

**From:** Liz Jennings [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 19 October 2025 17:52  
**To:** Consultations  
**Subject:** OBJECTION - Canterbury District Local Plan focus consultation 2025 – ‘Merton Park’ orchards prospective development

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Dear Consultation Team,

**RE: Canterbury District Local Plan focus consultation 2025 – ‘Merton Park’ orchards prospective development**

We are writing to object to the potential development of the orchards at the back of Wincheap (being referred to as ‘Merton Park’).

We are against the development proposals for the following reasons:

1. Canterbury is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Developments within a UNESCO site must not prevent panoramic views or wholly obstruct a landmark, but should aim to preserve or enhance them. The development at Merton Park would be detrimental to these requirements as there does not appear to be any view corridors. There are fantastic views of the Cathedral from the orchards which residents of Wincheap have enjoyed in living memory, and which we as a community value and share on a regular basis. This is a unique and treasured view which should be available to any residents, visitors or tourists in Canterbury as part of our UNESCO status.
2. There have been a number of sightings of rare birds – including birds on the endangered red list – and we know from evidenced research that there are overall 36 species of wild birds in the orchards as well as other species of wildlife and pollinators. The planned development removes all trees and hedgerows and would result in the loss of habitat for all these creatures which we feel strongly against. We know of several teenagers locally who are excited about environmental conservation – and the orchards have played a key role in this learning and care for the environment, for example our friends’ son on Norfolk Road monitored and recorded wildlife in the orchards from a young age, and has gone on to study wildlife photography in Exeter, and is already winning prizes for his nature photography: all this began with the orchards. Another friends’ daughter monitors and records bird activity there – and has this year begun studying for a degree in environmental conservation studies at UKC, again, her passion for nature came from her engagement with the orchards.
3. There is a considerable lack of information within the local plan – or provided by KCC - explaining how the site will be accessed and what new road developments will be put in place in order to not increase traffic or air pollution through the current routes. We would suggest that the council and KCC would have to carry out a full and current road traffic

assessment as Wincheap is already overstretched and its narrow back lanes are dangerously overcrowded and treated as 'rat runs', endangering many school children who make their way to Wincheap primary school and nursery settings, as well as the Orchards special school. There is currently no suitable access to the potential development site from any direction in Wincheap that would not have a detrimental effect on the road capacity, pollution levels, noise levels, parking facilities and pedestrian safety.

4. Canterbury City's own air quality action plan states that the highest level of air pollution in Canterbury is already on the Wincheap / Hollow Lane junction. Developing nearly 2,000 houses with or without new road infrastructure will significantly increase air pollution, especially with the removal of the trees in Merton Park. The loss of these trees can only increase the levels of Co2 in the atmosphere around Wincheap, with the obvious impact on the people living in Wincheap. The trees also have cooling properties during times of excessive heat, which are increasing with climate change.

5. Artificial light at night. Housing developments must consider the use of artificial lighting and ensure it is not an annoyance to people / harmful to wildlife or undermine the enjoyment of the countryside or night sky, especially in areas with intrinsically dark landscapes. The proposed development of Merton Park is set on a hill and therefore there are concerns that artificial lighting will be seen across the district and therefore not comply with the rules.

6. Mental health concerns. The orchards act as an essential 'valve' for the residents of Wincheap, South Canterbury and beyond. This is a key resource for finding space and freedom from an already overdeveloped area of close-packed housing. Many dog walkers and families use the orchards which is beneficial for their mental health in the long term. Without these orchards, people and dogs will be roaming the streets – which will also be full of traffic. Wincheap is a very mixed population, with all sorts of mental health issues that come in a varied neighbourhood – but we generally all look out for one another and rub along very well together: a lot of this cohesion is thanks to this shared space where we pass one another with friendly greetings and become familiar faces in shared enjoyment. The area off Heaton Road includes a football pitch and basketball net. Families meet and picnic up here, teenagers hang out in a safe space and children grow up understanding the importance of conserving natural spaces.

7. The topography of the site being sloping towards Wincheap potentially means that there is a danger of water run-off during construction and subsequently, which is also a danger to the allotments and surrounding areas. Given the predicted climate changes, this is an increased risk.

8. Concerns that the environment will become STERILE and BORING! The interest of the orchards has provided play and pastimes for generations of Wincheapers: boring environments lead to antisocial behaviour, pent up frustrations and depressing views on a daily basis for all residents. Goodness knows, Wincheap can be depressing enough already with the traffic nightmares we all cope with on a daily basis – please don't consider Merton

Park orchards as a 'development opportunity', because in reality this is an opportunity to say no to degrading an area of beautiful biodiversity, and an opportunity to say 'You have value' to the people of Wincheap – many of whom are not treated so well by life.

Please appreciate that we are not against development as a whole, as we have children of our own who will need housing at some point. But Merton Park represents an area so inaccessible without causing horrendous problems with traffic, environmental loss and damage to the mental health of an entire neighbourhood that it's just not worth the sacrifice.

Yours sincerely,

Mark and Elizabeth Jennings

