

Alexander Gunyon

From: David Greenhalgh [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 May 2024 15:53
To: Consultations
Subject: Local plan 2040 Blean Woods

Categories: Blue category

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Dear Sirs,

Although I am a [REDACTED] I am writing in my capacity as a visitor to the area concerned by proposal C12, being a resident of Chilham, my address being [REDACTED]

My comments are in relation to Chapters 1, 2, 5 and 6 of the Plan and in particular to Policy C12 of Chapter 2.

The proposed development site under policy C12 is a remote rural housing estate, and it is not expected to be self-sufficient, requiring regular trips outside the area. Thousands of additional vehicles would clog the existing rural road network, exacerbating the previously rejected site's access issues. The proposed access roads would disrupt the green corridors outlined on page 52 of the C12 proposal. Tyler Hill Road, a narrow and winding road traversing the development's heart, poses significant safety risks, with the proposal vaguely suggesting minimizing traffic without clear solutions. Rough Common Road, a narrow residential road with weight restrictions, would likely become a major thoroughfare to accommodate construction vehicles and thousands of cars commuting to Canterbury, transforming it into a trunk road.

The area earmarked for development is situated on London Clay with superficial deposits of Head material (Gravel, Sand, Silt & Clay), rendering soakaways and field drainage systems ineffective. 2,000 houses would exacerbate regular flooding, regardless of proposed mitigations like Sustainable Drainage Systems, which are ineffective on such ground conditions.

The proposed development would impede connectivity between sections of the Blean complex and increase recreational disturbance, contradicting the draft plan's policies and ambitions emphasizing the importance of connectivity and biodiversity. The West Blean and Thornden Woods reserve, part of southern England's largest ancient woodland area, is an incredibly important habitat for scarce and priority species such as Heath Fritillary, Nightingale, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Bats, Slow Worms, and Great Crested Newts. It also serves as a vital wildlife corridor. In 2023, Canterbury City Council unanimously declared a Biodiversity Emergency, and the Council must uphold those principles by preserving the countryside, which, once lost, is gone forever.

Upon the University acquiring this farmland in 2006, the understanding was that it would be used for farming or educational purposes. The proposed development would displace two tenant farmers, a dairy farmer and an arable farmer, from their land. The land earmarked for development is classified as some of the Best and Most Versatile farmland in the UK – Grade 2 in the northern part and Grade 3 in the southern (grades 1-5, with 1 being the best). National Planning Policy and Canterbury County Council's own Local Plan prioritize building on poor-quality agricultural land over high-quality land. At this crucial juncture, setting the planning framework for the next 15 years, the Council must reinforce and uphold its commitment to protecting farmland.

The Church of St Cosmos & St Damian, a local landmark situated along the old Roman Salt Road, and the Crab & Winkle Way, a nationally-recognized cycle route attracting tourists, are integral parts of the area's heritage. Additionally, Mesolithic (9,000 to 4,300 BC) tool discoveries, a series of Bronze Age burial mounds adjoining the church, and a massive medieval enclosure ditch related to the adjacent Blean Manor House, mentioned in the Domesday Book, highlight the area's rich historical significance. Multiple heritage sites and conservation areas within and adjoining the proposed development area are protected by National Planning Laws, making it challenging to comprehend how the Council could even contemplate allowing construction in this historically and culturally significant region.

As a resident of Chilham, it seems that barely a year goes by without news of plans from either Ashford or Canterbury councils to tragically turn some of the most beautiful parts of Kent (which is one of the most beautiful counties in England) into an incongruous suburban sprawl, and I wonder if the people who are endowed with the power to make these decisions truly know what they are destroying, or if they don't care as long as it meets their quotas, and it does not affect their own homes – while at the same time, hypocritically we are lectured about conservation and preservation, in all its forms by the very same local government, with the threat of prosecution and fines if we should dare to lop a tree branch in our gardens that exceeds a particular circumference.

I ask that you therefore think again regarding the heartbreaking plans for Blean Woods.

Yours faithfully

David Greenhalgh

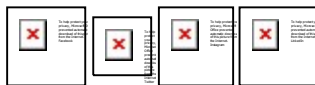
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