

Canterbury City Council - Local Plan 2040

Comments on Policies R7 and R8

Littlebourne is a village that is at high risk of flooding, in particular the long existing dwellings around the Little Stour. These dwellings have regular issues with flooding and high water levels, which have a negative impact of the wellbeing and livelihoods of their residents and the value of their properties. The proposed Policies R7 and R8 are on higher land above the long existing dwellings at the centre of Littlebourne and will therefore result in increased surface water run-off and increased flooding for the long existing dwellings in Littlebourne. In the event that the proposed dwellings proceed and the existing dwellings experience an inevitable increase in flooding, Canterbury City Council should be aware of the risk of potential litigation from the residents of existing dwellings in Littlebourne in respect of their property losses and breach of their personal rights.

Each individual in the UK has the right to respect for private and family life and home, and the right to enjoyment of possessions under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights. This right protects individuals' homes and their right to quiet enjoyment of such homes, and has been held to relate to flooding, and noise and air pollution.

In addition to increased surface water and flooding, the proposed construction of a staggering 350 dwellings under Policies R7 and R8 will result in a substantial increase in noise and air pollution, in particular for the existing homes on the A257. The dwellings will inevitably result in increased traffic and consequently noise and air pollution, and therefore if the Policies proceed they would breach current residents' rights.

Further, the proposed Policies R7 and R8 would result in the permanent loss of Grade 1 agricultural land, they would harm landscape characteristics including views to the south and east, and they would harm designated heritage assets / listed properties on the A257 and the neighbouring area.

In addition, the proposed Policies R7 and R8 do not include any details regarding how the poor current capacity of existing waste water / sewage will be dealt with, both locally and at the relevant sewage treatment plant, to prevent the pumping of sewage into the Little Stour.

Littlebourne is a small village with an infrastructure that already struggles to satisfy its current number of residents. It has a GP practice which is consistently unable to deliver satisfactory service, with around 50% of patients not being able to get a GP appointment when they need one. There is one primary school with around 100 pupils - the addition of 350 homes would result in an overwhelming flood of students into the school, and current students and new students would all suffer as a result of the excessive influx of pupils. Further, the policies have not provided any details and nothing substantive regarding infrastructure improvements to accompany the proposed dwellings, and certainly nothing to match the scale of the proposed development.

Any development should be in proportion with the existing residential area for various reasons, including as to not dramatically change the character of an area and to make sure that infrastructure gradually matches the size of the population. The proposed policies will result in a roughly 50% increase in its population size. According to the 2021 consensus, Littlebourne had around 1,600 residents with neighbouring Bridge having a similar number of residents. Bridge has an equivalent and if not more developed infrastructure, with many shops on the high street, but only around 13 dwellings are being proposed in Bridge. Chartham, which has a railway station which connects to Ashford International and London, has a population size of around 3,500 and 42 dwellings are said to be required by 2040 under the Neighbourhood Plan. Sturry has a population size of around 4,900 and around 160 dwellings are being proposed. These numbers of proposed dwellings are more proportionate to the current sizes of the villages. 150 dwellings are proposed for Hersden, which has around 2,000 residents, which seems a higher proportion than Bridge, Chartham, and Sturry, but at least it has a more established infrastructure with a secondary school. Noting that Littlebourne has only recently had a significant housing development of around 100 homes, which was already disproportionate to the size of the village, the proposed 350 dwellings are vastly disproportionate and inappropriate for a village of this size.

Therefore, no further developments should be built in Littlebourne for the foreseeable future as an already higher than proportionate number of dwellings has been built recently in the village. Any proposed dwellings should be spread around a substantially higher number of villages in proportion to their size.

Nor do the proposals present local employment solutions for the residents of the the 350 dwellings, meaning that the proposals do not meet sustainable development standards.

Crucially, Littlebourne already experienced excessive traffic in respect of its size as a small village prior to the recent development to the north of Littlebourne, but the proposed introduction of 350 homes would result in horrendous traffic and commute times for current and any future residents. It would result in unsafe roads which do not have the capacity to handle such volumes of traffic, and also exaggerate the village's issue with speeding vehicles. There is no protection for pedestrians by way of pavements in any event, and the proposed plans do not provide any concrete suggestions as to how they intend to deal with pedestrian and cyclist safety, nor the chronic vehicle speeding on the A257, nor is there a traffic assessment in the proposed plans.

In December 2023, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, Michael Gove stated *"There are perfectly reasonable reasons to resist development if it is unattractive, if it's unaccompanied by infrastructure, if it dramatically changes the character of an area, if it harms the environment"*.

Consequently, the proposed plans in Littlebourne fall squarely within the circumstances listed by the Government, and accordingly the proposed plans should not proceed.