

NAME: Mrs Jacqueline Jackson-Cox

Response to Canterbury City Council's new draft local plan

I have some comments to make relating to Chapter 1, Questions 1 & 2, but will be mainly concerned with Chapter 2, Policy C12,

Chapter 1, Questions 1 and 2

Who would not want a sustainable and resilient economy, a thriving environment, improved connectivity, and healthy communities? But building an additional 2000 houses over the existing and accessible green open spaces between Blean, Tyler Hill, and Rough Common, not to mention other such developments in the area, is certainly not going to contribute to achieving the latter of these aims, and would probably do little to help the other three, especially insofar as improving visitor experience goes.

No-one could object to providing local people with affordable housing, but how do you intend to ensure that this will happen? What will you do if the developers insist that a project can only be financially viable if only a very tiny proportion of the houses are affordable by poorer people? Will those houses need to be very small and of poor quality? At present much so-called affordable housing is not actually affordable by many hard-working, but low-paid, people.

Everywhere I go in East Kent there already seems to be house building going on and I am aware of other applications for more building in and around Whitstable. Do we really need that many more houses in this area? Such evidence as I have been able to find suggests that there is already enough building going on to meet local needs. Further building can only, therefore, be intended for inviting more residents into the area. Even assuming that we can actually attract more residents to move to the area and purchase these houses, Canterbury and Whitstable are going to end up like most of Thanet where it is hard to tell where Margate, Broadstairs, and Ramsgate start and finish.

How would that be in line with the aim of creating healthy communities? It was demonstrated all too clearly during Lockdown that people need attractive open spaces where they can take walks, cycle, and enjoy communing with nature in order to maintain their mental health. Allowing yet more building on existing open green spaces, rather than re-using brownfield sites will hardly help to achieve your aim of creating healthy communities.

Also, how will it be possible to create the infrastructure to meet all of the needs of all these additional residents?

Hospitals in Margate and Ashford already struggle to meet the needs of the existing population. Do you intend to provide more hospital services in Canterbury and, if so, will they be available in time to meet the needs of the additional population?

I will look at the problems with other services, such as sewage, highway maintenance, schools, and public transport in addressing the many issues raised by Chapter 2, Policy C12

Chapter 2, Policy C12

The proposal to build 2000 new houses on land purchased from Eastbridge Hospital in 2006 raises a number of serious issues that the Council will need to address. As a resident, I may well be accused of Nimbyism, but these are very serious issues that will affect future generations, and not just the better-off members of the community. In some ways it's probably even more important for the

poorer people living in small houses or flats with tiny gardens, if any, to have easy access to natural open spaces within a reasonable distance from built-up areas.

I will address these issues in no particular order.

RURAL SETTLEMENT

Para 2.15 talks about a new rural settlement north of the university, but with the building of 2,000 houses, a community hub with shops and small businesses, and a new school, this area will cease to be rural. It will merge with Canterbury, Blean, and Tyler Hill to create a large area of urban sprawl.

I can see that, only with a large number of houses would it be financially viable to create the supporting infrastructure, but this would totally destroy the existing rural nature of the area. On the other hand, a small number of houses built either side of Tyler Hill Road, similar to the ribbon development along Tile Kiln Hill which would not totally destroy the rural nature of the area, would not be sufficiently financially attractive to the university or potential developers. But please don't pretend that with the existing proposal the area would remain rural.

TRAFFIC

There is already considerable traffic on the Whitstable Road, especially when there are diversions from other roads, and it is rare that some part of this road is not being dug up for a variety of purposes. The traffic on this busy road will also increase if the development behind the Royal Oak pub goes ahead, as seems likely.

Tyler Hill Road is narrow and winding, and though the suggestion appears to be that it would not be developed as an access road, what could possibly prevent the new residents from using it with houses on both sides of the road?

Rough Common Road is already difficult to negotiate with parked vehicles, so how is a lot more traffic to be accommodated? The plan talks of the Harbledown slip roads and Rough Common Road improvements being delivered prior to occupation of 50% of the total dwellings. Surely this is far too late in the process, and how are improvements to be made to Rough Common Road which already has dwellings on both sides of the existing road?

There is mention of a high frequency bus service, but who is to run it and ensure that it keeps going even though it may not prove financially viable? Can KCC afford to subsidise it?

