

RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN
FROM ANIA BOBROWICZ, [REDACTED]

Please find below my response to the draft Local Plan which is referring to **Chapter 1 Q1 and 2 and Chapter 2 Policy 12 Land north of the University of Kent**.

I would like to express my **strongest possible objections to Policy 12 Land north of the University of Kent**. I am writing this response as a former senior academic member of the University with almost 20 years' experience of teaching and research as well as a resident of Tyler Hill.

C12 proposes to build 2,000 houses on the land north of the University of Kent which was purchased by the University, as I understand it, in 2006 in order to expand academic initiatives and for other educational purposes, NOT for building houses (see point 2 below of the University Masterplan).

I am dismayed that the University of Kent goes against its own highly ambitious Masterplan 2019. That document has been arrived at through collaborative process and extensive consultation with various stakeholders (<https://media.www.kent.ac.uk/se/23966/draft-framework-masterplan-2019.pdf>). The key principles outlined in the plan were:

- Biodiversity and the natural green environment is cherished and cultivated
- Future development is focused **in the existing core of the campus to promote and reinforce interaction between all members of the academic community**
- The history of this unique agricultural landscape is celebrated as a consistent theme through the **conservation of retained historic features** and in the design of new facilities
- The **environment contributes positively to the lives of neighbours, the local community** and to the City of Canterbury

Plan C12 submitted to the City Council **goes against all of these highly admirable principles**.

I believe that this proposal is unsustainable and unworkable for the following reasons:

- C12 combined with the Brooklands development in Whitstable and another development in the nearby village of Chestfield will lead to **a huge amount of additional traffic** on our roads which are already congested. Yet, there has been **no traffic impact assessment made publicly available** during the consultation process. This is a serious flaw of the process. The public ought to be able to make informed judgement about such an important issue.
- The plan states that C12 will be car-dependent which goes against Council's own Bus-first strategy (which is ambitious albeit unrealistic). Given the reputation of the current bus provider, which is more or less a local bus monopoly, for unreliable services, it is very doubtful that local people who need to get to the local hospital, for example, would want to wait for a bus that never comes rather than get into their own car.

- The Council stated that it aims for a 20% uptake of bus services. This is highly unrealistic. Many people have told me that they will continue using cars because the bus services cannot be relied on. And it is doubtful that the Council can enforce any arrangement undertaken with the bus provider.
- The proposed development will lead **to a loss of habitat of protected species** such as skylarks, nightingales, and yellowhammers. C12 goes well beyond the core campus in terms of its development and is bound to affect the local biodiversity. Although the aim of BNG of 20% is commendable, it is quite unrealistic to think that it will be **increased locally** by building 2,000 houses. In fact, the opposite will be true. Biodiversity **will be damaged locally**, but may be offset somewhere else. The local community will lose out.
- This development **will concrete over our beautiful fields which grow crops**. Surely, as a country we want to be self-sufficient in food and not have to import it from abroad.
- C12 will **damage the rural fabric of the local communities** of Blean, Tyler Hill and Rough Common and Harbledown, thus removing any separation between the city and its rural communities. The so called 'mitigation measures' are not credible. To all intents and purposes Tyler Hill and Blean will become part of the urban spread.
- It is incomprehensible that an outstanding local primary school will be demolished to make way for an access road to a building site. We have not been told what the sequence of the building works will be, how long the building will last, where the new school will be moved to and how it will affect the students' and staff wellbeing. Being in the centre of a building site for a number of years will undoubtedly have an adverse effect on their wellbeing.
- Housing numbers for Canterbury were calculated using **ONS figures from 2014 which are out of date**. A Parliamentary question by our MP Rosie Duffield uncovered that the method for calculating housing numbers will not be revised until data from Census 2021 comes out in 2025 by which time it would be too late to do anything about the development. The Council should acknowledge that the population of Canterbury has grown much slower than the projected figures. From 2011 to 2021 it has grown by only 4.1% as opposed to the average for England of 6.6% on which the housing targets are based. Thus, the number of houses that need to be built ought to be revised down from the current number. Canterbury City Council ought to **press for 'exceptional circumstances'** and ask the central government to reduce the housing numbers for the district.
- Stodmarsh water quality issues will not be resolved any time soon. Developers buying 'nutrient credits' to fund mitigation measures is a smokescreen and not credible. Longer term solution is a long way away, so how will sewage treatment be dealt with at C12? There are no reliable details in the plan on this issue.

- Both villages of Blean and Tyler Hill have a high water table. Gardens get flooded regularly, especially in rainy winter months as we experienced last winter. What will concreting over such a huge area do to the regular flooding problem in these villages?
- Heritage is a vital part of our locality. We have a number of **scheduled monuments, and listed buildings**. The church of St Cosmus and St Damien will find itself surrounded on all sides by the housing development where now we have beautiful fields and hedgerows (protected!) where birds sing. It is a very tranquil and relaxing place to be which is very good for people's mental health.

I urge the Labour-controlled City Council to be brave and ambitious and put pressure on the central government to revise the housing targets for Canterbury. I would also urge them to consider and lobby future government to tackle the systemic issues that are behind the housing problem in England. The mantra of 'we need more houses' needs to be challenged. Firstly, there is a stock of vacant properties that need refurbishing. Although I acknowledge that some steps have been taken by CCC in this direction, more needs to be done. We know that a number of property developers are struggling to sell new houses. Why is that? Are they overpriced and not affordable by local people? This is a problem that needs resolving. There is available stock but it's not selling. So why new houses are needed?

The Labour-controlled council ought to lobby the new central government to restrict new properties being bought by landlords for Air B&B with rents hiked up so that local people are priced out of the market.

Finally, why did the Council allow the land to be purchased by a London borough council in the south of Canterbury? How is this supporting the local population that the council is so proud of promoting? What guarantees do we have that this development will be affordable for the local population?

Like many people I have spoken to, I feel sadness and anger at the **unfairness of Policy C12 because it is being done for the wrong reasons** – The University's financial problems and the Council's having to hit central government housing targets based on outdated figures, neither of which has anything to do with the local community that will be mostly affected. **For these reasons, I strongly object to C12 and urge the Council to remove it from the Local Plan.**

I will leave you with this (somewhat altered) poem by SenOgino which brilliantly captures the mood of the moment:

'So many small animals lost their homes today
As bulldozers cleared everything away

Nests with young tossed aside
Burrows and dens buried alive
Priceless native plants discarded
Voices of local people disregarded
Sounds of destruction were heard from miles away
Those that could run fled onto motorways
As it rained, pesticides and litter
Entered the Sarre Penn river

But it doesn't have to be this way
Sustainable development could save the day
We must demand that the council
Honour the voice of the people
We can reduce urban sprawl and
Make affordable housing for all.

Ania Bobrowicz

2 of June 2024