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Thursday, 23 May 2024

Local plan – objections and comments

Dear Canterbury City Council,

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I think and hope that I have a reasonably good understanding of those who live in this part of East Kent.

Of interest, in Adisham there are at least twelve - and probably several more - families who have lived in the village longer than we have. Adisham is not a famously pretty village but is clearly a place to which people want to move and in which, once here, want to stay.

However, I am quite confident that villagers and all other local people I meet fully understand the need for our country to have more houses built, even in the Canterbury area, even in our village. But present villagers feel some sense of duty to maintain, in roughly similar form, a living place that had existed for 1600 years and more, always growing slowly and developing incrementally.

Our villagers have shown a similar responsible concern for their local environment in how they guarded the twelve ancient woodlands in the parish (not all close to the village itself) by checking on the legality of what was being done in some of them. As you may know, orders (subject to appeal) have been made following villager representations to remove several structures built in some of those woods that CCC officials may have been too overburdened by other pressing work to monitor.

This part of East Kent has, like so many other parts of the UK, things and places of historic interest and contemporary value. Some local villages – Patrixbourne, Womenswold or Wickhambreux, for example - are not suitable for any but very modest expansion because of their history, setting, size. Others - often on significant roads between larger communities or having historic industry or present business parks such as Littlebourne, Aylesham and Wingham – have already grown into, or towards being, small towns. Adisham is of the former category and the sensible decision of the council

to remove planning proposal known as R1 (Cooting Farm Community Garden Scheme) from the Plan allows that position to be maintained. R1 would, inevitably and quickly, have swamped and consumed Adisham; the village's characteristic slow development would have been ruptured and its continuous 1600-year character - ecclesiastical, agricultural, secluded-residential - lost forever.

R1 as proposed had no identified business purpose – agricultural or otherwise – and would have been a large dormitory from which thousands of journeys would have to be made each day to towns or other places of employment. It would have reflected, in part, the assumption that population growth will continue indefinitely – an assumption that may prove to be wrong. It assumed that there would be purpose in getting thousands of people to live in a large estate within open farmland intended without explanation to respond in some unidentified way to human needs and wants as well as to government demands for construction of a certain number of houses somewhere/anywhere. In truth the only real purpose was the government numerical one.

The Council's good decision to remove R1 from the plan seems to reflect and allow for the more likely preference of many people seeking homes to live in places close to places of work and to prioritise the use of brown field or similar sites.

So, I am delighted that Canterbury City Council has seen the sense of eliminating R1 that the concerns of voters - residents and people working in the area - have been understood. It is much to the credit of the councillors that they absorbed our concerns about this proposed Plan, and I thank them for this.

By this decision the Council has given the wildlife a chance to continue to thrive here – remember the birds we heard during lock down that we had not heard in recent years.

Here are a few of the reasons why, it seems to me, that you acknowledged that R1 was not a sensible plan:

This site is agricultural land and not a brown field site. As a site it serves no local purpose. On the contrary the UK needs every spot of land for growing food and farmers are under enough stress already.

Building here would mean an ancient landscape gone forever along with the destruction of wildlife, trees and fauna which surround it.

There was no adequate infrastructure planned or even possible. It was almost as if a set of houses was to be 'plonked' in the middle of farmland despite the effect that would have on a small, ancient community.

The traffic, the noise, the light pollution, the air quality, the carting around of sewage by lorries - imagine the potential accidents – increased by the number of people per house would ruin the identity of this village and area, indeed we would no longer be a village.

The chalk aquifers are vital, and Kent is already short of water. The environmental impact on the health and well-being of the wider community would have been irresponsible had the Council not shown proper concern for the area.

The peace and tranquillity of Adisham and its surrounding area are something to be treasured, valued and not changed. Locals and visitors enjoy the ancient woodlands and all that they encompass. The loss of Adisham's identity – an ancient settlement dating back to the Domesday book – would stain the Council's record.

### **Policy C17: Highland Court Farm/ Canterbury Business Park**

I am strongly opposed to this enormous winery development. This is not a walk in the park with a nice glass of wine at the end! Instead, simply unsightly, very tall, inappropriate, industrial buildings set in Kent Downs National Landscape. The light pollution here is alarming already even viewed from Adisham Downs Road. Many cyclists and walkers use the footpaths immediately beside the proposed site along with horse riders all to be startled or worse by enormous increase in cars and lorries.

