



Feedback: DRAFT CANTERBURY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN I TO 2045. Policy C6 Merton Park.

1 message

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To: Consultations@canterbury.gov.uk

15 January 2023 at 21:22

Dear Sirs,

I am writing with my feedback on the proposed plan that will affect my local area. In particular I will be referring to 'Policy C6 Merton Park'.

Looking at a map I can see why this area has been earmarked in the plan for developed, as it forms a wedge shape of land pointing towards the city that is also close to the centre. I believe however that the conceivers of the plan have not given consideration to why this area might have remained undeveloped over the long history of Canterbury. There are several aspects I disagree with in the plan which I will expand on below, but the core of my concerns come down to a main issue. Access.

Access to the site:

Having the trunk road go into the bottom of Hollow Lane seems ill conceived. Have the planners actually been to that location and surveyed the points at which they propose building access to the trunk road and development? As well as being an ancient Roman Road and all the history that entails, it is at the bottom of a deep gully, and at the point of joining the existing road layout it is in a very tight area with existing residential housing all around it. Even if the access could go in there, the roads leading on from it into Wincheap would not be able to cope with the traffic from a 2000 house development. There is no scope to widen them as far as I can see and even if there was they lead into Wincheap itself....notable in Canterbury for it's already very high levels of congestion.

I also note that the proposed new junction from the A2 is only on the southerly side. Northerly traffic would have to go down the aforementioned trunk road through Wincheap. As already noted... this is not a place with much capacity for more traffic.

The Park & Ride that has been suggested also has some issues. The regular buses would be travelling along small roads that can barely cope with the buses to the hospital at the moment. I suspect this will create more problems than it solves.

Basically the very vague and hand wavy road/access proposals don't appear to have considered where and how they will feed into the existing road system, if that is even possible, and if the existing roads can take any more traffic. As close as the area is to the City it has remained undeveloped for a reason... it is isolated and getting onto it is a big problem.

Loss to the local community:

Probably of less concern but a point I would like to raise, is the loss of this gorgeous area to the local community. It has become a very popular walking and hiking route, for families, dog walkers and those on longer outings. At a conservative estimate hundreds walk around and through the area daily. The views north west across the valley are spectacular and this is something that is obviously enjoyed by everyone. People specifically come out here to watch the sunsets across the orchards and fields. Often the plan talks about the views to the cathedral, it does not consider this other direction which is actually the more impressive from most of the site.

It is not often that an area so beautiful and with the feeling of being out in the countryside is so accessible and close to a city. It is a rare gem of a location.

Drainage and Water Treatment:

There is a small amount of text in the proposal that mentions a water treatment plant. It does not specify where this would go on the site, or how it would integrate into Canterbury's already problematic handling of treated water. The city has no capacity for handling more and we have a current problem with no viable solution yet in place. There is no consideration of what the city plans to do longterm to even cope with its current output of treated water, in this aspect the plan comes across as having been drawn up in isolation.

The site also has a lot of runoff water that drains into the 'valley' that runs through it. This will increase with more paving and buildings but there is no mention of where this runoff water would be drained to.

Local Farm usage of the land:

What will be the economic impact on the farm that uses this considerable area to grow crops and raise bulls? This also applies to the loss of a large area of orchards.

Legal enforcement of the plans goals on the developers:

There are many lofty ideas about green spaces, community areas, a variety of housing types and density. Expanding the hospital, sports facilities and the like are also mentioned. This alongside some lovely suggestions like keeping hedgerows and some of the orchards. But I do not see anything in the plan that shows consideration has been given to how these ideas can be guaranteed and not ignored by the developers. It happens time and again that the initial agreements are weak and the developers ignore the community aspects for density and reduced cost of building.

I apologise for the general list of problems I see, but that is the nature of these feedback processes. I understand the need for more housing, having been on the short end of that stick myself. However the scale of the proposals, especially when combined with the C7 area which is adjacent is shocking. I am very concerned that there is a distinct lack of detail on a couple of important make or break aspects, the main one being the access to the site and the scale and impact of what that would entail to construct. I'm sure this is why this particular area has never been developed before, the cost is too high. On a personal note, building would not concern me if it were more dispersed around the city, but losing such a large beautiful area to a new suburb in one location really does bring the spectre of urban sprawl to the ancient city of Canterbury.

Yours faithfully

Andrew H