

To Canterbury City Council,

My name is Thomas Crowther I have grown up and lived in Wincheap my whole life. I am strongly against the proposal to destroy the orchard to build 2000 new houses. The orchard has been Key to my upbringing and childhood, as it has been for countless others and as It should be for generations to come. I have used the paths in the orchard my whole life ( I am 25) running and walking up there ever since i could. When I was in Worthgate scout group we went up there all the time to play man hunt, tag, and all sort of other games. The football pitch in particular my friends and I used regularly every evening after school, I would ring up my friends Will and Jacob and go meet them up there with a football, and we would play there all evening until our parents would come up and tell us it was time to come home. The football pitch was far better when it has two goals! I have had birthday parties up at the orchard most memorably my 13th when we had races and played stuck in the mud, as well as hide and seek. Myself, my friends and brothers would also head up and make silly video's with our digital camera at the fields and orchard, then rush home and plug the camera into the TV and watch them. Sledging in the winter is amazing when it snows, and you can be sure to find a huge crowd of sledgers at the top of the orchard hill when it next does. Groups of people making snowmen and sledge jumps a torrent of kids hurtling down the hill with huge grins on their faces whilst mums and dads chat, sipping flasks of tea and hot chocolate. Every boxing day we have a mini football match on the football pitch, when we were younger it would be lads vs dads but nowadays we mix it up a bit to give the dads a chance. The footpaths and trails throughout the orchard and surrounding fields are how i got to my friends houses and also how my friends and i would walk to school. My brother and I as well as our friends Will, Tim, Jacob and his younger brother would all meet on the bench by the field and walk to Langton via the fields no matter how wet and muddy! You can probably understand that not only being key in my childhood that the orchard and surrounding areas has been key in the childhood of so many others too. This is the last place children easily access nature in this area. Now as an adult I still use the Orchard daily to run. My brother and I run a 5k run through the fields and orchard, round to rugby club and back every morning. Countless others use it recreationally too and it is a wonderful area to walk for many. Lots of dog walkers use the orchards aswell.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if instead of tearing down Wincheaps last remaining green space we used the wonderful space as a community orchard and the surrounding farmland transformed into a new native woodland! A space that can become a salvation for the endangered UK species that would be destroyed if the houses were built. Being in the Orchards I have seen so much wildlife! Red kites, buzzards, peregrine falcons,

puffball mushrooms, parasol mushrooms and fairy ring champignons. Badgers and foxes have dens in the area and I have seen the foxes chasing the rabbits around the fields and orchards in grand and impressive pursuits! The people of Wincheap and Canterbury need this area it is a connection to nature that improves significantly the well-being of everyone who lives here.

Wincheap Orchard needs to be protected as it is the last significant green space in the Wincheap area. The map below from the archive in the national library of Scotland shows the orchard has been there since 1919. So the orchard has stood there for 106 years at the very least! This historic Orchard is loved by the locals and should be celebrated as Orchards in Kent are in decline. How can we claim that Kent is the 'Garden of England' if we tear down the trees and hedgerows, concrete over the garden and build 2000 houses on it?

Please stop these plans,

Yours sincerely Thomas Crowther



This map shows the orchard in 1919 you can find this map on the national library of scotlands online map archive.

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=14.0&lat=51.26705&lon=1.07495&layers=253&b=256&o=0>

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To Canterbury City Council,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed allocation and development of approximately 2,000 new homes on the orchard and greenfield land south-east of Wincheap, Canterbury.

This proposal conflicts with multiple local, national, and statutory biodiversity and planning policies, including the Canterbury City Council Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018–2031), Biodiversity Duty: First Consideration (2024), UK National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2030), Natural England Action Plan (2024–2025), and Kent County Council’s Greener Kent Initiative. It also disregards the significant social, cultural, environmental, and mental health value this landscape provides to the Wincheap community.

The orchard and surrounding fields have been central to my life and to the lives of many local residents. From childhood games with the Worthgate Scout Group to sledging in winter, birthday gatherings, and informal football matches, this green space has shaped our shared community identity. I have run a 5k loop through the orchard every morning since I was old enough to explore it; many neighbours use the same paths for walking, running, and family outings. It remains one of the few easily accessible areas where children can safely experience nature. Research consistently shows that access to natural green spaces improves mental health and community cohesion. A 2017 study in *Frontiers in Psychology* found that proximity to green areas is linked to lower anxiety and depression, and greater life satisfaction. This orchard is therefore not only an ecological asset but also a cornerstone of public health and well-being.