There would be an increase of traffic in country lanes which don't have enough passing spaces anyway, and much of this would affect Adisham. This site would rely on road transport both for the business (lorries) and for people getting to and from work. The congestion will affect all roads.

There would be destruction of trees and fauna (not to mention wildlife in general) along with poisons to clear the ground, merely to expand and suit a business for financial profit.

### **Policy R12: Land west of Cooting Lane and south of Station Road**

I have two interests which I deal with separately:

Village - Effect on Station Road generally, road traffic use/risks in particular

and

Personal - our 3 / 4 acre field/meadow abuts Station Road and the site of R12 to the north / north east; see plan below.

To the extent explained in the Local Plan, R12 lacks sufficient detail for *any* proper view to be formed about it – it could be that R12 has been proposed without the person making the proposal having visited the site - and therefore I object to it, for reasons that follow. It is not enough to say that if the site remains in the Plan, detailed difficulties can be dealt with at planning applications. The insufficiency of detail goes to the essence of this proposal and should be dealt with now by removal of R12.

It is unfortunate that the village of Adisham had not started earlier preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and it may be best to defer the consideration of possible sites like R12 to the village's overall approach (which is bound to accept a need for some more houses, as explained above) and, for example, for consideration to be given to other sites, for example the footprint of the derelict building along Cooting lane (part of the same field as R12), an extension to the affordable houses built along Bossington Road but nearer to the centre of the village, land at the far western end of the village etc.

## VILLAGE INTERESTS

The site is above the level of the road by at least 4 four feet to the north of the site tapering down to a foot or so to the south of the site. Is it intended to excavate the site and for the proposed houses to follow the level of the road like the houses opposite or to be built on the level of the field? If the latter how will access be gained - from a roadway leading upwards from Station Road? Or an entry to a special new field-level roadway 2 cars wide off Cooting Lane, accessible to all emergency services; and if so at what distance from the junction of Cooting Lane and Station Road?

The present iteration of the Plan says the tree line on the edge of Station Road will be preserved without explaining how that can be achieved. (We have preserved and improved the tree line on our own property to the north of the site - shown by rough zig-zag line on the image below - by clearing the ivy that has been weighing down all trees and by other clearing of the verge). If houses are to be built at Station Road level – as with the houses opposite - all the trees in the tree line will have to go. As above in question form, If houses are to built at field level then major access will be required with a two car width access road in front of the houses, parallel to Station Road but behind the tree line and accessed either from Station Road or Cooting Lane,

Were houses to be built at field level, higher than and overlooking the houses opposite, then the view of Station Road itself will be dramatically changed for those living opposite who, we understand, may not want their view changed in this way. Even bungalows – if they were to be proposed – would have a similar effect.

It Is not clear how parking will be provided for the 'approximately ten new dwellings'. I assume it is at least an average of two cars per house and the Council will have expertise on the expected number of exits from the site onto Station Road (or Cooting Lane) and entries back from Station Road (or Cooting Lane) per day; my guess would be at least 20 each way.

Station Road is subject to a 30 mph limit that seems rarely to be obeyed by drivers using Station Road as a through route to or from the B 2068. There are always vehicles parked on the east side of Station Road opposite the proposed R12 site, nearly always part-parked on the pavement. They present, as anyone who has been on a speed awareness course knows, a real risk to children or others emerging without warning from behind a parked car or van. The

additional traffic from approximately ten dwellings will add substantially to the existing risk, well appreciated by local residents.

