and Hersden.

OBJECTION – The over-development of the A28 corridor through Sturry and toward Thanet. Additional housing in this area cannot be supported by the existing local services and infrastructure. The traffic volumes and consequential congestion is already contributing to the health concerns of local residents. The recent pedestrian fatality in Sturry has shocked the community, this event demands action by the Council to make this road safer. This needs to be addressed ahead of the existing housing developments completing and a further influx of new residents and their vehicles.

SUPPORT – The work to enhance Sturry railway station to improve traffic flow through the level crossing. This project needs to be prioritised and funded to ensure it happens in the short term.