

Tom Hawkes

From: David Weeks [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 October 2025 21:48
To: Consultations
Subject: Proposed Merton Park Development & Thanington Rec.

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--Email From External Account--

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for this consultation and for taking into account the needs of both current and future residents of the area.

I am writing as a resident of Wincheap. I regularly walk my dogs in Thanington Recreation Ground and in the orchards and fields behind Wincheap Primary School and the allotments. While I recognise the need for additional housing, I believe this should be achieved through smaller developments across multiple sites—ideally on brownfield land—following thorough assessments of the impact on human wellbeing, traffic, pollution, and wildlife before any decisions are made.

Loss of Green Space and Impact on Wellbeing

The proposed plan would result in the loss of a significant amount of green space, which is vital for human flourishing. Many residents of Thanington and Wincheap are among Canterbury's least financially well-off and therefore most at risk of mental ill health. They particularly depend on access to free, local green spaces such as Thanington Rec and the orchards and fields of Merton Park.

These areas not only provide opportunities for exercise and contact with nature, but also support community cohesion. Regularly meeting others while walking or playing outdoors fosters a sense of belonging and combats isolation—both essential for mental and physical health.

The Merton Park fields and orchards also form a safe, low-pollution route to school for many secondary-aged children from Wincheap. This daily walk supports the wellbeing of a generation already facing widespread mental health challenges, while giving them access to play and nature along the way.

Loss of Trees and Wildlife Habitat

Extensive research highlights the importance of mature trees in reducing temperatures and cleaning the air—both increasingly critical in the context of climate change. Yet the current plans would result in the loss of almost all trees in a large area.

The trees and vegetation at Thanington Rec and in the orchards provide valuable habitat for wildlife, including birds on the conservation risk list. A young local bird enthusiast has recorded 39 bird species in the Merton Park area, 10 of which are on the red list, and two—Cetti's Warbler and Fieldfare—are protected Schedule 1 species. I myself have seen a flock of over 100 Fieldfares feeding in the old apple orchards there earlier this year.

The proposed development—partly on a UNESCO World Heritage Site—would dominate the surrounding landscape due to its elevated position and contribute to light pollution, which harms both wildlife and human health.

Traffic, Air Quality, and Safety

The plans give little detail about how traffic from such a large estate would be managed. Hollow Lane and the Wincheap junction already experience poor air quality. The addition of traffic from 2,000 homes would make this far worse. The road is narrow, and congestion would likely mean long periods of stationary vehicles and high emissions.

Have new traffic impact assessments been carried out since Saxon Fields was completed and occupied? Increased pollution would particularly harm vulnerable residents—especially children and older people. The safety of children walking to Wincheap School is also a concern. Many currently walk safely, which supports healthy development, independence, and allows parents to work. This plan would jeopardise that, and more traffic would further endanger cyclists, who already face impatience and aggression from drivers -myself included!

Loss of Accessible Recreation Space

Thanington Recreation Ground is the only public green space for miles around and is essential for residents' health and social wellbeing. The proposed "alternative" green site is not a suitable replacement. It is too far away for many local residents, meaning they would need to travel by car,

and as I understand it, access would require payment and dogs would not be permitted. This unfairly disadvantages the many residents who cannot afford such costs.

A More Balanced Approach

More housing will mean more residents, and therefore more need for accessible green space—not less. I urge consideration of alternatives such as building upwards where appropriate—for example, multi-storey car parks at park-and-ride sites—to reduce the overall footprint of development. Relocating the park-and-ride to Chartham Hatch could also ease traffic congestion and reduce vehicle flow through Thanington and Wincheap.

In Summary

Please ensure the Local Plan provides genuinely affordable housing for young local people, while safeguarding adequate free-to-access green space for both humans and wildlife. It is vital that traffic management, pollution reduction, and the health and wellbeing of residents remain central considerations, so that we can all continue to enjoy our beautiful historic city in good health.

Thank you for considering these points.

Yours sincerely,

David Weeks

