

Comments from:

Deborah Thompson

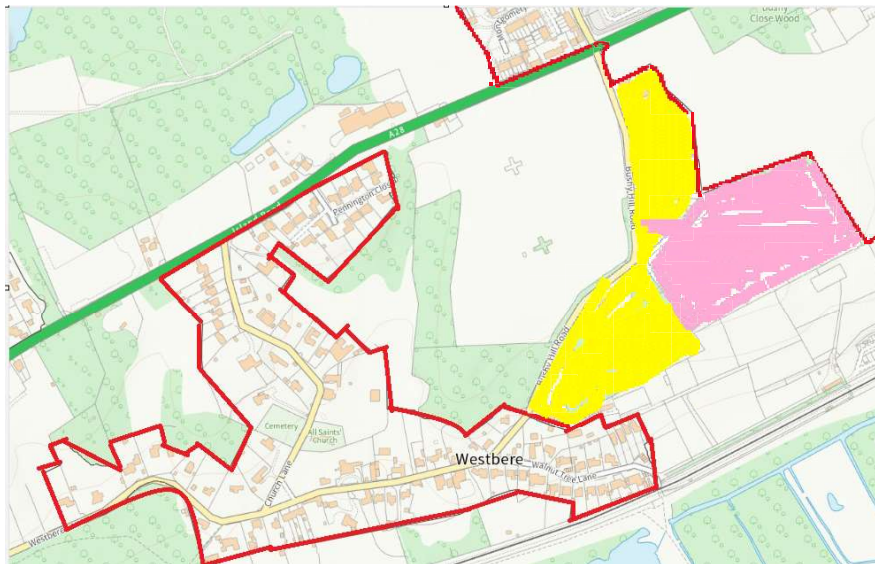


COMMENTS / OBJECTIONS

I am writing to:

- (i) Comment on/object to the Settlement Boundaries for the settlements of Westbere and Hersden as currently drawn as part of the draft Local Plan 2040, and
- (ii) Object to the inclusion of Policy R5 - Bread and Cheese Field, in the draft Local Plan 2040, whereby Site 5 (referred to in these comments as “the Field”) is earmarked for residential development.

Settlement Boundaries for Westbere and Hersden



The map above shows the currently drawn settlement boundaries for Westbere and Hersden around the site of the Field as proposed for the purposes of the draft Local Plan (red lines).

The settlement boundary delineating the settlement of Westbere is drawn incorrectly (by the Council’s own methodology as set out in the Canterbury District Local Plan Development Topic Paper, Section 5 (the “Paper”)), as it results in the exclusion of the majority of houses on Bushy Hill Road from the settlement of Westbere (including those that back on to the Field) as shown (with their back gardens) highlighted in yellow on the map. The land highlighted in purple is part of the curtilage of 7 Bushy Hill Road (shown in a slightly darker yellow on the map) and is directly accessed from the back of the house, also with a gate entrance off Bushy Hill Road.

The exclusion of these houses is an absurd result, as there is a **continuous line** of residential dwellings (**no gaps at all**) running from the centre of Westbere village all the way up Bushy Hill Road to the A28, which have been there many

decades and whose residents (including myself!) would clearly see themselves as residents of the settlement of Westbere. A site visit (as described in the Paper for where there are uncertainties), would confirm this.

Even according to the Council's own methodology, there is no legitimate reason for excluding these houses, unless cynically it has been done to help facilitate the development of the Field by trying to show that there is a "countryside" gap between the two settlements and Westbere and Hersden would not merge if the Field is built upon.

I note that in Section 5.9. of the Paper, that the Chartham settlement boundary was amended to include a couple of buildings to the north east, off Station Road, which were not included previously. Further research showed that the buildings were residential and commercial and therefore including them within the settlement boundary was in line with the methodology set out in Section 5.

Equally, the settlement boundary for Westbere should also be amended to include all the houses on Bushy Hill Road as there is no justification for their exclusion. This would clearly demonstrate that any development of the Field would result in the coalescence of Westbere and Hersden, and therefore the settlement boundary for Hersden should be moved to the eastern side of the Field (running down the access road to the sewage works and RSPCA centre).

Objections to the Inclusion of Policy R5 - Bread and Cheese Field

- **Coalescence of Westbere and Hersden** - Any development on the Field will merge Westbere and Hersden by removing the green space ("countryside") between the two settlements that the Field provides (see comments above on the incorrect and misleading current settlement boundary for Westbere), effectively compromising the individual and unique identities of Westbere and Hersden, and resulting in continuous ribbon development along the south side of the A28. This is an unacceptable outcome, despite the best efforts of Canterbury City Council planning department to make it look like it is not the case with a "convenient" but incorrect drawing of settlement boundaries.
- **Unnecessary Development** - According to a recent report produced by ACRA, (Alliance of Canterbury Residents' Association) Canterbury City Council has grossly over-stated the population growth for the area and, therefore, the demand for houses. The Field is not needed as a development site, especially considering the substantial developments already approved in and around Hersden.
- **Impact on local nature** - The Field, along with the ancient woodland and hedgerows, provide a vital source of bio-diversity and supports a wide range of wildlife (including kestrels, buzzards, foxes, swallows and bats that have been sighted hunting on or above the Field). This will largely disappear with any development. R5 cites "opportunities for green corridors" and a 20% biodiversity net gain (I assume by using a system of credits with an offset provider). Surely leaving the Field as a green space achieves these objectives and saves our local wildlife more clearly than building 150 dwellings on it!

- **Local Infrastructure creaking already** - Current infrastructure in the area, such as local shops, Doctors, Dentists as well as the lack of work opportunities are woefully inadequate for the existing population, let alone the inhabitants of another 150 homes relying on these already overstretched local services.
- **Road and Pedestrian Safety** - The A28 is already a busy A road going through built up areas, and has got busier with recent housing developments and an increased local population. This is a major problem, and can lead to safety issues when trying to join it leaving the two exits points from Westbere. In addition, the pavements along the road tend to be narrow with crossings difficult to navigate. A local Sturry resident (an elderly gentleman) recently got knocked down and killed trying to cross the road in Sturry. The A28 cannot keep supporting the increase in traffic that new development creates.
- The Field is of significant historic importance to the village of Westbere, with a charitable history that can be traced back over 300 years, and is still continuing today (see Community Governance Review – Westbere and Hersden parish boundary).