Historical Ordnance Survey maps (NLS Geo-Explore archive) show that this land has been hop fields and orchards since at least the mid-19th century, forming a defining part of Wincheap’s landscape and Canterbury’s southern approach. This historic continuity contributes to the district’s character and setting, which the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF §197) requires local authorities to preserve. Under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council must give special regard to preserving the setting of heritage assets. Large-scale development here would permanently sever this historic landscape link, contrary to both national heritage law and local policy.

The Council’s Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018–2031) identifies orchards and farmland as “an integral part of the district’s green infrastructure network,” providing “high biodiversity value through low-intensity management” (GIS, p. 16). The Strategy commits the Council to avoiding any net loss of green space, delivering measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in all new development, and protecting and enhancing green corridors and natural landscapes. Building 2,000 homes on this site would destroy established orchard and meadow habitat, directly breaching the Strategy’s “no net loss” principle and undermining its biodiversity objectives. Traditional orchards are also a nationally endangered habitat: the People’s Trust for Endangered Species (PTES)

reports that 90% have been lost since the 1950s, and almost half of those remaining are in decline. The Wincheap Orchard is one of the few surviving examples, supporting bats, birds, bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Its loss would represent a significant local and national setback for biodiversity.

The area's mature hedgerows and tree lines are essential for wildlife movement and carbon capture. The Woodland Trust describes hedgerows as "vital landscape features" that clean the air, reduce flooding, and act as ecological corridors. The UK has already lost more than 118,000 miles of hedgerows since 1950. Their removal here would fragment local ecosystems, disrupt biodiversity, and weaken landscape resilience.

Under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, the Council has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Major developments must achieve at least 20% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). There is currently no public evidence that this proposal can meet that standard, given the scale of habitat loss. Approving it in its current form could therefore place the Council in breach of its statutory biodiversity duty. I formally request that the Council publish or disclose the BNG assessment for this site under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

The UK National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2030) implements the United Kingdom's commitments under the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Among its key targets, Target 1 requires that the loss of high-biodiversity-value land be reduced to "close to zero" by 2030, while Target 3 commits to ensuring that at least 30% of terrestrial areas are effectively conserved for nature. Allocating a productive orchard and meadow site for dense housing is incompatible with these national objectives and would undermine the UK's legally binding nature recovery targets.

The Natural England Action Plan 2024–2025 requires planning authorities to deliver "nature-positive" outcomes by embedding Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), restoring habitats, and ensuring that developments actively support nature recovery. Approving 2,000 homes on existing orchard and meadow habitat would do the opposite—removing biodiversity rather than restoring it—and therefore cannot be considered compliant with this framework or with the Environment Act 2021.

Kent County Council's Greener Kent Initiative aims to protect and enhance the county's woodlands, meadows, chalk streams, and orchards. This proposal would directly contradict those aims by reducing biodiversity and climate resilience and eroding the natural heritage that the initiative seeks to protect.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy also identifies the River Stour floodplain as vital for natural flood storage and water management. Replacing permeable greenfields with housing would increase surface runoff and flood risk, contrary to NPPF §§152–154,

which require developments to support climate resilience. The A2/A28 corridor already suffers from poor air quality; additional urbanisation would worsen pollution, breaching the Council's duty to protect public health under the Environment Act 1995 (Part IV – Local Air Quality Management). Failure to assess these cumulative effects may also contravene the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

The orchard and surrounding green fields are central to community health and well-being, providing opportunities for exercise, relaxation, and connection with nature. The Council's own Help with Health and Wellbeing service recognises mental health, physical activity, and community well-being as local priorities ([canterbury.gov.uk](https://www.canterbury.gov.uk)). These spaces directly deliver those benefits. Removing them would contradict the Council's stated commitments and its statutory responsibilities for community health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

In conclusion, the orchard, meadows, and hedgerows south-east of Wincheap form a living landscape of ecological, historic, and community importance. They connect people to nature, support biodiversity, and sustain public health in ways that cannot be replicated within a housing estate. Destroying them would breach multiple environmental and planning policies, harm community well-being, and permanently diminish Canterbury's natural heritage. I therefore urge Canterbury City Council to reject the proposed allocation and development, and instead consider establishing a community orchard and native woodland project — a lasting legacy of sustainability, biodiversity, and well-being for future generations.

I would very much appreciate a response,

yours,

Thomas Crowther