



12th January, 2023.

Policy and Strategy,
Canterbury City Council,
Military Road,
Canterbury.

Dear Sir,

Canterbury District Local Plan to 2045

Having tried unsuccessfully for two hours to complete your on-line questionnaire on the District Local Plan, I have resorted to the age-old method of letter-writing. I would appreciate an equally old-fashioned polite acknowledgment.

After studying the lengthy Plan, I have the following comments:

Policy C1

Canterbury presents a shabby, depressed picture. This is due, among other things, to the number of empty shops and the preponderance of cafes and take-aways. There are few 'useful' shops selling comestibles and needed household goods. Only two quality stores are to be found: Fenwick's and Lenley's. It should be Council policy to restrict the number of new cafes and restaurants and control the style, lettering and signage on shop fronts. The garish variety of signs, the range of lettering and differences of colour create the image of a bazaar rather than a World Heritage site. There is a huge problem of litter, chiefly cigarette stubs and wrappers, in addition to the chewing gum which scars the pavements. Recent development along the New Dover Road and the increasingly shabby entrance to the Christchurch building next to the Odeon reinforce the image of a rundown, declining, poorly administered, third-rate city not meriting the accolade of world heritage, which it does nothing to protect or enhance.

If the Council is really concerned about 'green spaces' it should renovate the numerous roundabouts which are in an appalling state. In European countries, like France and Spain, roundabouts are a source of civic pride and opportunities for landscape gardeners to show off their horticultural skills. In Canterbury they are dusty spaces with weeds growing out of black plastic. Similar neglect is a feature of the hedge along St George's Place, opposite the former Odeon. Both the roundabouts and the hedge should be respected in the words of the Local Plan as 'habitat, pollinator and ecological facilities'.

The Westgate which should be a dignified entry to the old city is marred by a myriad of ugly signs. Nowhere in the document is there any attempt to address the visual quality of the urban landscape. There is a general sense of the philistine pervading the document.

Policy C2

The proposed plan would overload the site. 50 houses, parking area and flats would crowd a relatively small area and be visually damaging. The Plan is correct in stating the need to protect the historic area of Oaten Hill.

Policy 26

A City Council committed to the policy of 'green gaps', as stated in the introduction to the Local Plan, should not be considering development along Tyler Hill Road, the road linking the two villages of Tyler Hill and Blean. To allow houses to be built on this valuable farmland would have the effect of joining the villages and creating an urban undifferentiated village, destroying the unique nature of the two separate settlements.

The wording of Policy 28 is very vague – one suspects deliberately so. The phrase 'sensitive development ...including how the area could help to facilitate a northern movement corridor to complete the outer ring of the Canterbury Circulation Plan' leaves open the possibility of building a road across the Crab and Winkle Millenium Way, an amenity much valued by cyclists, walkers and students. There is also the serious issue of sewage and storm water disposal which would result from any development, sensitive or not. The university is an asset but that does not mean that its need for funds should be the basis for an undesirable development of domestic and speculative housing, which it is understood is being supported by a Canadian enterprise, whose sole motive is profit not amenity.

The land around Blean Church has historic importance. An archaeological dig conducted there eighteen months ago revealed Bronze Age artefacts and signs of a barrow burial mound.

Policy relating to Canterbury Golf Club

The possible Canterbury Circulation Plan would impinge on Old Park and Chequers Wood. These virtually undiscovered woods are a haven for birdlife, in particular the nightingale which has long since vanished from many areas in East Kent, including the woods around Tyler Hill. The woods are a priceless amenity, together with the thriving pondlife in the lake, make up what is effectively a secret wildlife sanctuary, which should be protected from all development. It is an effective lung in the city.

Policy SS4

Connected to the possible Circulation Plan, is Policy SS4 which talks, again vaguely, of 'upgrades at the A2 junction at Harbledown and Rough Common Road'. What is meant by this and where is Rough Common Road? Is it a veiled reference to Duke's Meadow which local people have long sought to protect as one of the major 'green lungs' of the City? If the Council is looking greedily at both Old Park Wood and Duke's Meadow for development potential, we shall have lost the two most important sources of amenity and recreation in the City.

I strongly object to the proposal to divide Canterbury into 5 sections, each section sealed off from the next, which would make it impossible for people living in Tyler Hill to get to

the Cathedral or the doctor or a supermarket without crossing one of these boundaries, incurring a severe fine, or making a very long detour.

Canterbury achieves its World heritage status on the basis of three sites of Christian worship. There is no acknowledgement of this in the plan or recognition of the importance to the community of ease of access to the Churches. For those attending city churches such as St Thomas of Canterbury, in the Burgate, or the Cathedral itself, parking is already a serious challenge. The proposed closure of more of the adjacent car parks will make it more difficult and suggests that the plan is conceived by those who are hostile to the Christian tradition and practice. I urge reconsideration of the car park closures. The churches draw their congregations from a wide catchment area and access by car is for the majority the only practical option. This applies not only to those attending regularly on Sundays and Holydays but also for funerals and weddings attended by many from outside the city. The plan seems intent on ensuring that church attendance depends on surmounting obstacles, which will be exacerbated by policies proposed in the plan.

I hope the Planning Committee will give these points serious consideration and revise its proposals before making recommendations to the planning inspector.

Yours faithfully,

Penelope Reilly.