

Comments on Local Plan

Supporting Village Centres.

The Rural Settlement Study (2020), which has been used as “evidence” in classifying rural settlements, hubs, hamlets and service centres, is fundamentally flawed. It seems to make the totally false assumption that people in rural areas only travel by road, with little reference to footpaths. It is also already out of date in terms of facilities listed, some of which no longer exist, such as a bus service and inaccurate on some, such as the assertions on High Speed Internet. This study and its flawed categorisations should not therefore be used for rural planning decisions, certainly in my area, which is Hoath, seemingly randomly lumped together with Sturry.

When you are only looking only at road links, and people travelling mainly by car, it could seem natural to put Hoath and its surrounding hamlets in with Sturry. However, if you are looking at the footpath network which has served rural communities for generations, a very different pattern emerges. For instance, where I live at Maypole, I can be at my Doctors Surgery, a choice of village shops in Herne or Broomfield, a Dentist, a range of pubs and other facilities within a 15/20 minute walk. We can see Herne from our upstairs windows. Sturry is miles away. Hoath and the surrounding hamlets are much more closely linked to services at Herne and Broomfield than Sturry, which would take hours to reach by foot.. A link to facilities at Herne is not mentioned at all in the Draft Plan, although the facilities there are likely to be more widely used in Hoath than those in Sturry. It is therefore wrong to consider planning decisions in Hoath in relation to facilities at Sturry, as travelling there would force people into more car use on narrow and poorly maintained country roads.

There are also, as mentioned, links to facilities in Upstreet and Hersden by various short footpaths on the other side of Hoath. There is local employment in both Herne at the Wildwood Industrial area, and at Hersden on the New industrial estate. People can and do access jobs on these using the footpaths.

In our present times when environmental sustainability should be at the heart of all planning policies, the assumption that the rural population can or should travel only by road to Sturry to access various facilities should not be made. I cannot see why Hoath should be considered with Sturry, and feel that it could be quite detrimental to Hoath. If we need to be linked anywhere for analysis of facilities, it should be with Herne and Broomfield.

Had any weight or consideration at all been given to the practical rather than purely recreational use of footpaths, or bridleways in rural life, where people can cycle as well as ride, Canterbury City Council might have come to conclusions regarding the importance of maintaining and extending this network, such that those who chose to live in rural communities are not forced into travelling by car. As it is, these important rural issues haven't been considered in the Draft Local Plan, which in my view would be the appropriate place for them.

Hoath and the surrounding hamlets have a unique character which has not been recognised at all. The centre and hamlets have grown up around farms, therefore we have a village centre in Hoath where the largest Farm, Hoath Court, was situated. There are hamlets at Maypole, Oldtree, Tile Lodge, Boynden Gate, Ford Manor, Chislet Forstal and Knaves Ash all related to previous or current farm activity. The outlying hamlets are joined to Centre of Hoath by winding poorly maintained

roads or nice direct footpaths. They are separated by beautiful open spaces consisting of high grade farm land, with ancient hedgerows. Planning permissions which fill in these spaces would destroy the unique character of the area.

2) In my view categorising rural areas by services assumed to be available just because they were listed at some time in the past is flawed for the following reasons:-

It would need continuous updating to have any relevance or value at all. In times when the Canterbury City Council is constrained by costs, anything so labour intensive as to need continuous update is a poor idea. Instead, proper weight and consideration should be given to what residents themselves have said they would like via their Parish Plans, which should form the cornerstone of planning decisions.

Some of the services listed as available are already out of date, Hoath is no longer on a bus route. A planning decision should not therefore be made on the basis that a bus service is available when it isn't. Residents of new homes will have to travel by car if they wish to go to Herne Bay or Canterbury, with the consequent increase in environmental pollution and waste and use of narrow and poorly maintained country roads.

Having a service within a village can be different to it actually being available. For instance, Hoath Village School has been oversubscribed for many years, despite a recent extension. A planning decision made on the basis that there is a primary school with places available would force people to transport children to schools in Sturry or Reculver by car. Adding new housing in the centre of Hoath close to the school could simply force residents from the hamlets out of the school, and into transporting children by car.

It is stated that all properties in Hoath except a very few properties on Marley Lane have access to superfast broadband, giving a connectivity score of 10. This is not true. At Maypole we have been to the Ombudsman in order to try and get High Speed Broad Band. It is not possible at the moment, and the overhead cables mean the service, like our electricity supply, can be quite variable.

Traffic Maypole Road and through Hoath and Policy DS15

At present we are suffering huge tankers travelling to and from the digestive pit at Chislet Forstal, extended without planning permission. These are going along the Maypole Road and through the centre of Hoath approximately every 20 minutes. The Maypole Road has been deeply rutted either side, and also has huge potholes. The damage is accelerating daily. These vehicles often travel at high speed, and do not have number plates. Our Canterbury City Councillor has said it would be possible to put speed restrictions and traffic calming on the Maypole Road, and have the need for this listed on the Local Plan. I would certainly be very pleased to see this, both to control these huge tankers and also the additional traffic that will be generated by the new building beyond Reculver at Beltinge. I understand that both the abuse and heavier traffic from the new building can be controlled by Canterbury City Council under policy DS15

Land behind Church Farm listed on Local Plan SLAA202.

I object to the inclusion of this site on the local plan.

1) It would infill between The Centre of Hoath and the hamlet of Maypole, destroying the unique character of this area, which is hamlets around a centre, with green spaces between.

2) The size proposed is inappropriate for the centre of Hoath, which already has several new housing developments to assimilate.

3) As there isn't a local bus route anymore, the new residents would be forced to use cars to commute to Canterbury, Herne Bay or further, with a consequent increase in pollution and use of already overcrowded narrow roads in an increasingly poor state of repair.

4) Although a village school and playgroup are listed as local facilities, both have a very limited number of places. As proximity is a main criteria for admissions, a new estate here could force people from outlying hamlets, just a short walk away, out of the village school, with the consequent impact on the inadequate narrow local roads and the environment.

5) High grade agricultural land should not be used for development.

Land behind Marley Lane to be used as Solar Farm SLAA280

I object to the inclusion of this site on the District Plan.

It is an enormous (101 hectare) Solar Energy Farm between Hoath and Chislet, which is much too large to put between two rural villages.

Much of this site is high grade farmland, which should be used for the production of food.

This site plan goes right up to peoples' boundary fences, which will cause an unacceptable level of noise pollution (the electrical storage emits a continuous hum and the panels are also noisy when they change direction. The loss of amenity for residents is unacceptable.

The large buildings housing the battery storage are unacceptable

There are a number of public right of way over this proposed site, which are very pleasant to walk at present, with long reaching views over the rural landscape. If a Solar Farm is built, this will be destroyed, as security measures including high fencing will need to be put in place along the public rights of way. Residents were told this during the initial zoom consultation meeting.

Recently various hedgerows within the proposed area have received a severe pruning causing death, while not actually being grubbed out. Canterbury City Council are supposed to have policies in place to protect ancient hedgerows.

I must stress that I do not object to solar power generally, but do feel that there are plenty of sites which do not adjoin villages or threaten our rural environment or public rights of way. I live the other side of Hoath, so am not occupying one of the houses directly affected, but I do walk this area regularly.