

## Response to Canterbury City Consultation on proposed Plan

### RE: R15 and R16

I was impressed by the commendable aims stated at the beginning of the plan and the Consultation and Engagement Topic paper, but unfortunately these aspirations don't appear to be reflected in the specific actions detailed further on in the document. In particular, the plan is full of housing developments on grade 1 agricultural land, a permanent very sad loss at a time when it is arguable that the UK should be aiming to be more self-sufficient in producing food.

It is noted that the new proposed housing developments in the 2045 plan were not in the 2017 plan five years ago, which was designed to last until 2031. I understand some of the new housing planned for in 2017 has not yet been built. On the other hand, the 87 new houses in Littlebourne, 'The Laurels', were not in the 2017 CCC plan but were still given the go-ahead against local opposition. This makes us wonder how real this latest plan is and how long it will last.

There are a number of specific areas that I want to comment on

1. The need to ensure infrastructure is in place before housing is built. This includes increased primary and secondary school provision, adequate primary health care services, adequate water supply and upgraded sewage treatment arrangements suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
2. The notion that Littlebourne is, or could be, a rural service centre for other local villages.
3. The evident willingness of Littlebourne residents to embrace new houses, allowing for gradual increases in the population over time.
4. The enlargement of the village 'envelope'.
5. The implications of the siting of access roads to proposed new developments
6. The need for new housing to be truly affordable
7. The need for new housing to be constructed in a way that takes account of up-to-date insulation advice and renewable energy.
8. The consultation process and the implications of Michael Gove's letter to MPs of 5 December.

1. The plan states under Local economy and Employment: ' **The need to ensure infrastructure is in place before housing is built.**' We do not have any confidence that this will happen. All primary and secondary school provision in the area is full to overflowing. Existing primary health care services are inadequate for the existing population. Water supply and sewage treatment arrangements need upgrading so that they are suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Increasing pressure on this already failing infrastructure should not be contemplated. The plan states under Local Economy and Employment: 'Significant investment in our water

environment and infrastructure will improve river and coastal water quality, provide a resilient water supply and minimise flood risk.' Southern Water shows no willingness to invest properly in updating local waste water treatment. The new plan shows no assessment of flood risk from surface run off. The first week in November 2022, Southern Water polluted local bathing waters by discharging 5 months' worth of untreated sewage into the sea in just one week. Rosman, in her recent history of Canterbury, tells us that in 1866 'Canterbury was in a most deplorable state as regards both Drainage and Water Supply; probably a worse state for so distinguished and wealthy a City scarcely can exist' (p. 158) citing the use of cesspool as one of the problems. A KentOnline report of 8 November 2022 tells us a new development on the former Nasons site have been 'given the green light after proposals were agreed to take sewage away from the site in tankers' twice a day. Currently Southern Water is already taking 500 tanker loads of sewage a year from Littlebourne into Canterbury, that is 10,000 tons of raw sewage, to try and protect our rare and precious chalk stream, but it is still getting polluted through runoff. It seems we haven't made much progress since 1866.

2. **I would question the assumption that Littlebourne is or could be a rural service centre for surrounding villages**, based on the existence of a primary school, GP surgery, pre-school, convenience store and village hall and sports facilities. The definition is that residents living there can meet most of their day to day needs within the settlement. The level of service provision in a Rural Service Centre means that the settlement plays an important role in the wider area, providing access to key services for residents living in smaller settlements nearby. Neither of these statements is true of the services available in Littlebourne. Littlebourne primary school is full to overflowing and the GP practice is struggling to provide a service to the existing population. As you may be aware there is a national shortage of GPs and this surgery with only 2 rooms for GPs to use, is dependent on locum GPs so patients, who are lucky enough to get a rare face to face consultation, are unlikely ever to see the same GP twice. There are many occasions when patients have to travel to other surgeries such as Bridge or central Canterbury. I note, in addition that Millwood, the developers of the Polo Farm site just up the road, are advertising Littlebourne as the place for their residents to go for amenities including the primary school. Was Millwood required to provide or contribute to the cost of increased educational resources?
3. **The willingness of Littlebourne residents to embrace new houses is evident, allowing for gradual increases in the population over time.** Over the years there have always been new houses added a few at a time to the housing stock in Littlebourne; about 18 over the last few years. That is a normal rate of increase which does not generate opposition. The most recently available figures suggest Littlebourne has only 707 people on the

electoral register. Added to that, we already have 87 new houses, The Laurels, almost completed, so a further 350 houses could double the population.

4. The plan suggests that the city council can arbitrarily '**enlarge the village envelope**' without any reference to the local residents. How can that be right?
5. **The implications of the siting of access roads to proposed new developments.** It seems you are proposing that at least 300 more cars from R15 will have an access road opening onto Bekesbourne Lane, a narrow country lane between high hedges, with no pedestrian provision which is Highway Safety issue, and where lorries, buses and cars cannot pass each other easily. Children wanting to reach the primary school from that estate would have to cross the busy A257. The 50 proposed houses to be built at R16 will be given access onto Court Hill and Jubilee Road equally narrow country roads.
6. **There is a pressing need for new housing to be truly affordable if they are to meet local needs as the City Council claims.** The Consultation and Engagement Topic paper notes: 'The need to deliver a range of market and affordable housing to meet local needs, particularly as house prices are high relative to local incomes. This will include affordable housing, older persons housing and a range of sizes and types of housing to meet local needs. The plan states under Local economy and Employment: **'In 2019, each job in the district was estimated to generate £44,600 of "output" each year which is £7,100 lower than the UK average. Unsurprisingly, this is also reflected in local earnings levels which fall well below national averages.'** The notion that affordable housing is or will be built to meet local need, is not supported by the evidence. Very few of the 87 recently build houses are occupied by people who used to live locally, because they are too expensive. Shared ownership is also an expensive option. For your information, we have a very good social housing scheme in Littlebourne: Court Meadows, the Elders and List Meadows. The land is owned by the Parish Council and leased to Sanctuary Housing. Tenants are required to have existing links with the area. This is a good model which could and should be replicated if CCC really wants to provide affordable housing to meet local need.
7. **Standard of housing.** The Consultation and Engagement Topic paper notes 'the need to proactively lead on climate change, aim for zero carbon and support the green economy. ' Any new housing needs to meet sustainability targets, to high insulation standards and designed to use

green energy, not gas, oil or wood, so that these important advantages do not have to be met through back-fitting by the subsequent owners. Some local planning authorities e.g. Oxford City, already require developers to meet these standards. We, on the other hand, still have new houses being built with gas boilers, poor insulation and chimneys for wood burning stoves, but no sign of solar panels or heat pumps. Surely we know enough about global warming to understand this is not good enough?

8. **The consultation process and the implications of Michael Gove's letter to MPs of 5 December.** This letter states very clearly that local agreement to new building should be the way forward and that Michael Gove is minded to remove the government building targets. Sending out a ready-made plan and asking us what we think is not the right way forward if you want local agreement.

I will take this plan into account when deciding how to vote in the local elections

Helen Howard

Littlebourne resident.