

## Alexander Gunyon

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**From:** Luke Lavan [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 03 June 2024 16:30  
**To:** Consultations  
**Subject:** District Plan consultation

**Categories:** Green category

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### --Email From External Account--

Dear Canterbury City Council,

I am writing to comment on the section C12 of the district plan, relating to Blean.

I live at [REDACTED] work for the university of Kent since 2007 and am a frequent visitor to Blean. In 2020, I organised the excavations of an iron age fortified enclosure and bronze age barrows at Blean Church Field with students from Univ of Kent.

I have also supervised Campus Archaeological Survey and have held a conference on Campus Archaeology at the university. I was involved closely in the development of the University Plan in 2018, advising the author architect John Letherland, and giving him a historical narrative.

My efforts were well received by John, by the University Estates Dept, by the community of Blean, and Blean Church, where I gave a lecture on my work. However, our work has been excluded from decision making on the proposed development by the university management.

The University Plan was very carefully developed with great attention to place-making, respecting and enhancing the historic and natural assets of the campus, whilst developing more intensively already 'urban' parts of the zone. However it is being disregarded by C12.

This has happened before. Despite having supervised a geophysical survey, paid by a fund in the university, at the site of Turing College, I only learned of the massive excavation there only from ex-students who phoned me up to tell me as it was happening.

The preventive archaeology we did, which could have reduced costs and reduced damage to heritage assets, was not considered. I was only told by my line manager that my work might find something and this was bad, as if the university could avoid a proper survey.

In the end the work that was done at Turing by CAT was a huge passive cost, added to the development bill without the chance having been given for a disinterested survey to reveal what the cost of building in different places might be, and so reduce them.

This is a situation that reflects the poor leadership of the last six or more years in which staff are not listened to as yet one more harsh top-down solution fails to produce better financial results. Now we have a grab for cash at Blean that ignores anyone with better ideas.

I fear that the present disregarding of our 2020 work at Blean, which included surface surveys and geophysics of much of the area to be developed, damages and disregards heritage assets including the adjacent scheduled ancient monuments at Blean and Tyler Hill.

The fields around Blean Church very rich in both archaeology and identity for the local community. There is not only the medieval manor and church at Blean but also at least three round barrows (of which we dug one) and a fortified enclosure (of which we dug a section). There are also large numbers of Neolithic and earlier flint tools on site.

This hilltop, today known for its skylarks and contemplative graveyard, was an ancient sacred space. The line of the iron age ditch respected one the round barrows, indicating that they remained striking landscape features here. A bronze to iron age palstave axe recovered during our 2020 dig was doubtless part of the burial of a chieftain of this period whose tomb looked down on the Sarre Penn valley here.

The barrows surely existed when was founded the church of St Cosmas and Damian: two Syrian doctors famous for giving medical treatment to the poor for free. This unusual dedication was most likely made by Theodore of Tarsus, who brought Greek education to Canterbury. The development of a medieval manor on (now scheduled) site may follow a Roman villa, given the reused bricks of Blean Church.

Thus, the site is of great meaning and the proposed development of 2,000 houses, which approaches very close to it, will overwhelm its character in historical terms. Whilst a sensible university plan would seek to reinstate the barrows and protect the fortifications and other features, this one will permanently destroy large part of the site and break up its associations, both with Blean and the university.

Thus I find the provisions of site C12 point 2f as inadequate. Archaeological assessments already exist and we know that this area incorporates important monuments which strongly relate to the landscape which will be removed - indeed they are landscape monuments - an industrial landscape of European importance and burial mounds with white chalk topping and church towers meant to be seen.

The idea that the plan will enhancing the earthworks of the area under C12 point k is quite ridiculous. We know where the earthwork and barrows in Blean Church Field and you are planning to build over them rather than connected them to the existing scheduled ancient monument of Blean Church. Just look on Google Earth and you will see a good number, not to mention those we found by geophysical survey.

I also know as a resident that the Sarre Penn valley is a key wildlife corridor from the marshes to the East to Blean Woods and is a key access route for walkers. The biodiversity of the Brotherwood woods is striking in autumn, when an incredible variety of fungi are visible, of types I have never seen before. The arrival here and in Blean woods of hundreds of cats and new dogs will greatly upset this ecosystem.

I am particularly concerned about the impact of cats of rare birdlife in Blean woods, which has a national bird reserve, especially the ground nesting ones, as well as damage from trampling to fungi. There is also a leisure impact for residents of Canterbury. As a family of cyclists, we know that there are only two routes that are really safe and level in Canterbury: the Stour valley path and the Crab and Winkle.

The flora in some of the small copses in Blean is exceptionally rich - it will not survive these becoming exercise parks for dogs and dens for teenagers- I have seen such damage myself and it often involves burning plastic and making a huge mess. Thus the policy of C12 point 3i will not work.

