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From: Stephen David Banfield [REDACTED]
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Dear Councillors,

A few brief comments on the draft local plan currently out for consultation, if I may.

1. I particularly welcome the deletion of C12 (the Blean area proposed for housing) from the plan, for the reasons you have given. I would like to thank the councillors for having listened to the reasoned concerns of a very large number of people. I would hope that any future proposals for this land will take those concerns equally into account. From the map, I do like the look of the Blean Biopark (though the stork seems a bit optimistic), and hope that the Council will be able to consider it carefully as a forward-looking idea.

2. Studying the plan, one appreciates just how difficult it must be to find sufficient land for housing if the Council really does have to be tasked with the building figures stated. I know that the Brooklands Farm site, which it would appear is still going ahead, is greatly controversial with residents. Of more serious concern to me, however, is the proposed Merton Park. I appreciate that for the past 50 or 60 years, ring roads and orbitals, of which the A2 at this point must count as one, have marked the acceptable boundaries for infilling. But the loss of the breathtaking sudden view across the fields and orchards from Stuppington Lane will be tragic. This has been hitherto a magical and precious survival: a point of direct pedestrian access to the archetypal landscape of the city's surroundings from the city itself. For hundreds if not thousands of years, city residents across Europe could walk out of their town of an evening for such an experience, probably in any direction. We have long lost that norm in most British towns, but when I moved to Canterbury six years ago I was thrilled that it survived in just that one corner--and I think nowhere else, where Canterbury is concerned, for it is the one point at which the city directly meets the outstanding Kent chalk downland with all the necessary elements, including fruit orchards and oasts, fields, slopes and lanes. Many who come after us will feel that it was horribly shortsighted to let it go.

3. I am impressed with the meticulousness with which the Council has identified small plots of land for building, especially the brownfield sites, but every few days I walk past the horrid vacant lot bounded by Union Street and Union Place, next to Northgate, and wonder why nothing has been done with it for years, possibly decades. It is prime urban building land. I can't see it referred to anywhere in the plan, and it may well be that longer-term residents are familiar with some overriding reason why it cannot be used. It seems to me that the reason would have to be very overriding indeed to make sense at this point!

I think that's all.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Banfield

