

Brooklands Farm – proposed development

Proposal

From reading the local paper, my understanding is that 1,300 homes are planned for the Brooklands Farm site. This is the largest scheme proposed for Whitstable which will act as an extension to the attractive village of Chestfield. Apparently a school for children with special needs or disabilities is also planned for the site.

Canterbury's attitude to development

This large scheme should be seen in the context of what Canterbury City Council is planning for the whole geographic area coming under its responsibility. Some while ago, the Government set a target of 9,000 new homes for the whole Canterbury area. However, Canterbury City Council decided that, instead of this figure, 17,000 new homes should be built. It is understood that the extra homes would produce contributions from developers towards extra infrastructure costs. The local paper indicates that these figures are now vastly understated as the current Local Plan reveals that the Council is now proposing to build **13,000 extra homes by 2045 – a figure which is on top of the 16,000 already earmarked for construction by 2031**. Our contention is that this approach is seriously flawed and definitely not in the interests of the local area served by the City Council for the following reasons:

- The area comprises three towns – Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay and many small villages. There is a substantial amount of countryside which is fast disappearing through the housing developments already under construction let alone the vast number that would be built if Canterbury were to achieve their target of 29,000. Once the green spaces are lost they will be gone forever and what is now a relatively pleasant residential location will become an overcrowded and most unpleasant jungle;
- **At present**, the area has an inadequate infrastructure – roads, schools, hospitals, sewerage, drainage to name a few! For example, the traffic problems in and around Canterbury are not going to be solved by the hairbrained plan to create five separate zones. Children moving into the area are not always able to go to their nearest school. Canterbury Hospital needs rebuilding now with greater facilities to cope with the existing population. Some current developments demonstrate that they can't properly accommodate their sewerage (Mountfield Park) and drainage demands (Grasmere Gardens), and

- Instead of trying to resolve housing needs within just the Canterbury area, there should proper liaison with all the local authorities in East Kent. This would enable a proportionate approach to be determined rather than the present piecemeal and excessive attitude. For example, how much better to agree on a new small town (e.g. between Canterbury and Thanet) which could have virtually all services incorporated instead of the present totally disproportionate expansion of the existing towns? You only have to look beyond Canterbury to see unbelievable extensive developments around other towns such as Faversham and Hythe.

Turning down the Brooklands Farm proposal will be a step in the right direction.

Developments ALREADY UNDERWAY around Whitstable

Looking now to the position in Whitstable. It is a relatively small coastal town and yet already has two significant developments underway **TOTALLING 700 HOMES**. For obvious reasons, coastal towns only have half of the land available compared to a country town.

- Whitstable Heights – one of the biggest housing developments in Whitstable's recent history - **400** homes due to be completed in summer 2025, and
- Grasmere Gardens, Chestfield – **300** homes being constructed plus commercial properties.

Developments UNDER CONSIDERATION around Whitstable

In addition to the above properties, there are plans for **A FURTHER 1,820 HOUSES** to be built around Whitstable:

- Brooklands Farm, Chestfield – **1300** homes are proposed as well as a primary school;
- Land South of Thanet Way opposite Duncan Down -**270** homes are proposed as well as new shops, community facilities and a park and ride with 200 spaces, and
- Bodkin Farm, Chestfield – **250** homes and a new coastal secondary school. This is a new proposal following the previous one which was turned down, on appeal, by the planning inspector in 2015.

The Brooklands Farm Impact upon Chestfield

Chestfield is, at present, a pleasant village and, in many people's opinion, the best residential part of Whitstable. Previous developments have been happily accepted and the village has grown significantly over the last 30 to 40 years.

Fortunately, the first Bodkin Farm proposal was turned down. Sadly, however, the wonderful green lung of Grasmere Gardens is now being lost forever and, what was a most enjoyable open space is fast being concreted over. Will the drainage be able to cope with what is a very wet site during the winter months and what will happen to the enormous increase in traffic at the Chestfield roundabouts?

The Brooklands Farm proposal would be a tragedy for the area if approved for the following reasons:

- The scale of the proposal is totally out of keeping with the present size of Chestfield;
- All of the development would be on existing farmland which is needed to preserve a sensible balance around a relatively rural village;
- The loss of a substantial swathe of lovely countryside would result in a blight on the landscape;
- Transport links to the site would produce an unacceptable increase in traffic on either Chestfield Road or the road past Tesco's or both;
- Such a proposal, combined with the other developments, underway and proposed, if approved, would destroy the present attractive town because they would drive the need for a great increase in the demand for more infrastructure and many more commercial facilities.

Personal perspective

- My wife and I have really enjoyed living in Chestfield for over 40 years but are now deeply saddened by the number and scale of the developments underway and being considered.
- We are not against future appropriate development but strongly believe that it must be complementary to the area and enhance it rather than destroy its characteristics.
- I consider that I have an excellent understanding of local issues having worked in local government for all my employment – 8 years in and near Canterbury, 6 years in three London Boroughs and 28 years in the City of London at a very senior level on finance and policy issues. Please take notice of the points raised!

Enough is enough – no more

PLEASE, PLEASE TURN DOWN THE BROOKLANDS FARM PROPOSAL

13th January 2023

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