

COMMENTS ON PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT LITTLEBOURNE

I understand from a recent meeting of the parish council here at Littlebourne that the comments of residents of the village were effective in stopping the development of the farmland opposite the new development which has access to The Hill. However, the subject has once again raised its head, this time with a further proposal for 350 houses, a road that links to Bekesbourne Road which anyone who drives that road knows to be laughable, further traffic along Jubilee Road which is even more ludicrous, more strain on a school with a waiting list already and a surgery which struggles to cope. Add to that the acute problems of drainage which are resulting in raw sewage in the river and tankering of sewage, all of which are causing an environmental problem to residents and to the natural surroundings, especially at Stodmarsh. I am sure that these aspects will be commented on by the parish council itself but let me tell you what it's like from my individual experience.

We moved here on retirement 26 years ago and enjoyed the benefits of living in a rural community near to the city of Canterbury. We fought hard to retain a post office here and to have a shop. The Memorial Hall is our hub for activities and events as is the recreation ground and the social club. It was a pleasant rural community with three pubs, a church and an excellent workshop for car repairs and MOTs. We lost two of the three pubs and the workshop to more residential building. The traffic has increased in and around the village. Every time I try to drive out of my driveway, I have to look in the mirror I had to install and then inch out on to the main road keeping an eye not only on traffic from my right but also from the left where traffic is pushed over into the middle of the road by parking along the road by residents opposite, in addition I have to watch out for traffic opposite me emerging from Jubilee Road. It takes me some considerable time to emerge unless someone kindly lets me out. It's even worse if I'm walking when I have to wait for ages before I cross the road since there is no pavement on my side and the only crossing is located by the Memorial Hall. Improvements to the drainage have been raised over the years and nothing has been done. My own experience of the water company's incompetence was when I was told by one of their inspectors that there were several leaks from residences along the main street. He had located an underground leak which he thought might be on my property and was responsible for the loss of 3,500 litres of water an hour. It took three months, dozens of phone calls to several departments, including the complaints department before a work team discovered that the leak was actually in School Path and was caused by one of their work teams unclipping a supply pipe. By that time the underground leak had become a visible stream running down School Path and flooding my drive. Add more houses to this kind of bungling and it's a disaster waiting to happen. My grandchildren and I used to love walking on the footpath by the river and crossing over the bridge into the village. They would play at the water's edge but they were forbidden to do that any more when notices went up about sewage discharge and you could smell what was in the water. We have worked as a community to maintain our wild spaces by the river, in the apple orchard and in our nature reserve. The loss of surrounding farmland, which surely should be retained for the production of food, would further erode our rural identity. I am told by a local historian that one of the proposed routes runs over an ancient site of historic and archaeological significance. We do not want to become part of an urban sprawl which is already redefining the village boundaries where until now planning permission for small and less dense development has been refused.

Mrs. Myrna Gray

