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From: Gary Samson [REDACTED]
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I am responding as a resident of the Canterbury District.

My comments are in relation to Chapters 1, 2, 5 and 6 of the Draft Local Plan and in particular to policy C12 of Chapter 2.

The proposal to build a new town of 2000 houses on prime agricultural land between Blean and Tyler Hill—bordering ancient forests and vital for local biodiversity—I find wholly unacceptable and, frankly, astonishing. In actively considering this proposal, Canterbury City Council appears to run counter to many of its own policies on protecting green spaces, advancing a weak case for additional house building rather than seeking an exemption from central government due to Canterbury's unique circumstances and historic character. Large-scale developments such as that proposed between Blean and Tyler Hill should instead seek to use designated brownfield sites in the district before contemplating the destruction of valuable agricultural land, ancient woodland and recreational countryside.

Blean, Tyler Hill, and the Sarre Penn Valley are places of immense historical and cultural value, making them truly remarkable exemplars of Britain's rich cultural and landscape heritage. The thirteenth-century parish church of St Cosmus and St Damian, situated along the ancient Roman Salt Road, is a notable local landmark that will be entirely engulfed by the proposed development. The Crab and Winkle Way, one of the first railway passenger railway lines in the world and now a cycling trail of national renown, regularly draws visitors to explore these areas. Archaeological digs at Blean conducted by the University of Kent have uncovered tools used by Mesolithic hunters, and a series of Bronze Age burial mounds lie in the field close to the church. Furthermore, a massive medieval enclosure ditch connected to the nearby Blean Manor—mentioned in the Domesday Book—is located in the area earmarked for construction. All of these will be irretrievably covered in brick, concrete and tarmac. There are also multiple heritage sites, Grade II listed buildings and conservation areas situated in and adjoining the whole area for development. These are all protected by planning laws. It is both curious and alarming how Canterbury City Council could consider permitting construction in this historic locality.

Many psychological studies that support the notion that easily accessible green spaces are beneficial for communities, individual wellbeing and mental health. For many in Rough Common, Blean and Tyler Hill, Blean Woods and the land around Sarre Penn is that accessible space. The proposed development under policy C12 will sweep away opportunities to explore the natural local environment for thousands of individuals living in these three villages and deny it permanently to future generations.

The Blean is home to an abundance of wildlife—over sixty species of birds, bats, foxes, hedgehogs, voles, weasels, and Great Crested Newts. These ancient woodlands, hedgerows and ponds are important habitats for these native animals. It is difficult to see how any mitigations to the wholesale loss of these natural habitats will increase biodiversity, a claim stated in the proposal. It is difficult to see how biodiversity in the area will be not be negatively impacted if the development in C12 were to go ahead.

A 'rural settlement' of 2000 homes will inevitably mean increased traffic and more air pollution. The road infrastructure around the development—Tyler Hill Road, Rough Common Road and Whitstable Road—is not designed to support a significant increase in the number of daily car journeys. Even now, Rough Common Road, in common with the road network in Canterbury, is often at a standstill during busy times. It is almost certain that an additional 3000–4000 cars using the network will bring traffic flows to a halt, consequently reducing air quality for all those living along these routes with the attendant risk of developing respiratory illnesses.

In summary, I firmly believe the substantial housing development proposed for C12 should not go ahead on the grounds of poor housing strategy, multiple unresolved access issues, air pollution from increased traffic, damage to wildlife, woodlands and heritage sites, and the destruction of valuable farmland and recreational green spaces.

Kind regards

Gary Samson
Rough Common