

# 1. Traffic Concerns

The Sustainability Assessment of the SLAA describes Site C12 as a “car-dependent development,” a designation that appears justified despite the council’s newly proposed bus policies. The primary access points for this site are located on Whitstable Road near the Rough Common roundabout. Additionally, the development of Rough Common Road will require significant “highways improvements,” including the construction of two new slip roads on the A2 at Harbledown. This transformation will turn Rough Common into a major thoroughfare for traffic entering and exiting Canterbury.

**Increased Congestion and Air Quality Issues:** The expected rise in traffic along Whitstable Road, particularly towards St Dunstan’s roundabout and down St Stephen’s Hill, is likely to exacerbate congestion and further deteriorate air quality. The presence of on-street parking along these routes, which cannot be restricted due to the lack of off-street parking options for many homes, will intensify these traffic issues, especially during peak times.

**Problems with Surrounding Roads:** The other surrounding roads, characterized by their narrow, winding, and hilly nature, already have records of speeding and accidents. The proposed development plans to minimize traffic flow onto Tyler Hill Road; however, this claim seems improbable. Instead, it is likely that greater traffic will flow onto this road, especially as motorists use it as a shortcut between the major roads from Whitstable and Herne Bay.

**Cycling Route Safety:** Access from Tyler Hill to major cycling routes, such as the Crab and Winkle route, is currently hazardous, particularly for children. The situation will worsen with the introduction of more local traffic. Several pinch points, especially along Tyler Hill Road and Calais Hill, further complicate the issue, as there is insufficient space for two cars to pass simultaneously.

# 2. Character and Heritage

The Council’s 2021 Landscape Character Assessment highlights the “strong rural character” of this area, which comprises a mix of woodlands, orchards, and farmland. The assessment emphasizes the importance of conserving this landscape.

**Impact on High Landscape Value Areas:** The southern part of Site C12 is situated within Canterbury’s Area of High Landscape Value and lies between two Sites of Special Scientific Interest: RSPB Blean and West Blean Reserve. The C12 proposals conflict with the 2021 Land Character Assessment, which the Local Plan mandates adherence to. The proposed development would effectively merge the villages of Tyler Hill and Blean into a sprawling suburban extension of Canterbury, thereby destroying the rural nature of these villages and their surroundings.

**Heritage Asset Implications:** The development threatens numerous “heritage assets,” including the Church of St Cosmus and St Damian, the remains of a Roman Villa, some Mediaeval Tile Kilns (both scheduled monuments), multiple Listed Buildings, and several Conservation Areas. The council’s Environmental Strategy in the Local Plan states that “the district’s heritage assets are highly sensitive to change,” and commits to protecting and enhancing the historic environment. However, the C12 proposal fails to demonstrate that conservation areas can be preserved. The impacts on heritage sites and their surroundings cannot be minimized under this plan. The Church of St Cosmus and St Damian, traditionally part of Blean village, would become an indistinct feature within a large suburban extension of Canterbury, losing its cultural heritage entirely.

### 3. Nature and Biodiversity

The proposed development site lies in the heart of the Blean Woods area, encircled by various parts of the National Nature Reserve. This region is home to numerous rare and endangered species inhabiting fields, ponds, hedgerows, and the Sarre Penn valley.

**Threat to Biodiversity and Ecosystems:** The council’s other policies, such as SS1.10, state that efforts will be made to extend and improve the connectivity of the Blean Woodland Complex. However, this development would render such connectivity impossible. Over the past decade, biodiversity in the area has naturally increased, contrary to national trends. The thriving population of buzzards indicates a vibrant species web supporting these large birds of prey. Other significant wildlife, such as great crested newts, are regularly observed in the area’s waterways and ponds. The development contradicts policy SS1.10 and would destroy a mature, vibrant ecosystem.

**Loss of Agricultural Land:** The proposed development would also result in the loss of extensive areas of high-quality agricultural land, classified as Grade 2 and Grade 3. The Local Plan includes a policy to protect the best agricultural land outside urban and settlement boundaries. In a time when food security is becoming increasingly critical and there is growing awareness of soil degradation necessary to support agriculture, building over some of the best land in the area is irresponsible.

### 4. Impact on Blean School

The two proposed access points for the 2,000 houses are both on Whitstable Road, about 400 meters apart. One of these access points necessitates the demolition and relocation of Blean Primary School elsewhere on the site.

**Disruption to Education:** Blean Primary School is the only Outstanding primary school in this part of Kent. Currently, the school’s infrastructure is adequate, and it has recently initiated the

development of a forest school. The plan suggests replacing the school with a much larger institution, potentially destroying the strengths and character of a school which is at the peak of its performance. Continuous disruptions, including noise and air pollution, will degrade the students' schooling experience for many years as the development progresses.