

Canterbury Local Plan Objections

R1 Cooting Farm Garden Community

I object to the proposed development of the land at Cooting Farm, creating the Cooting Farm Garden Community.

My objection is based on many factors.

The village of Adisham currently has less than 300 houses. This development is therefore more than 10 times the size of the existing village, thereby effectively wiping our village off the map and replacing it with this new "garden town". The village has developed organically over hundreds of years, and many of the residents have lived here for decades due to the community that exists. I do not believe that that community feeling could survive the addition of 3,200 new homes (not to mention the possibility of an influx of secondary school children and the business hubs that would be created. This development would radically and irrevocably change the very nature of the village and its community.

The plan talks a lot about the creation of green spaces. Adisham is currently situated next to ancient woodland and SSSI land, as well as being on the edge of the North Downs AONB, with easy access to the North Downs Way. We also have 2 village greens and a number of footpaths and bridleways. It is also surrounded by farmland, again with footpaths around or through those areas. This development would destroy much of the open land, and turn what is currently natural green spaces into more manufactured green space. The creation of green space is unnecessary as things currently are, and the net effect of the development would be the loss of a substantial amount of green land/open space. Not only that, the creation of 3,200 new homes, and the population that brings with it, would increase footfall and traffic in the ancient woodland, which would cause more damage to the paths through this space, no doubt also doing damage to and destroying fauna and flora.

The land that is suggested for this development is currently actively farmed land. The land is easy working (meaning that it requires relatively low levels of power to farm) and is highly productive. Removing this from the local area will ultimately increase pollution, as alternative farmland may be more energy hungry to farm and food will be produced from further afield, increasing food miles. With a growing population, and the issues of Brexit adding import problems, as a nation we cannot afford to take active farmland out of use. The land is farmed by a local family and the next generation wish to continue farming the land. This also bring employment into the area. Whilst the development may bring businesses of some form to the area, will the jobs be suitable for locals, or will it just be bringing in people from outside of the area. The farmland currently provides employment for people living in and around the village.

Adisham has an incredible amount of biodiversity, including habitats of creatures that are declining or low in numbers. The village is home to many owls (including barn owls, little owls, short eared owls and tawny owls), buzzards, badgers, skylarks and other ground nesting farmland birds, bats and butterflies. Other species are also seen in the area including red kite, white stork, white tailed eagle and deer. Many of these animals, such as the owls and the badgers, rely on the dark skies to regulate their cycle and allow them to safely hunt.

The creation of this “garden community” would destroy the dark skies currently enjoyed in Adisham. As a result, it would make it much more difficult for the nocturnal creatures to survive here. It would also affect the quality of life for local residents, no longer able to enjoy the tranquillity of the dark skies. Adisham is already mildly polluted by light from the growth of Aylesham over recent years, but at the moment the impact is small. Extending Aylesham further would cause further detriment, but this development would completely obliterate the dark skies.

Adisham is also a very peaceful village. The sound of birds can be enjoyed early in the morning and in the evening as the sun sets. Buzzard calls are common throughout the day, and the sound of children playing can be heard on summer days. This development will create noise pollution, drowning out the tranquil sounds currently enjoyed by residents. Many people choose to live here for the peace and tranquillity. It provides a space of solace in an otherwise busy world. This is so important for the good mental health and wellbeing of residents. That peace and tranquillity is also enjoyed by those who choose to visit Adisham, to walk in the woods or around the various footpaths.

Adisham has an active walking and horse-riding community. Safe horse riding requires areas with low traffic and low noise. The conditions in the area around Adisham are currently perfect for this, and there are a number of riders who choose to travel to Adisham to enjoy the riding. There are currently many bridlepaths, which allow miles of off-road riding with very little need to touch any roads. This development would see the loss of bridlepaths, or they would be intersected with roads, making them a lot less safe.

