

## Alexander Gunyon

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### Response to the Canterbury Local Plan Consultation

The Stour Valley in the vicinity of Canterbury is rapidly becoming an area of urban sprawl rather than a rural area full of charming villages and high grade agricultural land circumventing a Cathedral City hosting the headquarters of the Anglican communion which is both a Grade 1 Listed Building and an Ancient Monument, together with St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's comprises a UNESCO World Heritage Site because it was the birthplace of Christianity in the English speaking world. Yet Canterbury City Council feels compelled to plonk 23,000 extra houses and associated infrastructure within the District. Based on census records, a net influx of circa 25,000 extra people begs at least two major problems: water and transport.

The Stour and its tributaries derive their water from the underlying chalk aquifer. That is at full stretch in the ever hotter summer months, supplying people and agriculture. One reason why the proposed Broad Oak Reservoir was refused in the 1970s was because of the likelihood of poisonous algae blooms due to pollution in the river. Think how many thousands of houses have been built in the Stour catchment area since then. And then there is the internationally famous Stodmarsh Nature Reserve, designated as a Ramsar site, which is dying a painful death because of the ever growing population upstream coupled with inadequate sewage works. A European Court ruling in 2018 has forbidden any development which increases the nutrient loads arriving at Stodmarsh. Readers may have noticed that development in Canterbury District has come to a grinding halt in recent years. There are two *short term* remedies for dealing with the waste from *existing* development: the creation of new wetlands which is very expensive if executed properly, or carting sewage away by tankers, destination unspecified. Neither of these are solutions to the waste generated by yet more housing. Whilst the absence of an up to date local plan makes any local authority vulnerable to speculative development, it won't solve the waste water problem.

Secondly, there is a rule of thumb in the planning world that one residential unit generates seven movements of vehicles per day: the journey to work, to school and leisure facilities, plus municipal, commercial and private visitors to the property. In the next twenty years the City Council is planning to build approximately 23,000 houses which would mean an additional 161,000 movements per day crisscrossing the district. The idea that the new residents will go by bus, or use the new local facilities, which may or may not materialise, is fanciful. It still won't reduce municipal or commercial traffic. Anyone who has experienced the havoc caused by road works in the last six months alone can only despair. However it doesn't stop there. Many of our schools are adjacent to main roads. Poor air quality can inhibit the development of children's lungs, and kill off people with respiratory conditions. It also affect crop yields and biodiversity. CCC is not unaware of its legal requirements to reduced air pollution, but its monitoring equipment is not necessarily in the optimal place to give a true picture if what real people are inhaling. Extending the built up area is going to make it that much more difficult to achieve CCC's stated objectives.

It is clear that CCC has to devise a long term solution to the fundamental problems of water and air pollution before formulating any local plan. When it does, **CCC should bear in mind that it can protect it's built and natural heritage and still comply with Government policy. According to the NPPF December 2023, para. b)1 & ii. Take advantage of these exceptions to preserve our natural and built environment.**

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