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From: John Wightman [REDACTED]
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To: Consultations
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Categories: Green category

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From:

John Wightman

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I wish to object to the proposal for the development of Brooklands Farm. Overall, it would destroy forever the most attractive and distinctive part of countryside abutting Whitstable and Chestfield, and would create large new built up areas that would be distant from the centre of Whitstable, yet not be self sufficient settlements in their own right.

Travelling out of Whitstable along South Steet, once past Brooklands Farmhouse the road opens out with, ancient hedgerows on both sides, and presents a vista of rolling countryside, with Convicts Wood along Swalecliffe Brook, and Shrub Hill and Clowes Wood in the distance. This view and its sense of openness would be lost, being replaced primarily by housing at a density of 35 dwellings per hectare. This route of South Street is visible on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey one inch map (1819), and this vista has probably changed relatively little since then; developing this country side and diverting this ancient road will effectively erase part of Whitstable's history.

The proposed environmental mitigations around green corridors, green spaces, and preservation of hedgerows and Convicts Wood are basically camouflage. Placing these features in what is a developed urban environment will completely change their character. Their existence as a mix of cultivated and remote natural countryside will be gone, and they will be isolated, denatured remnants, vulnerable to becoming degraded by overuse.

The housing created will not feel part of Whitstable in the same way that existing housing on urban edge can. Much of it will be two miles from the main centre, and so it will be a car journey for most (down roads - Millstrood Hill and Church Street- which are already unsuitable for the traffic they bear). The risk is that- even with the "community hub" that is promised- this will be a soulless, built up area of 1400+ dwellings that feels stranded, without its own proper centre, but too far from the real centre to feel part of it.

It is notable that there are a number of proposed sites in the 2040 plan that envisage very large numbers of dwellings (well over 1000). Such sites will inevitably have a massive impact on the areas where they are located, quite possibly larger in aggregate than if the same number of dwellings had been delivered with smaller sites; this will be especially true where those are areas which are already greatly valued as they are. In one sense, such areas will be taking a large part of the pain of new development for the rest of the district. I question, however, whether the method for selecting such high impact sites is fit for purpose. My understanding is that this is the same process as is used for much smaller sites (say up to a few hundred), where the starting point is the preparedness of landowners to put land forward for consideration. This means that the options for the location of a large neighbourhood- transforming site are not based on all possible locations, but are due the happenstance of which owners it suits to sell up (this is the public reason behind the proposed site between Tyler Hill and Blean.)

If the Brooklands Farm has been selected – rather than other locations - basically because the owner wants to sell, that would seem an insufficient reason to inflict the harms which the proposal will undoubtedly cause.