The plan talks of encouraging the use of cycles, but surely the construction of a road alongside the Crab and Winkle way will actually discourage the use of cycles? In any case, not everyone is able to cycle or use buses, so there will inevitably be more cars on the road.

ACCESS

The primary designated approach road joins the busy Whitstable Road just north of the Rough Common roundabout and appears to encroach on a conservation area including the Crab and Winkle cycle route and some Grade II listed buildings.

The secondary access point is also on the Whitstable Road and would involve the knocking down of Blean Primary School. This school has served many generations of Blean, Tyler Hill, and Rough Common residents and has had an excellent reputation. Where will the school be moved to and how will the transfer be organised without disrupting the children's education?

DRAINAGE AND WASTE WATER



If you dig down anywhere in Blean, it will not be long before you reach London clay. Having purchased a strip of farm land from Eastbridge hospital, I have first-hand experience of what this involves. In digging out a wildlife pond, I had to struggle with the pond filling up with rain water before I could put in a proper liner.

In order to be able to walk around the plot in winter, I had to dig drainage channels, put in a soakaway, and lay plastic meshing over the ground to prevent the paths turning into muddy quagmires. I have also seen pictures of similar problems up the top of the hill on Blean Common.

Planning permission to build even one house on the land of one of our neighbours was turned down in part over the problem of guaranteeing that waste water would not find its way down the hill into the Sarre Pen and cause problems for the protected marsh areas east of Canterbury.

It is often the case that the pumping station adjacent to the Sarre Penn struggles to cope with the volume of water in the winter, and it sometimes happens that flooding causes disruption to traffic on Tile Kiln Hill/Whitstable Road. Trees help to soak up the surplus water, so any destruction of existing trees will just add to the problem.

Has serious consideration been given to the need for new drainage systems and their implementation before contamination of the local environment is caused by the building any of these new houses?

As for the plans to deal with the volume of sewage created by 2,000 homes, the plan talks about the provision of new high quality waste water treatment works at an appropriate location within the site. Given the dire reputation of Water Companies at this time, with illegal amounts of untreated sewage being dumped in the sea, how can we trust them to ensure that no contamination reaches the Sarre Pen Valley?

THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE; WILDLIFE; AND BIODIVERSITY

Para 2.17 talks about a linear development with opportunities to create large new area of open spaces and separation of Blean from Tyler Hill, but any development can only reduce, not increase the existing open spaces, leaving narrow strips of land of less benefit to the existing wildlife.

In 1968 there were nightingales singing regularly across the Whitstable Road in Church Woods. There were also Skylarks and Yellowhammers in the fields behind the houses on the other side of Tile Kiln Hill. After about 10 years, these birds disappeared and have never returned. It is good to hear that these birds can still be heard around the Crab and Winkle Way, though the numbers are seriously low, but what is the chance of them surviving if the remaining open spaces of arable farmland are built over. And these are not the only rare and endangered species of animals and plants dependent upon the fields and hedgerows of the Sarre Pen valley.

There used to be plenty of hedgehogs, but these are now declining. They need a wide area to travel in search of food, and people's tendency to install solid walls and fencing to keep their dogs from straying, prevents the hedgehogs from moving freely in search of food. This will not be helped by the building of 2000 more houses.

The previous loss of the Bluebell Woods was tragic when student accommodation was built at Park Wood, but at least this was for educational purposes, not property speculation.

SOCIAL HISTORY

Blean has a long and interesting history with evidence dating back to the Bronze Age. How is this new development to be achieved without having a negative impact on heritage sites? Even if a small area is set aside around the perimeter of the church and the remains of earlier occupation, the rural aspect of this historic part of Blean will be lost forever.

I could say more, but time is running out. Whilst I appreciate the need for housing, this is in the wrong place, will totally destroy the rural nature of the area, and small strips of land set aside for the benefit of public health and wildlife would be totally inadequate. Global warming, whatever its cause may be, requires us to protect the natural environment and plant more trees for the benefit of future generations. What use are more houses if they are in danger of flooding or causing floods elsewhere? Any compensation involving re-planting in a different area is totally inadequate. It takes years to establish hedges and woods and such planting should be happening anyway, whether or not our natural assets are being destroyed in Blean.