



CCC Consultations <consultations@canterbury.gov.uk>

Objection to Draft Canterbury District LOCAL PLAN to 2045 - Policy SS4

Puteri Watson

15 January 2023 at 17:45

To: consultations@canterbury.gov.uk, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
15 January, 2023

Head of Planning

Planning Department

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Draft Canterbury District LOCAL PLAN to 2045

Objection to Policy SS4

Dear Sir or Madam,

With my sister's permission, I would like to state my agreement of the objections that she has set out in her letter. I have filled out the outline survey and many of my comments can be found there. I would also like to take this opportunity to add to those comments and to what my sister has outlined below. The two major points I would like to make are as follows;

1. Growth strategy overall: The strategy for supporting the growth of Canterbury District seems to be entirely based and depend on infrastructure investment. This is a short term and short sighted means to develop sustainable and environmentally sound growth for the District. One could even go as far as to say that this is 'lazy' development planning. It fails to recognise or take into account the many local assets that already exist, the potential markets and growth sectors and the comparative cost (financial, social and environmental) in each of the potential growth models. It seems as though the strategy is suggesting that investing in infrastructure (houses, offices, retail space, warehousing) will lead to growth for the district and that property development (with some public spaces and cycle lanes) is sufficient. The strategy fails to consider alternatives, such as increasing the productivity of existing assets and industries by, for example, improving the offering of existing rental space, introducing policies to encourage a more diverse set of retailers, incl. local businesses, back to the high street, investing in connecting firms to markets, investing in skills and productivity of local firms, improving the social housing offering and, importantly, coming up with sustainable solutions for supporting those who are homeless in Canterbury to access housing so that they can re-engage with society and the job market. There is so so much more that can be done to develop a sustainable, equitable and environmentally friendly economy in the District - but the strategy focuses almost entirely on property development. This is neither desirable nor sustainable. At which point will the Council decide that there are enough buildings and roads? Or will we, the residents, see an increase of both into infinity? I would strongly encourage the Council to look at other examples of development and planning and models for economic growth, including from other cities in the UK where there are some really good examples of city and district development - Manchester and Hebden Bridge for example. There are also good examples further afield, for example Finland's 'Housing First' project. Lastly, I sincerely hope that you are engaging with the many think tanks in the UK that have done important research and thinking on development, including Shelter, The Open Spaces Society and Wild in the City.

2. I'd also like to follow up on my sister's comment about Rough Common. Rough Common isn't, as the strategy documents state, a 'local service area' - it's a community and a village and I object strongly to the Council treating it as anything otherwise. We come together as a community regularly, including to try and manage the problem of speeding that the Council has not been able to help us address and to raise funds for the scant village infrastructure and services that still remain. The very dubious decision a few years ago to grant a business license to a property rental agency where our local pub used to be was desperately wrong. Despite the Council's attempts to reduce the sense of community by failing to provide a bus service, not supporting the maintenance and development of our village hall and playing field and granting a license for commercial services which are not relevant to the local community, the identity of Rough Common is still one of a community and a village, as defined by the actions and engagements of its own inhabitants. The strategy to 'upgrade' Rough Common Road does not serve the interests of the residents and I fail to understand why our opinion and our public and private service needs do not matter. Whose interest are you serving exactly? We are also subject to council tax, and in return, I would like to see investment in our community in the form of improved public spaces, a better bus service, better pavements, improvements to the village hall and playing field facilities and commercial services, such as a Post Office and a local cafe or pub and a grocery store - not more traffic. Increasing the service offerings and the public transport provision in villages such as Rough Common would be a much better way of relieving Canterbury traffic from the pressure of short trips to town. 'Upgrading' is just moving the traffic problem to a new location (one inhabited by children and elderly people) and kicking the can down the road. Surely the Council can be more imaginative, more long-term thinking and progressive than this.

Yours Sincerely
Puteri Watson

