



Local Plan Consultation

1 message

Greta Ross [REDACTED]
To: consultations@canterbury.gov.uk

5 January 2023 at 15:27

Dear Councillors

I am writing in response to your request for comments from the public on the draft Local Plan, and also the article about the new Circulation plan in the December issue of the Canterbury CommunityAd magazine. Having looked at the whole Local Plan on your website and the Circulation plan I have the following comments:

1. It is obvious that an additional 31,500 homes will profoundly change the character of Canterbury as a Heritage city, given this is approximately another 50% on top of Canterbury's current housing stock of 69,135 (2021 figures). The overall appearance of Canterbury as a historic city, with the Cathedral as its focal point, will be affected. The piecemeal location of the possible housing developments scattered over many land sites means that accompanying infrastructure will be more costly and intrusive into the landscape to provide. There are serious doubts in my mind that water supply, sewage and waste management can accommodate such a dramatic increase in housing stock and population given that services can hardly cope with current demands, and any new treatment works will take years to build and establish. It also means building new roads servicing the new homes and "concretisation" of farm land, contrary to aims to reduce environmental damage and pollution.
2. The Circulation plan with a proposed bypass (with fines enforced to make drivers take the longer roundabout route) is unrealistic. Forcing drivers onto an A2 bypass to simply cross from one "zone" to another will only increase air pollution, carbon emission, and make journeys more costly and time consuming for residents. The bypass is not socially friendly and our community, especially older residents, will be highly inconvenienced if they will have to be bussed from one nearby zone to another via a long circuitous route. The 'no-brainer' is to build far fewer houses thus removing the need for a bypass at all. I believe that Michael Gove has made decisions by councils regarding housing targets more flexible, and encouraged community involvement in decisions. By the way, I cannot see in the Local plan where the evidence, such as a detailed needs assessment of actual current housing needs; the Plan assumes new homes should be 3BR and 4BR in preference to 1BR and 2BR (smaller cater better for older residents with or without a partner). I suspect the push for big houses comes from developers looking for higher profit. On searching Kent Analytics I see that Canterbury has only 8330 1BR and 21,300 2BR houses as opposed to 26,330 3BR and 11,880 4BR houses. Older people wishing to downsize will not welcome yet more large expensive new-build houses. There is also very little social housing in Canterbury available despite a known need for more. How many of the 31,500 new homes will be truly 'social housing' to rent rather than simply 'affordable' to buy? What does 'affordable' mean nowadays, with the cost of mortgages going up, and living costs at crisis level for many? The Local Plan assumes that the economic outlook will remain stable, but this now is highly questionable.
3. I am disappointed that the Local Plan seems to show very little input from the local communities about how communal living areas will be created and function, what amenities there will be for social living and enjoyment (other than sports halls and sports grounds). That is not the same as catering for tourists and commuters. There is also insufficient information how resultant noise and possible increase of disturbance to present communities from the new houses will be mitigated or handled.
4. I was also concerned about Policy Section DS18, 7a and 7b, where it seems developers may be given permission to cut down ancient woodland and veteran trees, as long as they can assure replacement tree planting and state that benefits outweigh damage. There is no way ancient woodland can be reproduced or ancient trees be replaced.
5. Pertinent to the above, I fear significant loss of Canterbury's natural green countryside, farming land, and the disturbance to wildlife and biodiversity resulting from such a large house building plan (with its accompanying creation of roads and services). If this number of houses must be built then the logical option ought to be for the council to identify a land area several miles away from Canterbury where a self-contained new town can be created, along the lines of Milton Keynes. But not tagged onto Canterbury.
6. Finally, I question the certainty with which developers push "active travel" as a solution. Many factors may discourage residents from cycling and walking to and from town, such as weather, time of day or night, age, physical ability, time pressures, bulky shopping, ill health, parents with small children. Not every amenity will be available in the new-build clusters, such as good restaurants, cafes, theatre and cinema. People will not want to walk or cycle into the city centre after dark for a night out.

Although housing is needed I feel the present Local Plan needs to be paused and reviewed in the light of changed economic circumstances, actual population needs, and consistency with climate targets.

Thank you for your attention,
Mrs G. Cotterrell

