



Outlook

I object to the proposed allocation of 1,930 new homes at Merton Park

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I wish to object to the proposed allocation of 1,930 new homes at Merton Park.

As a local resident, my biggest concern is the huge amount of uncertainty this proposal would bring to the area. Developments of this scale in Kent have repeatedly shown how promises made at the planning stage often don't match what happens in reality. Communities can be left living beside half-finished estates for years, waiting for schools, roads and health services that arrive late — or not at all.

1. Deliverability Concerns

Large housing schemes in Kent have a poor track record of being delivered on time:

- **Mountfield Park** was approved back in 2016 and still hasn't built a single home.
- **Chilmington Green** near Ashford was planned for up to 5,750 homes but has progressed painfully slowly. A decade later, schools and community facilities are still missing.

These examples show how vulnerable big developments are to delays, changing market conditions and shifting developer priorities. National planning rules (NPPF 77–78) require councils to show that sites are genuinely deliverable in the short term and developable in the longer term. Merton Park does not convincingly do this.

2. Strain on Infrastructure

- **Healthcare:** The Canterbury hospital redevelopment is still unfunded, and local GP surgeries are already full. There's no clear plan to handle thousands more residents.
- **Sewage and Drainage:** Southern Water's network is under serious strain, with frequent discharges into rivers and the sea. Adding almost 2,000 homes would make this worse unless major upgrades are guaranteed.
- **Schools and Community Facilities:** A school, sports hub and community centre are mentioned in the plan, but there's no firm timetable or guarantee. Elsewhere in Kent, these kinds of facilities have consistently lagged years behind housebuilding, leaving families without proper services.

3. Roads and Transport

Traffic in South Canterbury is already heavy, and the local roads are simply not built for this scale of development:

- **Lime Kiln Road** is narrow and partly serves as a footpath. It is completely unsuitable for extra traffic.
- **Stuppington Lane** is a well-used walking route for residents and dog walkers. Closing it to through-traffic and rerouting cars would damage a valued local amenity.
- With the **A2 slip road now cancelled**, all extra traffic would be funnelled through inadequate local roads like South Canterbury Road, Nackington Lane and Hollow Lane.

The proposed “fast bus link” is just an idea on paper, with no funding or operator in place. National planning policy (NPPF 110–111) is clear: development should only go ahead where there’s safe and suitable access, and should be refused if it causes severe impacts on the road network. This proposal fails that test.

4. Loss of Farmland, Green Space and Wildlife

The fields around Stuppington Lane are not just attractive countryside — they’re productive farmland. In a time of growing food security concerns, permanently losing this land makes no sense.

These green spaces are also home to a variety of wildlife, from hedgerows and pollinators to bats and farmland birds. Narrow landscaped strips can’t replace what would be lost. National planning rules (NPPF 145, 186–187) require councils to protect valuable farmland and safeguard ecological networks.

On top of this, the orchards and fields offer beautiful, uninterrupted views of Canterbury Cathedral — views that appear in historic paintings and form part of the city’s character. National policy gives great weight to protecting heritage assets and their settings (NPPF 207–210). This development would harm that irreversibly.

5. Cumulative Impact

This development doesn’t exist in isolation. Whitstable and Herne Bay are already earmarked for almost 5,000 new homes, including 3,200 at Bogshole. Adding nearly 6,000 more in South Canterbury would overwhelm local roads, healthcare and sewage systems.

The Local Plan does not convincingly explain how all this extra pressure can be handled sustainably, as required by NPPF 20.

Conclusion

The Merton Park allocation would create years of uncertainty and disruption for local people, with no guarantees that the necessary infrastructure would ever match the scale of the development.

Local roads are already unsuitable. Healthcare and sewage systems are overstretched. Valuable farmland, green space and heritage views would be lost forever.

This proposal does not meet national planning tests. It is not supported by clear evidence, it is not realistic to deliver, and it does not follow national policy.

I urge the Council to remove Merton Park from the Local Plan and focus instead on smaller, deliverable brownfield and town-centre sites, where new homes can be added more sustainably,

without damaging rural communities, threatening food security, or eroding Canterbury's historic and natural landscape.

Yours Sincerely,

Lewis Stevens