

Subject: Formal Objection to Merton Park Development – Impact on South Canterbury, Stuppington Lane and Surrounding Environment

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Oliver, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I am writing as a resident of [REDACTED], where I live in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], to formally object to the proposed Merton Park development and its impact on our community and environment.

I would like to look at it from a different perspective as I am one of the main stakeholders in this decision.

Heritage Site

I am doing [REDACTED] and we have been learning about Roman connections and Canterbury and its heritage in school. We were taught last year in a field trip that the footpath by the Wincheap allotments is an ancient footpath goes all the way back to Romans. These fields and Orchards go so far back and have been part of the countryside and will be against the Countryside act to build on. Many of my friends use the path to walk to and from school.

Loss of Farmland

Why Loss of Farmland Matters

1. Food Security

- Farmland contributes to local and national food production.
- Losing productive land to housing developments reduces our ability to grow crops and raise livestock domestically.
- This increases reliance on imported food, which is vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions.

2. Environmental Sustainability

- Farmland acts as a carbon sink, helping to absorb greenhouse gases.
- It supports pollinators like bees and butterflies, which are essential for crop health and biodiversity.
- Replacing farmland with concrete and tarmac increases surface runoff and flood risk.

3. Local Economy

- Agriculture supports jobs and rural businesses—from farmers to suppliers and markets.
- Development can disrupt long-standing farming operations and reduce economic diversity in the region.

4. Landscape and Heritage

- Farmland contributes to the rural character and visual appeal of places like South Canterbury.
- It often includes historic field patterns, hedgerows, and orchards that are part of the area's cultural heritage.

5. Loss of Green Buffer Zones

- Farmland often serves as a buffer between urban and rural areas.
- Its loss can lead to urban sprawl, reducing access to nature and increasing pressure on local infrastructure.

6. Impact on Wildlife

- Many species rely on farmland for nesting, feeding, and migration.
- Hedgerows, field margins, and orchards are critical habitats that are often destroyed during development.

Loss of Orchard and Its Ecological, Cultural, and Community Impact

The orchard adjacent to Stuppington Lane is not just a green space—it is a living ecosystem, a cultural landmark, and a community asset. Its removal as part of the Merton Park development would have serious consequences:

1. Ecological Devastation

- Orchards are biodiversity hotspots, supporting a wide range of species including birds, bats, dormice, hedgehogs, and pollinators like bees and butterflies.
- The mature trees and hedgerows provide nesting sites, food sources, and shelter for wildlife year-round.
- Their destruction would fragment habitats and disrupt ecological corridors that connect the wider countryside.

2. Loss of Carbon Sink and Climate Buffer

- Mature orchard trees absorb carbon dioxide and help regulate local temperatures.
- Removing them contributes to climate change and increases the urban heat island effect.
- The loss of tree cover also reduces natural flood mitigation and increases surface runoff.

3. Cultural and Historical Significance

- Traditional orchards are part of Kent's rural heritage and landscape identity.
- Many of these trees may be decades old, representing a continuity of land use and local farming traditions.
- Their removal erases a tangible link to the area's agricultural past.

4. Impact on Community Wellbeing

- The orchard is a valued space for dog walkers, families, and nature lovers.
- It offers peace, beauty, and a connection to nature—especially important for mental health and wellbeing.
- Its loss would reduce public access to green space, contrary to Local Plan policies that promote outdoor recreation and community health.

5. Contravention of Planning and Environmental Policies

- The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** requires developments to protect and enhance green infrastructure and biodiversity.
- The **Local Plan** emphasizes the importance of preserving landscape character and access to nature.
- The orchard's removal would violate these principles and diminish the environmental quality of South Canterbury.

Loss of Public Green Space and Dog Walking Routes

The fields and orchards are not only ecologically important—they are also cherished recreational spaces for local residents. I take my dog for a walk daily. Stuppington Lane and its surrounding green areas are widely used for dog walking, family outings, and nature appreciation. The development would eliminate one of the few remaining accessible green corridors in South Canterbury, contrary to Local Plan policies that promote public access to open space and green infrastructure.

Traffic Congestion and Road Safety

Stuppington Lane is a narrow, rural road already under pressure from existing traffic. Lime Kiln Road is narrow and not suitable. The Merton Park development would dramatically increase vehicle movements, both during construction and once the new homes are occupied. This will also affect the traffic into school and will lead to lateness and loss of learning. This raises serious concerns about:

- Increased congestion on Stuppington Lane, South Canterbury Road, Ethelbert Road, Old Dover Road, and surrounding routes
- Greater risk to pedestrians, cyclists, and schoolchildren
- Emergency vehicle access being compromised

No clear mitigation strategy has been presented to address these issues, and the current infrastructure is not equipped to handle such a dramatic increase in traffic volume.

Pollution and Environmental Impact

The increase in site traffic and long-term vehicle use will inevitably lead to higher levels of:

- Air pollution, affecting respiratory health and contributing to climate change
- Noise pollution, disrupting the peace of this semi-rural area
- Light pollution, which will affect nocturnal wildlife and the character of the area

Construction activity itself will also generate dust, debris, and disruption for existing residents, with little evidence of how this will be managed or minimized. These concerns may warrant a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the EIA Regulations 2017, given the scale and sensitivity of the site.

In Summary

The Merton Park development threatens to:

- Destroy a legally protected and ecologically rich habitat
- Eliminate cherished green space used by the community
- Overwhelm local roads and infrastructure
- Degrade air quality and increase noise and light pollution
- Contradicts with government target of Net Zero by 2050

I urge the planning authority to reject the proposed plans to protect the environmental, social, and historical integrity of South Canterbury, Stuppington Lane and its surroundings.

Thank you for considering this objection.

Yours faithfully,

Oliver Bonnie

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted contact information]