

From: Kudzai Baker [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 October 2025 10:42
To: Consultations
Subject: Consultation - Land at Merton Park

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Planning Department
Canterbury City Council
Military Road
Canterbury, Kent CT1 1YW

Date: 20/10/2025

Subject: Formal Objection to Proposed Development at Land at Merton Lane, Canterbury (Wincheap Fields)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed development at Land at Merton Lane, Canterbury, also referred to as the Wincheap Fields development. This proposal represents a serious and irreversible loss of biodiversity, natural landscape, and community green space, and would cause long-term disruption to South Canterbury's environment and residents.

1. Irreplaceable Biodiversity Loss

The site is home to a diverse and well-documented range of wildlife. Residents have provided clear evidence of:

- Over 20 bird species, including blackbirds, robins, woodpeckers, and several red list species recorded through a two-year local bird study with time-stamped photographic evidence.
- Regular sightings of bats roosting and foraging around Stuppington Lane and Chineham Way.
- Established badger setts throughout the orchards.
- Frequent appearances of hedgehogs, foxes, and protected slow worms, the latter being safeguarded under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

This mosaic of hedgerows, mature trees, orchards, and grassland forms a valuable wildlife corridor that supports both resident and migratory species. Its destruction would fragment local habitats and eliminate one of the last green buffers between Canterbury's built-up area and surrounding countryside.

Under Sections 174–179 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Environment Act 2021, developments must provide measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Merton Lane proposal would instead result in a net loss of habitat, biodiversity, and ecological connectivity, in direct contravention of these statutory requirements.

2. Loss of Vital Green Space and Community Amenity

The fields and orchards at Wincheap are widely used by residents for walking, dog exercise, family recreation, and informal wellbeing activities. They offer a safe, peaceful,

and accessible green area within walking distance for many households in South Canterbury.

This land serves as a community's natural heart — a place where people interact with nature, exercise, and maintain their mental health. Its loss would remove one of the few remaining unspoiled open spaces serving an area already under significant development pressure.

Once this land is built on, it can never be restored. In a post-pandemic society that recognises the importance of local green access, the Council should be protecting, not erasing, these community assets.

3. Traffic, Pollution, and Road Safety

The road network around Merton Lane, Wincheap, and the A28 is already severely congested, particularly during peak hours. The proposed development would generate substantial additional vehicle movements. The average number of cars per household in the South East is 1.38, according to 2023 data from NimbleFins. This data is derived from UK government statistics on vehicle ownership. This development would lead to a worsening air pollution, noise, and road safety concerns.

Narrow access roads are unsuitable for large volumes of construction traffic, posing risks to pedestrians, cyclists, and school children. The cancellation of the A2 slip road has already compounded local traffic problems — adding a major housing site here would be wholly unsustainable.

4. Long-Term Construction Disruption

Residents fear years of continuous disruption, with heavy vehicle movements, noise, dust, and vibration during construction. This would cause significant harm to residential amenity and public safety throughout South Canterbury.

Moreover, ongoing development nearby at Saxon Fields remains unfinished — adding another large-scale site before that project's completion would create unnecessary cumulative disruption.

5. Heritage and Landscape Impact

The Merton Lane orchards form part of Canterbury's historic landscape setting, offering open, panoramic views toward the Cathedral and surrounding countryside. The proposal would irreversibly damage the area's visual and cultural character, contrary to both Local Plan Policy HE1 and national heritage protection principles.

Conclusion

In summary, this development:

- Destroys habitats supporting protected and priority wildlife species.
- Removes a much-loved community green space.
- Worsens traffic congestion and air quality.
- Subjects residents to years of unnecessary disruption.
- Permanently alters Canterbury's historic landscape and setting.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Council to refuse planning permission for the Land at Merton Lane development. The site's ecological, social, and cultural value far outweighs any perceived housing benefit. Protecting Wincheap Fields is not merely a matter of local sentiment — it is a matter of environmental duty and lawful planning policy.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Kudzai Baker

