

IAN OSANG

Thursday 15th December 2022

The Planning Department
Canterbury City Council
Council Offices
Military Road
Canterbury
CT1 1YW

Dear Sirs,

REF: Objection to proposed development of Brooklands Farm

I am writing to object, in the strongest terms, to the proposed development at Brooklands Farm. I would summarise my specific areas of objection and concern as follows:

The proposed development contravenes previous Council planning decision

In 2003 our neighbour at 28 Blackberry Way applied for planning permission to extend the boundary of their property between two and six feet further towards Brooklands Farm. For the benefit of anyone reading this who is unaware of the layout of the land and therefore unable to fully comprehend the complete hypocrisy of the proposed development, a number of properties in Blackberry Way, including our property and number 28 have boundaries which run parallel to Brooklands Farm. Between our fences and Brooklands Farm there are some hedges and a public footpath before the farm. If one were to continue walking in a straight line across the farm, after a few hundred yards there is the Thanet Way, a busy dual carriageway stretch of road which generates the noise and carbon emissions one would expect of such a busy road which carries on where the M2 ends and goes down towards Margate.

Canterbury Council came out to visit and rejected the planning application to extend by two to six feet because of the need to keep the current distance between the boundary and Thanet Way as a "natural buffer" between property and Thanet Way. Therefore, the Council have already ruled it is not allowable to build closer to Thanet Way than the current boundaries in Blackberry Way but are now planning to submit approval to build hundreds of yards nearer to Thanet Way now it suits its purpose and expedience to do so.

I am afraid the public no longer tolerates hypocrisy like this and, the Council will not get away with a "do as I say not as I do" approach. I do require a response from the Council acknowledging it declined planning permission for the reason outlined above and confirming it now plans to allow building hundreds of yards closer to Thanet Way having previously rejected an application for two to six feet nearer.

Changing the character of the area

Until now the Council has been able to lay the blame for the massive increase in developments on Government targets. That is no longer the case. Proposed relaxations by Central Government will

mean Council's can fall short of previous targets if hitting them would result in the change in character of an area. It is therefore important to establish whether the proposed development at Brooklands Farm would constitute a change in character for the area if affects?

Currently, Chestfield is a village on the borders of Whitstable. It is a beautiful area with detached houses and bungalows and moderate levels of traffic. It has a thousand years of history and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The people who live here do so because they want the peace and quiet of village life with the town of Whitstable on their doorstep. When I look down from raised parts of Chestfield Golf Course, there were two areas of open land visible towards the sea, Grasmere Pasture and Brooklands Farm. The Council have already started to destroy the area by approving a 300 home development on Grasmere Pasture (of course, the original planned school on this site is no longer happening in order to allow the developers to maximise profits).

The proposed development of Brooklands Farm would more than double the size of Chestfield. It would turn it in to an urban jungle. There would be increased traffic, increased noise pollution, increased air pollution, an unbearable strain on infrastructure, increased flooding, increased sewage problems, it would destroy an area of natural beauty. The urbanisation would bring increased public disorder, increased crime as I am advised is the case at the former Canterbury Barracks development. In short, it would turn the area from one of village life with beautiful scenery to an urban concrete jungle with traffic congestion, and the destruction of the lifestyles those who currently live here enjoy. Asking whether the proposed development would change the character of the area is like asking whether the Pope is a catholic?

I must insist the Council responds to this letter and confirms whether or not it accepts the proposed development at Brooklands Farm will fundamentally change the character of the area or not?

Risk to existing residents health

The proposed development and years long building work required risk the health of existing residents whose properties border the development. There will be significant air and noise pollution for years. In the four properties on the fork of Blackberry Way where I live and which are no more than a few feet from proposed development land, there are three houses where one or more people have asthma and another where a 2 year old child has autism. The dust and other air pollution associated with any development, let alone one of this size means it poses a considerable risk to their health, notwithstanding the fact the prevailing wind direction typically blows from Brooklands Farm towards our properties. At the moment, we have one day a year where the crops grown on Brooklands Farm are harvested and where we have to close windows, ensure there is nothing on the washing line and then clean cars because of all of the crops blown on to our properties. We face years of this should this development go ahead. Of course, it is not harmless crops which will be blown our way but rather, dangerous dust and other pollutants.

