

POLICY N3 THANINGTON RECREATION GROUND

I wish to object to the proposal in the draft Local Plan to use the recreation ground next to the Neighbourhood Resource Centre as a replacement site for the Wincheap Park and Ride. I am writing as a county councillor representing Thanington for 28 years, from 1989 to 2017. During that time I got to know the area very well, especially the original council estate. I saw with great concern the lawlessness which affected the estate, and chaired the first meeting of residents who called for a community centre. I was delighted when the City Council was able to build the Thanington Neighbourhood Resource Centre. I made the acquaintance of Paula Spencer, the indomitable and intelligent manager of the Centre, and was able for several years to help fund youth work there. The improvement of lives of residents on the estate was remarkable. I believe strongly that this improvement is now at risk, with the proposal to take up such a large portion of the recreation ground that abuts the Thanington Neighbourhood Centre.

I object to the proposal to build a Park and Ride site on this green space. My reasons are as follows.

- 1) The site is a green environmental buffer between the community of Thanington, and the A2 and the heavily-trafficked junction of the A2 and the A28. The Thanington area has been identified as an air quality hot-spot. Given that Saxon Fields, and the proposed development sites in this Local Plan will distance open countryside a long way from Thanington, it is vital that this green space is preserved, in line with the City Council's own Air Quality Management Plan (2020-25)
- 2) The City Council supports, in its 2020 Playing Pitch Strategy, retention of neighbourhood -level playing fields. Replacement of playing-fields elsewhere, including the new development site at Merton Park would not qualify as 'neighbourhood level'
- 3) The former council estate in Thanington is one of the most deprived LSOAs in the country. That is why the Neighbourhood Resource Centre was built to serve it. At present, although situated on the edge of the estate, it feels like part of it. The disruptive impact of building the Park and Ride site, and then the constant flow of vehicles in and out of the site, would isolate the Centre from its natural community, and prevent it from making use of the informal green space which at present surrounds it. I contend that a local council should make a priority of supporting its poorer residents, and ensuring that a community centre that does so much for them is not hemmed in and lost in a sea of vehicles, but continues to have a green environment which they can enjoy.

MARTIN VYE (County councillor 1989-2017, Canterbury City Councillor 1995-2011, Lord Mayor of Canterbury 2004/5)