We love accessing local countryside at Blean, with the sense of elation that arriving at Blean Church gives. We also appreciate going through the fields north of here as our nearest experience of real countryside involved in food production. The disappearance of this farm land will mean young children with bikes

especially lose a major asset and the number of electric bikes / motorbikes going far too fast will only grow.

Tyler Hill has its own stories. In 2019 and 2020 I supervised geophysical work on the fields by Little Hall Farm, just north of the field where Time Team uncovered a medieval tile kiln, which is part of a scheduled ancient monument, a medieval industrial landscape, that gives European-wide significance to the aptly-named settlement of Tyler Hill. There are a great many such kilns in your proposed devt area.

Such monuments may seem less attractive than the cathedral and its fine glass but represent an exceptional landscape of work, obvious from the medieval tile which coated this area and was found in large quantities away in Blean. Such early industrial landscapes deserve to be preserved for their own sake as much as for the identity of the village that hosts them, as Historic England and others recognise.

I am concerned about the community of Tyler Hill being overwhelmed by the scale of the development, with its already clogged roads. The development seems too far to attract anyone except those with one or two cars. What we will get is not social housing for young families or students but houses for those who can afford to pay: in short low density urban sprawl of detached houses with gardens paved to stock cars.

The tight knit community at Tyler Hill don't deserve this. They are not over-housed like some residents of Blean but have modest homes set well within the landscape, Their sense of community will be destroyed by a commuter village of people coming from elsewhere. What we are seeing is meanings and identities in this rich landscape being ignored instead of drawn out.

I myself live in a terraced house with small garden. This ensures that the city does not overwhelm the precious green space around Canterbury. The loss of the area round Blean is only part of the same malaise - we are to lose a big part of the valley heartland at Chilham and Saxon Fields already overshadows what was pristine district. Our ecological heritage, that makes it so worthwhile to live here is lost.

Thus, I am in favour of developments such as that seen at Canterbury Riverside, in which high density city centre accommodation is made available in price bracket that young people can envisage living in. This does involve public gardens and small private gardens and implies a shift away from cars. The whole north side of Canterbury with its low quality stock needs to be redeveloped back into terraces as it was.

You say in 1.15 that you wish to provide access to **high-quality** housing stock but this is not required. Rather, we need access to decent affordable and sustainable **medium quality** housing, that avoids unnecessary destruction of our main leisure resource: we need terraces and medium rise flats that locals can actually afford, not houses of 300k plus which people moving into the region will take with their two cars.

Finally, as a cyclist, I would comment that the provision for bikes is still poor at Canterbury. Why cannot my son cycle to Simon Langton? To do so he must brave zooming cars on the Causeway and an iron bridge that he cannot lift his bike over. A route exists to the Wildwood from Blean for a day out but the last 100m can only be reached by car. The end of the path to Whitstable is unsafe, Wye cut off from the Chartham path.

Very little money is needed to sort these junctions: a few trucks of hardcore to level up the iron bridge approach, and a proper crossing into the Causeway and out into Pound Lane being obvious. We are told that no bridge can be built at Whitstable but then you are proposing new junctions that will overwhelm Rough Common with traffic. I worry for my children's safety as they mix with aggressive cars.

I find the provision for cycling throughout the plan to be inadequate. You speak of potential for improving cycling access but there is very little detail compared to that on housing or road improvement. Exactly what type of route are you planning and will it separate children from cars?

On policy S4 I know from experience that bus-led solutions are not going to work well. Faced with a commute to the station taxis or cycling will be preferred to avoid missing trains or waiting too long. The development at Blean if it goes ahead will result in very heavy car use for these reasons - wealthy people coming to the station to drop children on rainy winter evenings when they will not wish to cycle up a very steep hill.

Has anyone who wrote section 4 of C12 actually cycled up the hill to Blean?. Before assuming that large numbers of people will actually use this route perhaps try doing it yourself - it is a huge climb and you have to be athletic, not well-used to travelling by car, to do it.

As more traffic comes down Whitstable Road the blockage that comes from the level crossing not being in a tunnel will only get worse and worse adding delays and pollution as more people sitting alone in a large metal box choke their way up to Blean and the university, whose existing buses will now be delayed further.


What we need from Canterbury city council is a clear step away from car-fuelled urban sprawl and a return to higher density city-centre living, reworking areas in the north of Canterbury that we given low-density housing in place of terraces in the 1960s and proper Dutch-style cycling ways that give us the advantage over cars who are now consistently discouraged. Without this we will not be able to move forward.

I would be happy to provide further assistance to the council, especially relating to the historic asset and identity of the Blean communities in revising this plan, professional contributions of which have been ignored to date, especially due to the well-University Plan being disregarded.

Yours sincerely

Luke Lavan, 

I know from experience of walking with my children



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[REDACTED]