

## Tom Hawkes

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**From:** Jill Clarkson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 20 October 2025 11:46  
**To:** Consultations  
**Subject:** Formal Objection to Proposed Development Merton Lane Canterbury/Merton Park

**--Email From External Account--**

To the Planning Dept  
Canterbury City Council  
Military Road  
Canterbury  
CT1 1W  
20/10/25

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to register my formal objection to the proposed development to the land at Merton Lane Canterbury known locally as Wincheap Orchards or Merton Park. This proposal is completely inappropriate for the site and would result in very significant and irreversible harm to Canterbury's natural environment heritage, landscape, character and community well being .

This site would create a terrible loss of biodiversity and ecological value. The site is not 'vacant land' but a rich and interconnected system of orchards hedgerows mature trees scrubland and grassland that forms a vital wildlife corridor between south Canterbury and the wider Kent Downs landscape.

Local residents have gathered extensive evidence confirming that this area supports over 20 bird species including robins, wrens, finches, woodpeckers, blackbirds and several 'red and amber list' species. This has been documented through a professional 2 year local bird study with supporting photographic evidence.

There are established badger setts within and around the orchard boundary plus regular bat activity near Stuppington Lane, Chineham Way and the Oast Houses which is consistent with roosting and foraging habitats protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. There are frequent sightings of hedgehogs, foxes and slow worms (a protected species) as well as pollinators essential for surrounding ecosystems.

These species are evidence of a mature and biodiverse habitat mosaic quite the opposite from a degraded or 'low value' site. As such the loss of these habitats would violate statutory biodiversity duties under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Sections 174 -179 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) The Environment Act 2021 which requires developments to deliver a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

There is no credible ecological mitigation strategy which could offset the permanent destruction of such a complex and well established ecosystem. The Merton Lane proposal would instead result in a net loss of habitat, biodiversity and ecological connectivity in a direct contravention of these statutory requirements.

The field and orchards at Wincheap are widely used by residents for hiking, running, dog walking, exercise, family recreation, sport and wellbeing activities for the young and old. Such a terrible loss of vital green spaces and community amenity would be beyond tragic as they offer a safe, peaceful and accessible green area within walking distance for myriad households in South Canterbury.

This land serves as the community's natural heart and soul; a place where people can take time out from our increasingly busy and stressful lives to recharge their batteries and for many stabilize their mental health in these swift changing and often worrying times. Its loss would remove one of the very few unspoiled open spaces serving an area already under significant 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 stepping forward to protect these community assets not erasing them.

In terms of 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 worsening air pollution, noise and road safety concerns. Narrow access roads are unsuitable for large volumes of construction traffic posing risks to cyclists, pedestrians and school children attending Wincheap primary school. The cancellation of the A2 slip road has already compounded local traffic problems - adding a major housing site here would be wholly unsustainable.

Residents would be left in real fear of years of continuous disruption with regular consistent heavy vehicle movements, noise dust and vibration during construction. This would cause significant harm and stress to residential amenity and public safety throughout South Canterbury. Moreover the ongoing development nearby at Saxon Fields remains unfinished and some houses built unsold! It therefore belies common sense for another large scale site to be built before the existing one at Saxon Fields is completed creating more unnecessary and cumulative disruption to all concerned.

The Merton Lane orchards form part of Canterbury's historic landscape setting. This is our heritage for future generations to enjoy offering open panoramic views towards the Cathedral and surrounding countryside. The proposed site would irreversibly damage the area's visual historic and cultural character contrary to both the Local Plan Policy HE1 and national heritage protection principles.

In conclusion this development would destroy habitats supporting **protected and priority wildlife species.**

Remove a **much loved community green space used by many residents living locally**

Considerably **worsen both traffic congestion and air quality**

Subject residents to **years of unnecessary disruption placing stress and strain on the local community**

Permanently alter **Canterbury's historic landscape and setting, majestic views of the Cathedral.**

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 outweigh any perceived housing benefit. The protection of Wincheap Fields and orchards is not merely a matter of local

sentiment, it is a matter of environmental duty and lawful planning policy for the existing and for future generations.

Yours faithfully

Jill Clarkson, local resident  
Retired RMN