

Draft Local Plan 2040

I write to comment on the above Plan, with reference to Chapter 2 (Canterbury) Policy C12 the proposed University of Kent land development.

As well as speaking for myself, I would like to speak for the wildlife in the Blean, particularly the skylarks who look upon the area as home. Unfortunately, they have found themselves with a landlord, The University of Kent, that turns out to be a land speculator, probably aided by public funds to get to this position. The footpaths through these fields has always been a first choice location to be enraptured by the song of skylarks but their loss is going to be much greater than mine should this development be realized. Of course, it isn't just skylarks that would be effected. Destroying the well established hedges running through this area would increase the fragmentation of Blean's woodland parcels with a strong detrimental impact on all of its wildlife.

Even without knowledge on the type of housing that would be submitted for building approval, I think that we can be fairly sure that the majority of any development here would be beyond the budgets of most local people needing to live or remain in the locality. As every developer knows, London still holds lots of people who would like to get out and use their capital to buy into an area where their money goes a lot further. The appeal of being able to afford a new home in the country and the SUV to go with it has already set the pattern in most parts of our county.

Before anything concerning the University of Kent's land in the Blean is included in any Local Plan, both now and in the future, I think that Canterbury's traffic problems need urgent attention. While a succession of new housing estates have sprung up on previously open countryside, adding more traffic to the mix, the problems that our Council has failed to fix are the two level crossing at St Dunstan's Street and St Stephen's Road. I cannot see any way to deal with the St Stephen's crossing, but would have thought that the St Dunstan's crossing could have been made redundant by the building of a bridge, but this was before the Council granted building permission for the retirement apartments on the former tyre depot site, and before they build their own multi storey car park in Station Road West.

Even though the potential site seems to be labelled as a car-dependent development, I have no doubt that, bearing in mind the Canterbury City Council's proposed 'Bus Policies' the agency marketing any development there, will try to sell their new "garden village" as within an easy 'bus journey to Canterbury'. From personal experience I can say that Stage Coach Bus Services are totally unreliable. On my local route, the drivers treat Bus Stops as Request Steps and unless they see someone actually on the side of the road and waving, will drive right passed, usually at speed. Waiting in the shelter and sitting on the bench if there is one, is a recipe for watching the bus you wanted to catch disappear down the road. Regarding cycle (bridleway) and footpaths, they only remain in what most people would consider to be a usable condition if they are maintained. From my experience, gained by walking in my own local area, quite close to the C12 site, I can categorically say that they are not, and subsequently the footpaths and bridlepaths that we already have are often impassable without risking injury. Having the "Crab & Winkle Way" traversing the proposed site will of course give it one decent road-alternative route into Canterbury but I expect that those

using it will have to compete with motor bikes and electric scooters whatever the eventual legislation regarding the use of these. I also suspect that once the bus, bike or walk options have been tried a few times it will be case o back to the SUV or the giant extended cab pick-up again, for a drive to the station to start the commute, or for the school run, both of which will probably come with a long wait in traffic due to a level crossing, or two.

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