This development would also increase air pollution. Increasing a village from less than 300 homes to something in the region of 3,500 homes will mean a LOT more cars on the roads. Clean air is very important, especially for the older population, so the pollution created by that many more cars would be a huge detriment to the air quality, and therefore quality of life for long-term residents of the village.

Adisham is currently served by a few roads, which is sufficient for the current size, but would not be appropriate for a conurbation of this size. Adisham Downs Road can be dangerous due to the narrowness, turns and hills. However, those that live in the village get used to the road and generally drive it carefully. With many more cars using it, I feel there would be a large increase in accidents along this road. Woodlands Road is another route into the village, but this is single track with a few blind bends. Due to the volume of cars currently using it, the number of accidents is low, but it is absolutely not suitable for more cars. I notice that the plan talks about reducing vehicular access to Adisham Downs Road. If this were to happen, I don't see any option but for many cars coming from Canterbury to use Woodlands Road. How on earth is this meant to work??? Another alternative would be the road in from Bramling, but again this is a single track road with a couple of dangerous blind bends, so it would not be a suitable alternative road.

The only other route to Adisham is via the B2046. This road is narrow for the type and volume of traffic that it already carries. Adding vehicles for another 3,200 homes (plus other homes in Aylesham, Womenswold etc), plus the schools and businesses would be disastrous. Cars turning on and off the road would slow traffic further, causing backlogs and adding to air pollution. It would also lead to more accidents.

In terms of infrastructure, not only are the roads inappropriate, but the water and sewerage systems already struggle to cope with the number of properties in the area, the internet connectivity is relatively weak, and power cuts are not uncommon. All of these issues would be worsened.

Lastly, the open land and farmland surrounding the village absorbs a lot of water. This means that the area is at very little risk of flooding. If this land were covered in concrete, as per this proposal, a substantial amount of that rainwater would run down the hill into Adisham, causing a flood risk for the homes that already exist. This risk will become a drain on already stretched council resources, and will become a huge stress on those who currently live in the area. With the change in weather patterns seen in the last few years, and the expected weather patterns in future years, very wet winters look to become the norm. Therefore, there is a permanent increase in the risk of floods. We should be doing everything possible to find ways to manage this situation and reduce risk, not adding more concrete over absorbent land.

R20 Aylesham South

I object to the proposed development at Aylesham South. My objection is based on several factors.

Aylesham is already a large village, and has been extensively expanded over recent years, with more growth proposed in the Dover local plan. This will add further to the pressure on the local road structure, particularly the B2046. This road cannot cope with increased volume, and this will lead to more accidents and more backlogs of traffic, which will in turn lead to increase air pollution.

Any increase in traffic brings an increased risk to wildlife, and the creation of (yet more) homes leads to a reduction in locations for wildlife habitat.

This will also add yet more light pollution to the area, reducing the quality of life for more residents, and making it harder once more for wildlife.

R22 Land at Cooting Lane/Station Road

I object to the proposed development of housing at the location of Cooting Lane/Station Road.

Whilst this is a small development, and I support the option to build 10 new homes (of the appropriate type), this is in totally the wrong area. Station Road is narrow, and with cars parked along it from the properties already built along Station Road, the road is narrowed further. In bad weather conditions, this can be extremely dangerous. Building houses in the particular location would make visibility from the Cooting Lane junction difficult, making it difficult and dangerous pulling out from Cooting Lane. If the proposed "garden community" is allowed to happen, this junction will become used more frequently. Building more houses along this road will only lead to more cars parking along Station Road, adding to the pressure and parking problems that already exist. There are better places to build these houses, such as extending the housing development along Bossington Road towards Pond Green.

General Comment

The plan states, within policy R28, that priority will be given to protecting the rural character of the district. Clearly a lot of this plan seeks to demolish the rural character of small village areas such as

Adisham and Womenswold, flying directly in the face of this comment. If the plan goes ahead, there will be very little "countryside" left to protect.