Constant noise can be extremely harmful for the mental health of those with autism as many suffer from sensory processing disorders. As such, the proposed development is likely to cause unbelievable suffering to any residents with autism.

We are all virtual prisoners in our own homes. It will be impossible to sell our properties at anything close to their current values with this development hanging over our heads which may be for many years. After all, who would be stupid enough to pay market value to live somewhere where their lives will be turned upside down for years?

I must insist the Council respond and confirm whether it acknowledges the proposed development will cause both air and noise pollution which is dangerous to the health of those with asthma and autism. I must also insist the Council confirm it has been made aware that, should it persist with this development, I will be making a criminal complaint against Canterbury Council.

In addition, there will be residents who work from home and will be massively affected by the noise of any development so close to their homes. How does someone have a business Zoom or telephone meeting with continuous noise?

Flooding

Whitstable is an area both with a history of flooding and which is known as being on a flood plain. When we moved here from London in 2019 our solicitor discovered the flooding issues and we were made aware of this. I would respectfully suggest that, if a solicitor in London is able to uncover this risk, Canterbury Council will be well aware of it. Therefore, to propose a development on this scale is not just unwise, it is negligent.

Farmland and other green spaces help to reduce flooding by absorbing excess water. The areas around South Street and Chestfield Road are already subject to regular flooding and this is with the current farmland to protect it. The area will simply not cope with another huge development.

Road access

The main access point to the proposed development is via South Street. Again, for the benefit of anyone reading this who is not familiar with the layout, South St is a narrow, country lane. From Chestfield Road to the entrance to Brooklands Farm, it is narrow, undulating and windy with hedges on both sides. It is the sort of road I drive with my heart in my mouth every time I go round a bend in case something is coming the other way. Whilst the road at this end would undoubtedly be widened should the proposed development proceed, access to and from Chestfield Road would not be able to cope with the massive increase in traffic turning in and out of South Street and long tailbacks would become inevitable.

Going the other way from the entrance to Brooklands Farm towards Millstrood Road (near Tesco), there are houses on both sides so, no widening of the road would be possible. Many of the houses do not have off street parking so, there are always cars parked on the road. The road is narrow enough so that, when a car is parked you cannot fit cars travelling both ways at the same time. Therefore, cars have to pull in to gaps in order to allow cars travelling the other way to pass. This currently works because there is not a large flow of traffic on the road. However, if this development were to proceed, there would be thousands of cars travelling on South St every day and it simply could not cope. This is before we even consider the flood risk of no longer having farm land to absorb some of the excess water which, even with this, does not prevent South Street from currently having flood water whenever there is any significant level of rainfall.

If this development is allowed to proceed, gridlocked traffic around Chestfield will become common place.

Sewage

There are already significant sewage problems in Whitstable without the additional pressure of the 300 homes currently being built on Grasmere Pasture and the 1,000 homes currently being built on Whitstable Heights. Again, this is not news to Canterbury Council. I am advised it was actually

Canterbury Council who objected to a previously proposed development between Grasmere Road, South Street and Thanet Way on the grounds of problems with sewage and water. I do require the Council to respond to this letter and confirm whether or not it accepts it objected to the development mentioned above on the grounds of sewage and water and that it is well aware Whitstable cannot cope efficiently with current demands, let alone the massive increases in population these developments will bring.

I have lost count of the number of times in 2022 there have been warnings to not swim in the sea because of sewage spillages. This area cannot cope with the current level of pressure, let alone the additional sewage the 1,300 homes currently under construction will bring. Another 1,300 from Brooklands Farm plus the other proposed developments in the area will turn Whitstable in to a cesspit of stench and waste.

Infrastructure

At a meeting at the Umbrella Centre on 6th December 2022, the Council representative stated one of the main reasons such a burden of the Council's building proposals has fallen on Whitstable is because it has shown it can cope with urbanisation. I find such a view to be naïve at best, negligent in reality. A table might cope with a certain amount of weight but, drop an elephant on it and the legs will collapse. If you stuck a 30 stone jockey on the Epsom Derby winner, it wouldn't win a donkey derby on Blackpool beach.

