

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
28th May 2024

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to:

- Comment on and object to the Settlement Boundaries for the settlements of Westbere and Hersden as currently drawn as part of the Local Plan, and;
- 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 Bread and Cheese Field”) is earmarked for residential development.

I have been a resident of Westbere since 1969, living at the Garth, 15 Bushy Hill Road. This is one of the older houses on the road, built in the early 1930s, the other properties date mostly from the 1960s. It has been brought to my attention that the properties on Bushy Hill Road have not been included in the settlement boundary as presented in the Canterbury District Local Plan Development Topic Paper, Section 5. This is a significant oversight as it presents a false picture of Westbere’s boundary and the settlement needs to be redrawn to include these properties, which have been part of the village for many decades. My property is clearly designated a Westbere address and post code in the original deeds and there is an unbroken line of residential houses running from the village center all the way to the top of Bushy Hill Road to where it meets the A28. All these properties have Westbere address.

Houses 1 – 15 on Bushy Hill Road back directly onto the Bread and Cheese field so any building on that field will impact the residents directly in terms of noise and light pollution, reduced air quality and increased road traffic. Furthermore, it removes any form of green space barrier between Westbere and Hersden leading to an unacceptable level of coalescence between the two settlements, compromising the unique character of both. To avoid this the settlement boundary for Hersden needs to be established on the eastern side of the Bread and Cheese Field, running down the access road to the sewage works and RSPCA centre.

In terms of practical considerations the current infrastructure in the area is already failing under an unacceptable level of stress as a consequence of rapid development without a corresponding increase in service provision or coherent plan. Local shops, doctors, dentists, schools and bus services that were hardly adequate for a much smaller population are struggling with the new influx. There are fewer local employment opportunities now than in the 1970s. Nearly all the pubs have shut. Local roads have remained largely unchanged since the 1960s and joining the A28 at Bushy Hill Road, Church Lane or Westbere Lane involves long delays and a degree of jeopardy due to the largely continuous traffic that had developed over the last decade. Crossing from Bushy

Hill Road into Bredlands Lane is extremely dangerous. There is only one light controlled pedestrian crossing between Hersden and Sturry, which creates significant road safety issues especially for the young and the old. These issues will only be exacerbated by the addition of a further 150 house on the Bread and Cheese field. There is also the issue of wastewater management as further properties are keyed into existing systems which are struggling to cope – as evidenced already by incidents of sewage backing up in older properties in Hersden.

According to a recent report produced by ACRA, (Alliance of Canterbury Residents' Associations) Canterbury City Council has significantly over-stated the projection for population growth for the area and, therefore, the demand for houses. This calls into question the need for further residential building on the Bread and Cheese field at all - especially considering the substantial developments already approved in and around Hersden and Sturry.

Residential development on the Bread and Cheese field will also contribute to the loss of species habitat that has already been severely compromised in the local area as a consequence of similar developments. As an Acoustic Ecologist and lecturer in field recording I am very well aware of the diversity of wildlife that inhabits the Bread and Cheese Field and especially the woodland and hedgerow areas that will be lost. These include kestrels, buzzards, foxes, swallows and a particularly important colony of Pipistrelle bats. These, along with all the other 18 species of bats in the UK, are in decline. All species of British bat are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

The Bread and Cheese field is also a site of considerable historical significance for the Village of Westbere (see Community Governance Review – Westbere and Hersden parish boundary) with a charitable history that can be traced back over 300 years.

On a personal note let me say that I like living in Westbere. As a child there was a palpable sense of living in the country. This has dwindled in recent years as the surrounding area has been built up but the green fields that continue to surround the village help ensure its character and maintain the sense of a village environment – and Westbere is a village of both local and national significance due to its surviving mediaeval buildings, coherent local community and a history of occupancy going back to the Iron Age. If the surrounding green spaces are build on, Westbere will become a shadow of its former self and little more than another population centre in a conurbation spreading all the way from Hersden to Canterbury. This would represent a complete social and environmental failure for planning policy and a disaster for local residents' mental health and sense of wellbeing.

Dr. Marcus Leadley