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Local Plan to 2045

1 message

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To: consultations@canterbury.gov.uk

Please find below our thoughts on the Canterbury Local Plan to 2045.

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As noted in the December 2022 Chestfield Parish Council Magazine, the Canterbury District Local Plan has a wide range of proposals (including new schools, housing, a reservoir, sports facilities and accessible open spaces) and aspirations (sustainable transport infrastructure, low density new developments, pedestrian and cycle connectivity, biodiversity net gains). However, it can be boiled down to two themes:

- A significant housebuilding programme across the district; and
- A re-engineering of the workings of Canterbury centre

Both are **fundamental**, but only the first concerns the Parish Council directly. We welcome this opportunity to set out our thoughts – the direct engagement with the public on the Plan has been limited to three drop-in sessions manned by council officers, and with (it seems) no councillor representation. These fundamental changes are being proposed without proportionate consultation with, and assessment of impacts on, the local population. In respect of the housebuilding programme, we note the following:

- It does not primarily address the needs of the local population, but creates a new population, as noted below
- It does not address the shortage of water
- It does not reflect the needs for sustainable local agriculture

At its core, the housebuilding programme anticipates the construction of 1,252 houses per year over the 25 year period of the Plan. The resulting total, 31,300 houses is **not** referenced in the Plan itself but is confirmed in the Development Topic Paper of October 2022. The annual number is derived by taking the 2014 projections of the NPPF for the 10 years between 2021 and 2031 (806 homes) and applying an affordability adjustment factor. The affordability factor is a mathematical equation – we do not know if real world outcomes prove for formula. The NPPF projections themselves go up to 2039, with slightly lower annual new homes in the period subsequent to 2031. The Plan identifies sites for 12,459 homes and does not address the remaining almost 19,000 homes aspiration. More importantly, it does not address the population impact both in number and source. The NPPF projections (extrapolated to 2045) suggest an overall population increase over 2020 of about 19%, with a corresponding increase in housing stock of over 29%. The

consequences of these different relative increases means that the inhabitants per house figure reduces from 2.29 to 2.11 – new houses over the period are occupied at a rate of about 1.48. This last figure seems low given both the cost of housing in the district and the profile of housebuilds proposed (ranging between 2.78 and 3.12 bedrooms in the Plan). A more realistic figure would perhaps be around 2.5. Applying this figure to the number of houses proposed would mean a population increase for the district of 50%, a fundamental change which goes way beyond the local needs of the community. Such a change cannot be organic and can only be as a result of migration to the district. In other words, the plan does not address the needs of the existing local population but anticipates a new population. There is no suggestion as to where this new population comes from.

Chestfield itself is an example of this impact – the proposals of 1,940 homes (including of 250 homes at Bodkin Farm) would result in a population increase of 4,850, an increase of almost 69% compared to the 2020 mid-year ward level population estimate of 7,060 published by the KCC. In other words, a fundamental change to the size and character of the village which is to absorb over 6% of the district population increase without, it seems, any realistic choice (after all, the Plan uses the phrase “planning permission will be granted”).

Whilst the Plan does address consequential infrastructure needs, the adequacy of the proposals is not validated. For example, the development of Brooklands Farm provides for east facing junctions on the A299 but no mitigation of the inevitable pressures of movement westwards. And whilst the plan refers in passing to the construction of a new reservoir at Broad Oak, there appear to be no further details of what is a critical and core element of the proposals.

Finally, we would note that events over the recent past have highlighted the importance of national self-sustainability in such areas as energy, manufacturing and food production – it therefore seems extraordinary that the Plan envisages taking out of production significant agricultural assets.