

Dr Hazel Vane-Wright,  


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I am writing to make a few personal observations about the Canterbury District Draft Local Plan with particular emphasis on the proposed development called Merton Park

I have never quite understood why local development seems to place greater emphasis on encouraging potential new residents to an area over the lives of those who already live there. Many residents currently living in Canterbury will have lived in the area for several years, and will inevitably have contributed economically, culturally and socially to Canterbury, during their time as residents. Personally I have lived here approximately 27 years. I have studied here in Canterbury, have been employed in the public services and raised children who retain connections to the city.

Of course, I do appreciate that central government currently places pressure on the City Council to enable the building of an average of 1200 new homes each year. In my opinion this is an unrealistic target given the size of the city and the constraints of being a major heritage and tourist site with roads already near capacity. In addition, as Canterbury City Council has no authority over the road network and countywide traffic management, any developments to provide additional housing are inevitably at the mercy of decisions made separately by Kent County Council who remain free to make choices at odds with the wishes of the City Council.

Although there is an apparent need for new homes in the area is it right that this should be at the expense of the quality of life of those already resident here in Canterbury? For example the development of Merton Park (site N1) would have enormous impact on the area boarded by the A2, South Canterbury and Wincheap, an area which is regularly, and extensively used by those living in the adjacent communities, whether they be children en route to school, dog owners exercising their pets, those walking or running for their health or those simply enjoying the sense of wellbeing that being in green spaces can provide.

I understand it is already recognised by Canterbury City Council that the south side of the city is disadvantaged in comparison to the north side of the city for green space, and yet this development, should it go ahead, would have a further and negative impact on this discrepancy.

Has enough been done to explore brownfield sites such as Nasons and Debenhams in the city centre, or to develop the previous council offices in Northgate. What is the status of the land at the top of Nunnery Road, a site that has remained unused for several years now? Given financial constraints many people might consider living in small developments of flats, as is common in Europe rather than the bigger developments on greenfield sites, which seem to

be favoured by developers in the UK possibly because there is more profit to be made.

I would urge the City Council to reconsider plans to build 2000 houses on the Merton Park site, destroying the orchards, the fields and the playing field and compromising the significant biodiversity of the area.