



CCC Consultations <consultations@canterbury.gov.uk>

A personal response

1 message

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To: consultations@canterbury.gov.uk

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To Canterbury City councillors,

I have struggled through the whole document and note many fine sounding ideas. I am however saddened to witness what appears to be the missing of a chance in a generation, to stand back and analyse just what the city and its immediate environment is all about. The Unesco World Heritage site is only mentioned at no. 8 in the introduction, nothing is said of the wider Stour valley, and any response to the climate change threats seems to be to tack onto each new development a few politically correct requirements for EV charging points etc.

Canterbury has a history longer and deeper than many other towns and cities around the country – as emphasised by the World Heritage status. But there is little attempt to strengthen or build on that. In the Cathedral precincts a new display indicates the World Heritage Site – The Cathedral, St Augustines and St Martins – yet most of those sites are dependent upon the wider heritage of Canterbury and district. All the stone, wood and the wide range of requirements were imported through the port of Fordwich and transported along the Iron Age road that linked the port to St Martins. Where is the vision to defend and expand that Heritage, rather than decimate it further? Funding for such Heritage sites must be available, and from a different pot than through local government allocations..

Rather than take the opportunity to develop, express and enhance the heritage, it would appear the case that the demolition of potential is the aim. The road – an ancient Iron age road - that links the main elements of the Heritage site to the port of Fordwich is to be lost under the proposed Eastern Corridor Movement – and no recognition of its existence or preservation mentioned. The port of Fordwich is left to languish – yet not quite as neglected and lost as its French counterpart – Quentovic – which has been allowed to disappear completely.

Mention is made of the desire to further support the viticulture of the area, but the heritage and historic associations with that industry are not recognised. Fordwich is home to the Rent Hotel in which was stored all the imported wines from Portugal before redistribution along the waterways of southern England... Watergate House was the home of the Blaxland brothers who were responsible for producing the first Australian wines to feature in European wine circles – and called it Fordwich wine.

A unique, exciting and profoundly important archaeological site, revealing details of the earliest hominids to live in the North Western corner of the European landmass, rather than being trumpeted, supported, preserved and encouraged will be cut through and destroyed by the EMC. This in the midst of ancient woodland that is inaccurately marked as farmland.

Season tickets, and the cost of rail travel is much in the news, but the more modern heritage of Canterbury – The Crab and Winkle Way, responsible for the first season ticket, gets no mention in the Local Plan. The heritage that could be enhanced – even exploited – is left to languish. Throughout the region there are other sites – Canterbury Castle, to name but just one more – that are potentially significant sites of historic importance, rich in the heritage of the area that have been overlooked. But rather than recognise them and enhance them, they are ignored in favour of brick, concrete and tarmac.

Work has been underway to develop the Stour Valley Regional Park, linking the whole of the area from Ashford to Pegwell Bay within a new regional park. The aims of which are both to preserve,

protect and exploit the potential of the wider whole. Yet the Local Plan appears isolated in its own world, unwilling to perceive, or unaware of, the possibilities of the wider vision. Anything that might be said about heritage or the challenges of climate change are true within that wider context, and better addressed together than in isolation. A regional park would also attract funding from a different government pot.

It would appear that addressing the issue of climate change has been done by adding on 'green' pieces to the concrete, brick and tarmac proposals. Yet there is little feeling that the decade of the forties has been grasped.

Will we still be driving personally owned cars in 2045? What impact will climate change have on water supply, flood prevention, the need for shade. How will our life styles have changed and what will those changes require?

With a rise in sea level caused by global climate change, seasonal flooding we are told, will become a regular event. Yet the Local Plan makes only passing reference to certain areas being flood prevention areas – and then plan to build the EMC right across the one designated area, with no provision made for coping with the excess runoff created by the new road, nor recognition of the difficulty and expense of building a road through the area. Surely flood prevention – and water retention, have to be viewed within the wider context of the Stour Valley catchment area, so that there can be an integrated and appropriate response.

Along with the potential for flood defence, summers are getting hotter, work patterns are changing and therefore the requirements for the people of the forties will be very different from those of the twenties. Lock down demonstrated very clearly just how significant it was for there to be green spaces for people to escape to, for relaxation and exercise. The Local Plan constantly talks of providing recreational facilities, and of two new parks. But there are other green spaces that are already being used – and abused – about which the Local Plan has nothing to say. Fordwich water meadows, and the Bretts works bordering Fordwich, Sturry and Westbere were overrun in the moments of release from lockdown. They, along with other local green areas, require preservation, development and management. They are in easy cycle or walking distance of the city and the potential Sturry railway link into the city.

Alongside climate change, we are being called to have sustainable food supplies. The EMC cuts across grade 1 farming land, dividing it into sections that would be barely viable for farming. In contravention of the Local Plan itself, the road is presently designed, goes on to decimate ancient woodland which is inaccurately marked as 'farmland' on the plan. At a time when there is an increasing interest in growing one's own fruit and veg., sadly, there is no mention made of increasing the land available for allotments, and the allocation for gardens around most of the possible house sites would be inadequate.

The assumption from the Local Plan is that we will all still be driving our own cars, but where is the vision to replace cars with self-drive pods for example. These operating within the city environs would negate the need for most of the car journeys when associated with an efficient public transport network. Planning instead goes ahead for the covering of yet more agricultural land, destroying more ancient woodland, with tarmac, concrete and brick.

Others will have expressed opposition to the Local Plan for more specific, and particular reasons, my aim is to seek for a refocus on the wider picture through the lens of one small community that is being impacted in a way that has not been the case since the Viking raid of 1011 when Fordwich was wiped off the map as the invading horde laid siege to Canterbury. Such destruction lasted only a short time, and soon Fordwich was once again taking part in the defence of the country as part of the Cinque Port Federation. To this day the town still pays its Ship Money to the head port of Sandwich.

Elizabeth Lewis



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EKS Partnership Mail - A personal response

