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From: Steve Stanley [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 May 2024 15:56
To: Consultations
Subject: Comments Regarding Local Plan: Policy R5 – Bread and Cheese Field

Categories: Blue category

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Hi,

I am a local resident of Westbere (Steve Stanley, [REDACTED]) and have some concerns regarding this section of the local plan.

The proposed development is situated on the small green gap that currently separates Westbere and Hersden. Building on this site in the manner proposed has several issues:

1. Eliminates the green gap between Westbere and Hersden, eroding the rural character of Westbere village in particular. Especially along Bushy Hill Road which is one of the primary entrances to Westbere village. The fields along both sides of Bushy Hill Road are vital green gap for the village.
2. There is a small patch of ancient woodland in the north east section of this proposed site, and the proposed development here would see it completely surrounded by housing and the A28, with no route in or out for key species like hedgehogs. This is one of the elements of British development and planning that is consistently handled poorly - very little regard paid to habitat connectivity, and too many pockets of ancient woodland ringed in development rather than expanded with tree planting to reach other sections of woodland. Restricting wildlife access to this ancient woodland will not enhance biodiversity value by 20% as stated. It will severely limit wildlife access and have a negative impact on biodiversity. And that's before considering the impact of light and sound pollution from all the housing being built around this ancient woodland, and all the cats that will be introduced to hunt local wildlife like birds, reptiles, and amphibians from 150 new households in such a dense area.
3. The biodiversity value of this area of Canterbury has so much potential for expansion, as this land all slopes down directly to Westbere Marshes and Stodmarsh Nature Reserve, part of a connected SSSI and Ramsar site which makes it incredibly important on a national level as well as a local level. The Ramsar designation even means that it is of *international* importance. When looking for areas of land to improve for biodiversity and tree planting, this parcel of land is exactly the sort of location that would have the best benefit. Tree planting here would connect the existing pocket of ancient woodland to the woods in Westbere, effectively expand the size of the SSSI nature reserve to the south, and act as a pollution, light, and sound barrier from the A28 running down to the wetland. Ecologically it is a perfect site for enhancing biodiversity in a way that links up and expands existing sites of importance. Housing development here shows a severe lack of interest in biodiversity enhancements for Canterbury, by building on one of the best candidates for biodiversity enhancement.

4. The A28 is already heavily congested with traffic, and exiting onto the main road from Westbere is already incredibly dangerous. More importantly, the traffic build-up at rush hours from the Sturry rail crossing frequently backs up into Hersden, and many drivers heading into Canterbury now use Westbere as a cut-through to get ahead of the queuing traffic, speeding through the village's 20mph zones as a short cut (down Bushy Hill Road, then west along Westbere Lane before rejoining the A28). The traffic issues on the A28 are creating very dangerous conditions for Westbere residents as the village roads are far too narrow to support this use. Further development will continue to exacerbate this traffic issue for Westbere and surrounding villages. We are even seeing pedestrian deaths on the A28 this year, so this is NOT an issue to be taken lightly. The traffic issues on this road are killing people.

Many thanks for your time, and I urge you to reconsider this location as being suitable for development. It erodes the character of Westbere by removing the green gap to Hersden, exacerbates traffic issues that are already causing pedestrian deaths, and makes no sense from an ecological perspective.

-Steve Stanley-

