

Tom Hawkes

From: Robert Benfield [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 October 2025 11:57
To: Consultations
Subject: Draft Canterbury District Local Plan to 2040 - Comment on Policy C12

--Email From External Account--

Dear Sirs,

I was very pleased to see Canterbury City Council's new version of the Local Plan in September. Particularly the very careful and detailed consideration of the proposal to build 2000 houses on land north of the University of Kent, which concluded that this land is unsuitable for such development, and consequently that Policy C12 should be deleted. Therefore, I did not see any reason to respond to the focussed consultation by the deadline of 21 October.

At the end of last week I became aware that the University of Kent is attempting to dispute this planning outcome, and intends to press ahead with its original proposal for development regardless [letter from the Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University to Julia Kirby-Smith of Save the Blean, dated 15 October, refers]. I think that this new situation means that further public comments on Policy C12 are relevant and should be considered, even though the official deadline for the focussed consultation has passed.

So I hope you will take this message into consideration.

All the objections to the development of this land north of the University, made by very many people during the Consultation and carefully evaluated by the Council's Planning Team, remain fully valid. The inadequate road network; the destruction of ancient woodland; the loss of agricultural land; the pressure on local services such as sewage disposal; and the cost-effectiveness of demolishing Blean primary school - nothing has changed.

I am incensed at the University's arrogant response to the deletion of Policy C12, and at its attitude towards local residents. The Acting Vice-Chancellor's claim in her letter that the site is "Immediately adjacent to the city, within walking distance of the city centre" is laughable. The recent announcement of a collaboration between the University of Kent and the University of Greenwich, referred to in her letter, is completely irrelevant to the current planning issue.

The current financial difficulties of the landowner (the University of Kent), caused by their own mismanagement, are not a valid reason for now permitting this land to be developed for housing. Nothing has changed in this regard, even if the University of Greenwich would like to monetise this landholding in return for its own investment in the University of Kent.

The deletion of Policy C12 should therefore be confirmed in the next stage of the Local Plan.

Thank you for reading this, and I hope that my comments can be taken into account.

Dr R E Benfield
[REDACTED]

Policy C12 - Land north of the University of Kent

I wish to object to the proposed zoning of a large area of land to the north of the University of Kent for housing, to be the site for development including 2000 new homes (Policy C12).

This land, a rural site, was considered for housing in the SHLAA of a previous Local Plan, and rejected as unsuitable on several criteria, notably the adverse effect on the countryside and historic environment. Nothing has occurred since then to justify changing that decision. The current financial difficulties of the landowner (the University of Kent), caused by their own mismanagement, are not a valid reason for now permitting this land to be developed for housing.

The site is good-quality agricultural land, and should not be lost to food production at a time of increasing importance for food affordability and security of supply. It forms a valuable 'green gap' between the settlements of Blean / Rough Common and Tyler Hill. It is an important area of open landscape, representing a 'green lung' to the north of Canterbury. The proposed housing development would therefore contravene the Local Plan Policy DS19 (Habitats, landscapes and sites of local importance) and Policy DS22 (Landscape character). It would also contravene the University's own Campus Framework Masterplan of 2019, which described the site as 'a considerable landscape asset in providing a green setting to the north of the University'. Local Plan Policy DS9 requires that proposals for the University estate should reflect principles set out within this Masterplan.

Road access to the site is completely inadequate for housing development, even with the construction of new access routes as proposed. The road between Blean and Tyler Hill, central to the site, is a narrow, country lane which follows a winding route. Tile Kiln Hill / Whitstable Road is a very busy main road which is currently congested at peak periods. The local road network simply could not cope with the additional traffic generated by 2000 new houses on this site, however 'cycle friendly' the development might be claimed.

Local services, notable sewage disposal, are also at their limit of capacity. As well as the widely publicised problems of sewage discharges at sea, and water pollution affecting the Stour river, Blean village itself has suffered problems with overflowing sewage. Local services could not possibly cope with a new development of 2000 houses without unaffordable investment by the local water / sewage company.

For these reasons I urge the rejection of the proposal to zone this area for housing.

Dr R E Benfield



