

Tom Hawkes

From: CARTER, Georgina (MEDWAY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST) [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 October 2025 10:44
To: Consultations
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Objection to Proposed Development of 170 Houses – N32 Rattington Street, Chartham

--Email From External Account--

Dear Planning Department,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed development of 170 new homes on land identified as N32, Rattington Street, in the village of Chartham.

To clarify, I am not against development on the brownfield site at the Chartham Paper Mill (N31), which is more suitable for redevelopment. However, my concerns in this letter specifically relate to the greenfield site at N32 Rattington Street.

1. Transport and Infrastructure Concerns

A previous application for a smaller-scale development on this site was rejected within the last two years. The reasons for refusal then remain valid today—arguably more so—due to further strain on local infrastructure, roads, and public services.

Rattington Street is a narrow rural lane, lacking footpaths and cycleways, with tight bends and limited visibility. It connects to Station Road via several small bridges—one of which is single-lane only—making it unsuitable for increased traffic volumes. Station Road has partial pedestrian access, but several sections are too constrained for safe pedestrian use or upgrades.

On the opposite side of the proposed site lies Shalmsford Street, a busier road that becomes severely congested during school drop-off and pick-up times. Cars often mount the pavements to navigate the traffic, posing a real danger to pedestrians. Kent County Council previously determined that Chartham's roads are not safe enough for a Walking Bus initiative—a telling sign of current infrastructure limitations.

Local Speed Watch records show 136 speeding vehicles were identified in just 20 sessions over the last two years, often during peak commuting hours. This data underscores the use of village roads as a commuter rat run and the urgent need to avoid exacerbating this issue.

Combined with the already approved development at the Paper Mill site (N31), the addition of 170 houses at N32 could introduce an estimated 470 extra vehicles to our narrow lanes—a completely unsustainable figure for our current infrastructure.

Public transport provision is also lacking. The village train station has no dedicated parking and the bus services are unreliable. Meanwhile, the proposal lacks clearly defined vehicular access points, raising serious concerns about road safety and legal land access, particularly regarding a shared pedestrian/cycle route owned by local residents.

The village Neighbourhood Plan confirms that most residents commute outside Chartham due to the closure of key local employers like the hospital and the paper mill, reinforcing the likelihood of further traffic increases.

The last comprehensive traffic survey is now seven years out of date. A fresh, independent transport impact assessment should be a prerequisite for any planning consideration.

2. Public Health and Community Wellbeing

Adding nearly 500 more vehicles into the heart of our village will significantly worsen both air and noise pollution, particularly around our primary school. Current environmental policies primarily target pollution in Canterbury city centre, overlooking the detrimental impact that high traffic volumes can have on surrounding villages like Chartham.

There are already issues with accessing GP services, and the primary school often reaches full capacity. Increased population pressure from this development would strain public services and compromise residents' quality of life.

3. Impact on Local Landscape and Heritage

The proposed site sits adjacent to listed buildings and conservation areas and lies on the rising edge of the River Stour Valley. The elevation of the land means any development would be visible from numerous public viewpoints including Bakers Lane, Summer Peace Grove, The Crescent, Rattington Street, and Beech Avenue. It would dramatically alter the character and visual appeal of the valley landscape.

Moreover, the development would physically merge the historically distinct areas of Chartham and St Augustine's, undermining their individual identities. The Canterbury Landscape Character Assessment specifically calls for the preservation of such village separations, and this proposal runs counter to that objective.

It also conflicts with the Chartham Neighbourhood Plan, which emphasises protecting green spaces and maintaining rural character.

4. Environmental Risks and Conservation Area Proximity

The site borders the Chartham Conservation Area, an area valued for its close relationship with open countryside. Any encroachment into this buffer would fail to uphold the legal obligations outlined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires local authorities to give "special attention" to preserving the character of such areas.

In addition, the site is near the Nailbourne and Stour rivers—both prone to seasonal flooding. Increasing impermeable surfaces without a robust flood and drainage plan would raise the risk of surface water flooding and strain an already fragile groundwater system.

The proposed development could also harm nearby Stodmarsh International Nature Reserve. Previous assessments have raised serious concerns about nutrient pollution (nitrates and phosphates) from housing developments, which negatively affect the reserve's protected wildlife.

Unless a clear strategy is in place to ensure “nutrient neutrality,” this should remain a critical reason to delay or deny planning approval.

The proposal also appears to conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework’s guidelines on protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

5. Loss of Productive Agricultural Land

The site comprises high-quality agricultural land that has been used consistently for arable farming for over three decades. The NPPF clearly advises against developing land classified as “best and most versatile” (grades 1, 2, or 3a), and instead prioritises building on poorer quality land or previously developed sites.

UK cereal production dropped by 22% last year, impacted by climate change and geopolitical instability, including the conflict in Ukraine. In this context, safeguarding domestic food production is more important than ever.

Natural England’s 25-Year Plan also commits to protecting soil health, reducing reliance on high-grade farmland for development, and improving environmental sustainability by 2030.

6. Biodiversity and Wildlife Concerns

The centre of the N32 site contains a significant area of ancient woodland, which would be heavily impacted despite assurances it would be “retained.” Urban encroachment leads to habitat fragmentation, disrupting wildlife corridors and species migration—essential for biodiversity.

Local wildlife includes protected species such as bats, tawny owls, badgers, and foxes. Both the Kent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust have been contacted with our concerns about the ecological damage this development could bring—not just to the woodland, but to the surrounding natural areas.

7. Policy and National Leadership Alignment

Finally, this proposal runs contrary to current government sentiment and planning policy direction. As stated by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer in a recent interview with BBC Radio Derby:

"Brownfield first... nobody’s talking about building on the countryside. That has to be preserved, of course."

Building on productive farmland and disrupting village life directly contradicts this stance. Brownfield sites—like the nearby Paper Mill—should always be prioritised.

In Summary

The proposed development at N32 Rattington Street is unsuitable on numerous counts: inadequate infrastructure, public health risks, loss of farmland, environmental damage, and

violation of both national and local planning guidelines. I respectfully urge the Planning Authority to reject this application and seek more appropriate, sustainable alternatives.

Yours sincerely,

Georgina Carter

(St Augustine's Resident)

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