

From: marie dickson [REDACTED]
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To: Consultations
Subject: Objection to Planning Application – Proposed Development at “Merton Park” (formerly Merton Orchards & Fields) — (Ref: Policy N1: Land at Merton Park.)

Importance: High

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Marie Dickson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

20th October 2025

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

Dear Sir / Madam,

Objection to Planning Application – Proposed Development at “Merton Park” (formerly Merton Orchards & Fields) — (Ref: Policy N1: Land at Merton Park.)

I am writing as a local resident of Chineham Way whose garden backs directly onto the orchard / fields behind and the adjacent football field. I walk and use this green belt area almost daily, and I have become extremely concerned and distressed at the proposed development of the land as “Merton Park”. I wish formally to object to the planning application on the following grounds:

1. Wildlife, ecology and protected species

- I regularly observe a wide variety of wildlife in and around my garden, the trees behind the garden, and in the fields behind our homes: red-birds (including what I believe to be

species of thrush or other woodland birds, jay birds, and yellowhammer), bats, foxes, badgers, squirrels and slow worms. The presence of these species is not incidental: this semi-rural green belt land is clearly functioning as an active habitat and green corridor for fauna. <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/birds/finches-and-buntings/yellowhammer> [Reptiles: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reptiles-advice-for-making-planning-decisions)

- According to the guidance on protected species and development in England, habitats such as meadows, grassland, parkland, woodland, scrub and hedgerows are precisely where species like bats, wild birds, badgers, reptiles and invertebrates are likely to be present. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications>
- Further, the emerging Local Plan of the Canterbury District emphasises that sites of open space and semi-natural habitats must be protected and enhanced, and green gaps and local green spaces have important ecological and community roles. <https://localplan.canterbury.gov.uk/historic-and-natural-environment/>
- The area proposed for development (Land at Merton Park) has been identified in the Habitat Regulations Assessment of the draft Local Plan as a site that may be “Functionally Linked Land” for certain species (such as golden plover) and therefore requires detailed assessment. [Habitat Regulations Assessment of Regulation 18 draft Local Plan 2024.pdf](#)
- Given the clear presence of fauna in the area and the established ecological value of the fields and orchard land, a development of the scale proposed (almost 2,000 homes plus business buildings) threatens to cause catastrophic harm to the habitats, connectivity, foraging routes and resting places of the wildlife.
- As someone who chose to live in this area for the very reason of the green belt behind our homes—and who relies on the tranquillity and nature behind the property especially because of the stressful NHS job I do—the thought of losing this habitat is deeply upsetting. For the animals, it is even more so: they have no voice in this process, and to think of them suddenly having their home demolished and disrupted is distressing.

2. Green belt, open space and character of the area

- The green fields, orchard land and adjacent football field behind our homes are part of the green belt / semi-rural fringe that contribute greatly to the character of our neighbourhood, the quality of life of residents, and the provision of nature and tranquillity in an otherwise busy town.
- The Local Plan for Canterbury recognises that open spaces of natural/semi-natural character are important for biodiversity, recreation, and the wellbeing of the

community; and that “green gap” designations are used to prevent merging of settlements and urban sprawl. <https://localplan.canterbury.gov.uk/historic-and-natural-environment/>

- A development of the proposed size would irrevocably change the character of this area: from quiet, open and nature-rich to densely built, busy and heavily trafficked. The view we currently enjoy from our garden—of the orchard, the field, trees and wildlife habitat—would be lost.
- This would not only reduce the amenity of existing residents but also undermine the community’s reason for choosing to live here.

3. Infrastructure, traffic, pollution and health

- I am concerned that local infrastructure is already under serious strain. As a community NHS health professional working in the area, I regularly experience major traffic delays. For example, I spend at least an extra hour each day stuck in traffic between home visits, especially during busier times of day. If nearly 2,000 houses (plus business units) are built in this area with limited local infrastructure improvements, the congestion and delays will markedly increase.
- The traffic congestion is already bad on Wincheap, and when that route is closed the estate roads become traffic jams and cause disruption for local residents. This development will exacerbate these issues and increase travel times for residents, emergency services (including health professionals) and local businesses.
- There are also acute pressures on local healthcare provision (existing GP surgeries and hospital capacity in Canterbury are already struggling, which has a knock on effect at the two major hospital sites in Ashford and Margate since the unbelievable downgrade of Kent & Canterbury Hospital). Adding a large population without adequate supporting infrastructure will further compound the problem. It is my understanding that the original plans some time ago was to upgrade the Kent & Canterbury Hospital to facilitate the growing population in Canterbury.
- With respect to air quality and pollution: increased traffic, construction dust and subsequent vehicle emissions will degrade air quality. As an asthmatic, I am personally concerned about the implications of poorer air quality on my health and on the health of other local residents, including children with respiratory conditions.
- The green fields currently help act as a buffer to pollution and provide an open space where residents, including children from local schools (some of which cater for children with learning disabilities), can access nature and benefit from the health and wellbeing advantages it brings. Removal of that open space will degrade the local environment and potential health benefits.

4. Mental health, wellbeing and community amenity

- The orchard land, the fields and the green belt behind our homes give us a sense of peace, connection with nature, and relief from stress. Personally, working in the NHS is very demanding and the tranquillity of looking out onto green fields, listening to birds, seeing bats at dusk and watching foxes or badgers from my garden is one of the reasons I chose this area to live in.
- To lose that would be devastating—not only for me but for many neighbours who value the open space, the wildlife, and the quiet amenity. It would fundamentally pull away something which contributes to our quality of life in a community sense.
- The children at local schools and residents of all ages benefit from direct access to nature, and building on this land would deprive future generations of that opportunity.

Conclusion & Requested Outcome

For the reasons set out above I respectfully request that the Council:

1. Recognise the ecological and wildlife value of the site, and demand full, comprehensive ecological surveys (for bats, reptiles, badgers, birds, slow worms etc) before any further approval is given, consistent with national guidance on protected species. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications>
2. Recognise the significance of the site as open green space/green belt/semi-natural habitat and ensure that any development does not undermine the Local Plan aims to protect biodiversity, open space, and green infrastructure. <https://localplan.canterbury.gov.uk/historic-and-natural-environment/>
3. Reject the proposed development on the basis that the harm to habitats, wildlife, open space, character, infrastructure, traffic, pollution and community amenity would be overwhelming, unless substantial revision is made that protects and preserves the green belt, the wildlife corridors and the amenity of the residents.
4. If any development is considered acceptable, it should be scaled back dramatically, incorporate truly meaningful wildlife corridors, green infrastructure, vehicular access improvements, pollution mitigation, traffic management, health and social infrastructure (schools, GP surgeries, healthcare facilities) before dwellings are occupied.

5. Consider alternative sites that do not destroy or fragment high-value green space and wildlife habitat.

I trust that the Council will give this objection proper weight and refuse the application unless these serious concerns are satisfactorily addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to make these representations.

Yours faithfully,

Marie Dickson.