Whitstable and Chestfield cannot cope with new developments without destroying the very fabric of the lives of the people who choose to live here. With regards to the 1,300 homes currently being built at Grasmere Pasture and Whitstable Heights, I must insist the Council responds to this letter and confirms how many new GP surgeries are being opened? How many new dentist surgeries will there be? How many new supermarkets or shops to cope with what I would estimate to be a 15% increase to the current population? How many new roads to cope with the thousands of extra car journeys each day? Please tell me if the answer is not a big, fat zero to every question.

The Council no longer has to destroy communities in order to meet Government building targets. Therefore, if the Council proceeds with this monstrosity of a development, there can be no hiding behind the fact it will be doing so to generate additional revenue to make up for years of financial mismanagement and fund more ridiculous schemes like the proposed zone system in Canterbury which will cost a reported £100 million and achieve nothing other than increasing journey times, adding significant miles to journeys, increasing carbon emissions and further alienating residents.

The attitude of Canterbury Council towards those they are paid to serve is lamentable. When I exchanged emails with Ben Fitter-Harding and advised him a proposed sale in our road was in danger of falling through because of the plans for development of Brooklands Farm, his response was that it was "a shame but inevitable". The arrogance and dismissive attitude of the leader of the Council towards those he is paid to serve is quite simply staggeringly unacceptable. I must demand the Council confirm whether or not it considers Mr Fitter-Harding's comments to be acceptable or not and that he has been warned as to his future conduct. Furthermore, I must insist the Council acknowledges it is aware it is there to serve us, not make our lives worse.

Destruction of agricultural land

The continued selling off of agricultural land for housing will have long term detrimental effects on the UK economy. The public are constantly lectured by our so called leaders on the importance of sustainability. However, it fails to practice what it preaches.

When a farm such as Brooklands Farm, which grows crops and breeds livestock closes, no new ones are being opened to replace them. As such, every farm that closes increases the UK's reliance on imported food and crops to replace them. Whilst I do not intend to provide a comprehensive economics lesson here, a brief summary is seemingly needed. The UK has a massive trade deficit. If we remove the trade surplus on the services side, the goods deficit is even worse. We have a weak currency and therefore, every pound of additional imported goods adds to the inflationary pressures which are currently destroying the lives of millions in the UK.

It also means the UK becomes even more affected by any political issues or foreign conflicts because we can no longer feed ourselves. We cannot control prices and foreign nations can set prices the UK has no option but to pay as we are not self sufficient.

We need to be protecting agricultural land, not destroying it. It also begs the question of why I or anyone else should move to a more sustainable way of living when Local and Central Government fail to practice what they preach? Why should I recycle, reduce water or electricity use, buy an electric car or, do anything else for the long term good when Local and Central Governments fail to do their bit?

If Canterbury Council needs to build new homes, it should do so in a way that benefits this community, not one that lines the pockets of developers and the Council. The first homes at Grasmere Pasture have just gone on sale at £630,000. Who can afford those except people from out of the area or those selling properties they already own? We need starter homes, 2 and 3 bedroomed properties so that people born and raised in the area can get on to the property ladder. The Council should be investing in shared ownership schemes for local resident first time buyers only, not approving developments that do nothing for this community. We do not need huge numbers of people from out of the area (they can buy existing properties that come on the market). We do not need our Council doing deals with London Councils so they can send problem families to our wonderful area.

If it is necessary to build developments of more than 100 or 200 properties, this can only be done by creating new communities in currently undeveloped areas, not finding any piece of green land between current developments and filling it with new properties. That way, the Council are forced to create new infrastructures, not pile more and more pressure on existing ones until they break.

I sincerely hope the Council will see sense and not put the proposed development of Brooklands Farm forward. However, I do require a response to the questions I have raised before 16th January 2023. That way, if the Council does proceed and it is necessary to take action to prevent the further destruction of our neighbourhood, there can be no question of any ambiguity as to the Council's priorities, nor that it is aware of the damage it will be doing and the fact it is contravening previous planning decisions.

Yours faithfully,



Ian Osang

c.c. Rosie Duffield MP

