

# **BLEAN, HACKINGTON & TYLER HILL SOCIETY**

**Registered charity number 270131**

**Established 1975**

**Response to**

**Canterbury District Local Plan 2040**

## **1. Vision for Canterbury**

This Society questions whether Canterbury can take any more houses and any more people. There are 15,000 houses already agreed and the City Council is proposing to build 9,000 more, a total of 24,514 houses. This could mean a population increase of c.70,000 which would amount to 60% increase in the size of the population. Canterbury is already a city under stress. Its streets are dirty and full of uncollected litter. Its roads are hazardous because of numerous potholes and are constantly being repaired and there are frequent 'diversion' signs on closed streets to the irritation of motorists and residents alike. There are traffic jams every day, several times a day at Wincheap and at the Sainsbury's roundabout. It is extremely difficult to get a doctor's appointment and there is a serious shortage of doctors and dentists and pharmacies. The schools are full .

2. Canterbury has one of the most important collection of historic buildings in the country: Roman walls dating from the third century, the magnificent cathedral, St. Martin's church, a seventh century Saxon foundation, St Augustine's abbey which saw the foundation of the Christian church in England and a number of friaries and hospitals built for the pilgrims who came to visit the shrine

of Becket. It richly deserves both its nomination as a World Heritage site and to be considered an *exception* from the Government's policy on housebuilding. If Canterbury does not merit the status of exception, which city does? And what further qualifications would it need to be granted an '*exception*'? This Society considers that further housebuilding and the consequent rise in population would put at risk its World Heritage status.

C12 This Society was founded in 1975 with the object of preserving and protecting the Sarre Penn Valley. It is therefore very concerned at the proposal of the City Council to build 2,000 houses on land which the University is selling to ease its financial problems. It finds it hard to understand that when the City issued its 'Call for Land' in 2021 and the University offered its farmland as a suitable site for building, the offer was turned down on the grounds that the site was unsuitable, both on account of access and of the terrain. What has changed that makes the site now suitable?

This Society deplores the loss of 60 hectares of productive, grade 2 and 3 farmland at a time of food shortages. Not only is the land productive, producing crops and feeding stock, it is also the habitat of a wide range of birds and small animals, being especially noted for the skylark which is under threat in the United Kingdom. The Local Plan's assertion that wildlife will be not only 'protected' but also 'enhanced' rings hollow. How can be wildlife be protected by building all over it?

The proposal to create a 'rural settlement' of 2,000 houses is unrealistic. Far from being 'rural' it will join up with the two villages of Blean and Tyler Hill, which are at present separated by a 'green gap' which developed historically and over a long period of time. The net result will be an

urban sprawl stretching from Tyler Hill to the Whitstable Road, changing the nature of both Tyler Hill and Blean and undermining their separate identities. What facilities will be available on this 'settlement'? There is no mention of provision of a doctor but one will be needed for up to 8,000 people. Will there be a pharmacist on the site?

This Society is very concerned about the issue of water in one of the most water-stressed parts of the UK. The Plan talks coyly about a 'waste water treatment plan'; what it really means is a sewage works. Where is the water to come from? How will the sewage be transported? Will the houses in the area be plagued by a bad smell? Will our houses go down in value? Has any thought been given to these questions?

Another problem which concerns this Society is the question of access. The demolition of Blean School will still result in the 'settlement' traffic (up to 4,000 extra cars) exiting onto the Whitstable Road, which was one of the reasons for rejecting the University's offer of land in 2021. Although the Local Plan talks of 'mitigating' the traffic along Tyler Hill Road, this will not be possible since houses are proposed for both sides of the road. The residents of Tyler Hill, as a consequence, can expect a big increase in the volume of traffic passing through. Has any thought been given to them?

After the demolition of Blean School, the Local Plan talks of building two new primary schools. This will mean that the children currently at Blean School will experience almost constant construction work going on around them. This will be both dangerous and disruptive. Two new primary schools next door to each other will be in competition for pupils if they share the same catchment

area and what will happen if one school is more popular than the other? The question of access and its ramifications is riddled with uncertainties and unanswered questions.

There is also the question of damage not only to the beautiful Sarre Penn Valley and its rich wildlife but also to the historic buildings in the Blean. The ancient church will be engulfed by new houses, the Salt Path, commonly known as the Crab and Winkle route, will become an urban road between houses, the site of the Roman villa and the Medieval Tile Kilns will go under concrete. The council's Environmental Strategy set out in the Local Plan declares: *'The council is committed to protecting and, where possible, enhancing the historic environment for future'*. How can this be achieved by building 2,000 houses on the site?

For these reasons and many others, the members of the Blean, Hackington and Tyler Hill Society urge the council to drop the 'rural settlement' proposal and to erase it from the Local Plan.

Penelope Reilly  
Chair

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