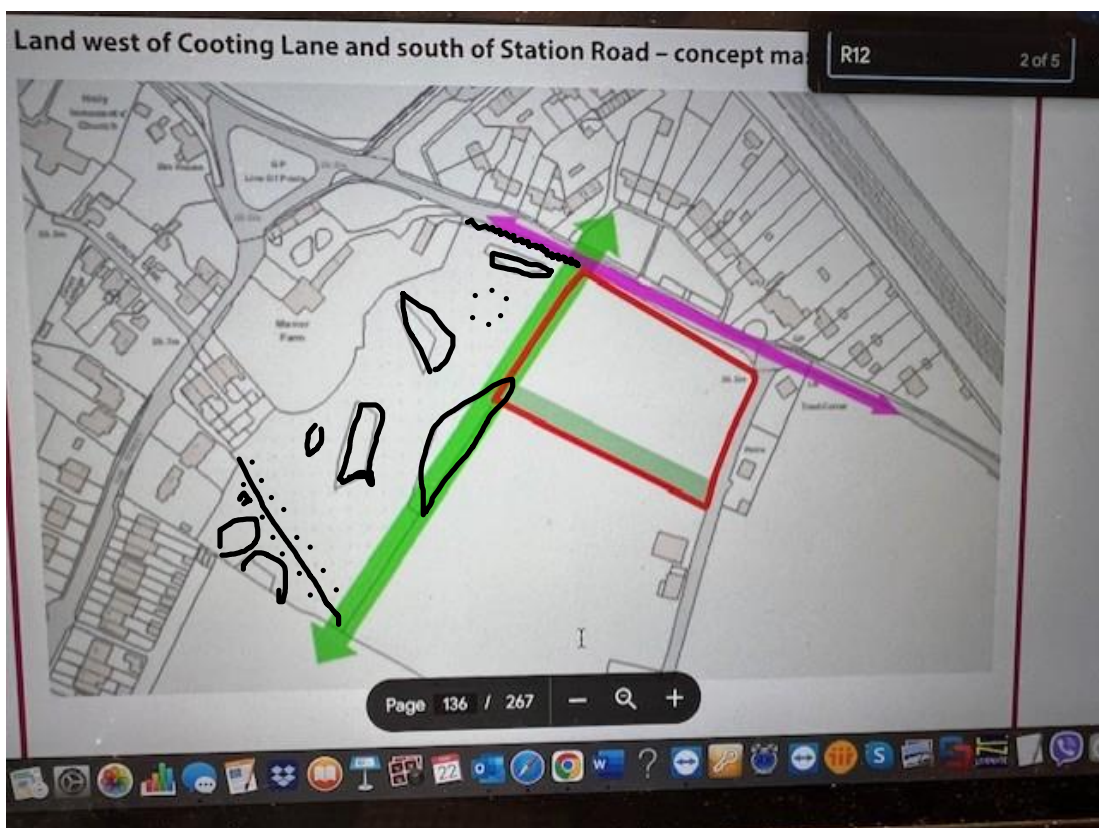
Without specified and enforceable undertakings about traffic-calming measure – for example chicanes and a 20mph limit strictly monitored – R12 must be removed from the plan for road traffic risk reasons alone.

#### PERSONAL:

Our field/meadow has been developed by us over the four decades that we have owned it by planting several copses of trees (roughly marked on plan below), hedges, creating paths and leaving areas wild with some used by apiarists. There is a footpath (straight black line on plan below) across the western corner of the field that we have turned into an avenue bordered by three parallel lines of trees (one line marked with dots) to make it more enjoyable/pleasant for dog walkers and other users.

We have refused – and will continue to refuse - invitations to consider selling the field or any part of it for development and would be content for all of it – not just a small part as at present – to be in the Conservation Area, the better to ensure that what we have made of it lasts as a place of some beauty.

(Please visit the public footpath or – with notice to us – the field itself.)



We count, and use, the field as amenity land – as part of our garden effectively – and walk round it at least once on more or less every day in all seasons. We note that on the plan there is a proposed ‘open space/landscape buffer’ to the south of the site but with no indication of what if anything it may shield, from whom or what. There is nothing of a similar kind suggested for the western boundary abutting our field/meadow.

Our use of the field/meadow as an amenity – perhaps walking round it quite as often as or more often than many people walk round their gardens – will be significantly changed by having an urban view from all of the NE-SW boundary (that is marked in green as an ‘opportunity for a green corridor’ on the Plan).

Therefore, as an interested party I cannot comment on this before seeing any plans and must ask that R12 be removed from the Plan altogether. This piece of land for R12 is fraught with unresolved difficulties if the council want it to become residential.

How would it be developed? It is at least 4’ higher than Station Road itself. Where would the access be? Where would the current residents of Station Road Park their cars? Would these houses be starter homes and/or affordable? Would they be ecologically viable? Would they have solar panels on the roof? What about the infrastructure? All these questions and others I would need to know before I could voice an opinion.

Yours sincerely,

Lady (Philippa) Nice,