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Date: 28 May  
2024

The Planning Department,  
Canterbury City Council Offices,  
Military Road,  
Canterbury  
Kent CT1 1YW

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Re: Objection to the proposed Brooklands Farm  
Development**

We write to register our objection to the proposed development of 1400 new houses on the Brooklands Farm site in Whitstable.

We object on a number of grounds. Firstly, the Brooklands Farm development would remove valuable agricultural land permanently, at a time when food security has become more important than for many years. It is absurd that agricultural land which is currently in use should even be included within the draft local plan at all. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, and the risk to global security posed by the Russians' weaponization of food supplies, it is surly clear to us all that we need to be self-reliant in food production as far as is possible.

Secondly, there is already considerable overdevelopment in the area. Across the Canterbury District, are many housing schemes, and Whitstable has yet to feel the full impact of the new developments at Grasmere Gardens (formerly Grasmere Pastures); Whitstable Heights; and Pearson's Heights; to say nothing of the developments on the former Herne Bay golf course; and in the Bullockstone area. People across the district are being asked to accept a huge rate of development which is completely changing the nature of the area and creating ever greater urban sprawl.

Thirdly, the amount of development proposed will place impossible challenges on local infrastructure. The road network alone will be unable to cope with the increased traffic that an additional 1400 houses will bring to the area, with an estimated 3000 additional

cars. Whitstable town centre and all the approach roads are impossibly clogged during the summer months, and there are no proposals to ease pressure on the town centre and the access roads into Whitstable. Indeed, it is difficult to see what engineering solutions there could be in a small fishing town hemmed in by the sea, the railway and the Thanet Way. The only sensible approach is to accept that there are limits to the amount of suburban development which is possible in a small town.

Nor are there any obvious engineering solutions to the pinch points at places such as Greenhill Bridge Road and the Chestfield Station junction with the old Thanet Way. There are already delays building up at such places, even before the full impact of the developments at Whitstable Heights and the other new development sites has yet been experienced.

These difficulties are likely to push more traffic in the direction of Canterbury, which, as a mediaeval city, is really not capable of absorbing additional vehicles. The Council's only approach to dealing with this problem is to increase the parking charges in an attempt to discourage people from driving into the city. There is, however, no current Park & Ride service on the Whitstable side of the town, and the Council stopped the Sturry Road Park & Ride scheme. This shows a distinct absence of joined up thinking.

Fourthly, the increased number of homes will increase pressure on the sewage system. At a time when increasing number of people are becoming exercised about more and more sewage being discharged into the sea and into our rivers, it cannot be good public policy to add to that problem without first addressing the capacity issues of the current system. It is frequently unsafe to bathe in the sea, and usually unpleasant. It would be good to see some pushback from our locally elected representatives against the universal assumption made by the water companies that whenever it rains, effluent will be discharged into the sea.

Fifth: at the same time, there are increasing pressures on our fresh water supply, with the water companies imploring us to use water wisely and threatening to introduce hosepipe bans. Once again, in the absence of anything being done to improve capacity, the obvious solution is to stop further overdevelopment.

We read a lot about proposed community developments, including schools, health centres, doctors' surgeries etc but these have never materialised with the new schemes developed to date. Local people in this district are very well aware of the fact that health services which were once rated as very good are now struggling to meet the needs of an increasing population, and it has become very difficult to get appointments. This problem will only get worse.

Many local people are reflecting upon the fact that the quality of life is being gradually eroded by the increasing urbanisation of the area. There is more traffic, bringing with it both noise and environmental pollution. In Whitstable, the Council provides very little in the way of amenity. The greatly valued amenity offered by Grasmere Pastures has been lost. Duncan Down has been eroded. There are proposed developments on the Church Street playing field. It feels as though the developers are running amok, with little challenge from the Council, as encroachments are made onto any available open space. We note that the Blean is also at risk, so that even our ancient woodland is no longer sacred.

We make trips to Suffolk and Norfolk each year, and we have recently travelled in Lincolnshire. What we find in those counties is that the approach to development is much more sympathetic. We see small local developments which do not threaten to swamp local communities. The local infrastructure seems able to accommodate the scale of change that is being proposed. What is hard to accept, by contrast, is the unrelenting scale of development in this area, which is making life impossible for us all.

When we attended the meeting on 24 April at the Umbrella Centre in Whitstable, it was disappointing that there were no elected members fronting the meeting. There was a great deal of anger voiced during the meeting, and we felt some sympathy for the officers present, trying to deal with a large and vociferous group of people without political support. We would have to say, however, that they were their own worst enemies, in that their responses were tetchy, defensive, and tone deaf.

Their general take on the suggestion that the council could refuse any further planning permission was to say, in essence: there is no point in resisting these developments, because the planning inspectors will force them upon the Council in any event, and local people will then have even less control than they do now.

The officers were out of their depth, frankly, and the Council really needs to think about supporting officers at these meetings, given the extent of local feeling. We find ourselves wondering what is the point of having locally elected councillors if the approach of the Council is to second-guess the outcome of the Planning Inspectors' eventual decision, and to roll over without a fight?

We think that many of us will simply withhold votes in the future for local councillors and parties who do not have the courage to represent the views of local residents.

Please ensure that our views are represented.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy and Catherine Shannon