

--Email From External Account--

To:

Canterbury Local Plan Consultation – Chartham

Canterbury City Council

Subject: Representation on the Local Plan – Protection and Restoration of the Kentish Stour at Chartham

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in response to the Canterbury Local Plan Consultation in relation to Chartham, to express concern for the future of the Kentish Stour and to highlight the exceptional importance of protecting and restoring this rare chalk stream habitat.

England is home to approximately 85% of the world's chalk streams, making them one of our most distinctive and globally significant natural environments. The Kentish Stour is one of these, yet it has suffered substantial ecological degradation due to human interference, including water abstraction from its aquifers, pollution (particularly from sewage effluent), and the presence of physical barriers such as weirs, sluices, and culverts. These pressures have severely impacted the river's biodiversity, water quality, and natural hydrological function.

The section of the river at Chartham Mill presents a major opportunity for restoration. The mill and its associated structures have been in place for centuries, but many are now redundant and act as barriers to the river's

natural processes. Their removal would allow the restoration of a naturally connected chalk stream, improving habitat quality for wildlife and enhancing resilience to both flooding and drought. The immediate area, including the Horton Brook feeder stream, could be significantly improved through bank softening, re-naturalisation, and the reinstatement of wetland features.

The Kentish Stour supports important populations of Wild Brown Trout and Sea Trout, with occasional Salmon still present. These species are key indicators of river health, yet their ability to move freely along the river to spawn and disperse is constrained by existing barriers. At typical flow levels, weirs and culverts prevent upstream migration, leading to fragmented fish populations and degraded habitat. Removing such barriers, rather than relying on engineered fish passes, would provide a sustainable and self-restoring solution.

In line with the Water Framework Directive, there is a statutory obligation to prevent further deterioration of water bodies, and under the Environment Act 2021, there are new opportunities within the planning process to secure measurable biodiversity net gain and developer contributions for environmental improvement. It is therefore essential that the Local Plan recognises the Kentish Stour's unique ecological value and sets clear policies to:

- Prioritise the removal of obsolete barriers to restore natural river connectivity and sediment transport.
- Require developments near the river to contribute to habitat restoration and biodiversity enhancement.
- Protect and restore floodplain and wetland areas to improve water retention, reduce flood risk, and enhance wildlife corridors.
- Ensure that all planning decisions affecting the Kentish Stour align with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the Environment Act.

The Kentish Stour is not only a vital ecological asset but also an integral part of Chartham's landscape character and community identity. Its restoration would provide multiple co-benefits, including improved biodiversity, natural flood management, and greater public enjoyment of the river environment.

I therefore urge the Council to include robust, enforceable commitments within the Local Plan to protect and restore the Kentish Stour and its tributaries, with particular attention to the opportunities presented by Chartham Mill.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Local Plan. I would appreciate being kept informed of future consultations or developments relating to the Kentish Stour.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Patrick Wheeler

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Sent away from home, via iPhone