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From: Andrew Heap [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 October 2025 22:39
To: Consultations
Subject: Feedback on Policy N1 Merton Park

Categories: awaiting reply

--Email From External Account--

Objection to the Proposed Merton Park Development, South Canterbury

I wish to object to the proposed Merton Park development plan in South Canterbury. The level of uncertainty for local residents, the lack of consideration of major issues, and the potential implementation problems are deeply concerning.

Roads and Traffic

My first set of objections concerns the apparent lack of serious consideration given to the impact of adding approximately 2,000 additional cars to the local road network (and this is likely an underestimate, given the UK average of about 1.2 vehicles per household). Several issues arise from this:

Access to the site:

The plan proposes routing traffic through Hollow Lane, Nackington Road via Merton Lane, and Lime Kiln Road. I question whether the authors of the plan have actually visited the area to see these roads and their surrounding environment. All are extremely narrow, with little or no scope for widening. Hollow Lane leads into an existing estate with no room for expansion and narrows further as it approaches its junction with Wincheap (A28). Lime Kiln Lane is effectively a footpath running between garden boundaries and leading into a dense residential area of narrow roads with on-street parking. Merton Lane leading into Nackington Road is a small country lane scarcely any better for handling the increase in traffic.

An earlier draft of the plan included slip roads from the A2 to serve the estate, at the time the plan raised significant concerns even with this infrastructure. The removal of this access in the current proposal does not alleviate those concerns—it makes them considerably worse.

Pollution levels:

The junction of Hollow Lane and Wincheap (A28) is already the most polluted location in Canterbury. This proposal would significantly worsen the problem, with long queues of vehicles forced through narrow exit points. It should be noted that the Wincheap corridor is designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

Wincheap traffic congestion:

This part of Canterbury already suffers from severe congestion, all funnelled under the railway bridge. Directing thousands of additional vehicles into this area is naïve at best. The proposed gyratory system will not help, as traffic will still need to pass under the same bottleneck. In the opposite direction, congestion will worsen for those trying to join the A2 or continue along the A28.

Combined impacts with other developments:

The traffic analysis fails to consider the cumulative impact of this development together with the ongoing Thanington (Saxon Fields) project. Both large developments will feed into an area already struggling with congestion, and the plan offers no credible mitigation strategy.

Outdated traffic data:

It is understood that the proposal is based on data from 2018—now seven years out of date—and that this data is flawed according to independent experts. At a minimum, an updated and independently verified traffic analysis should be conducted using recognised methodology.

Significant Shortcomings in Infrastructure Planning

The plan gives the impression that a piece of land has simply been identified on a map and allocated a housing density figure, with little consideration of how the resulting community would be supported. A development of this scale should include a detailed plan for essential infrastructure. Instead, that is notably absent.

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- Access: As outlined
 - above, access to the site remains wholly inadequate.
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 - Sewage capacity: Canterbury’s sewage infrastructure is already at breaking point, as reported in the media. New housing is being built without any expansion of capacity, and the addition of 1,930 further homes would exacerbate this critical issue. The plan contains no clear explanation of how this will be addressed.
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 - Schooling: There is no firm commitment to the timely delivery of new schools to serve the expanded population. Previous developments in the area have repeatedly failed or delayed delivery of such essential services.
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 - Healthcare provision:
 - Similarly, the plan is non-committal regarding GP surgeries. Existing surgeries are already oversubscribed.
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 - Hospital capacity:
 - The previous plan included an upgrade to the local hospital, but this was removed when central government refused to allocate the necessary funding. With other estates already under construction, the hospital will be unable to meet future demand, particularly
 - in the absence of a local A&E department.
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Community Impact

The area is interlaced with ancient and well-used public footpaths that provide access to and enjoyment of this beautiful countryside. It would be a travesty to lose this access. At least one of these routes—the path alongside the field from Stuppington Lane to Lime Kiln Road—is documented as being of Roman origin.

Thanington Recreation Ground:

This site has been earmarked for a new park-and-ride facility. It is currently a valued public open space surrounded by ancient trees. Replacing it with football pitches and small patches of grass is not an acceptable “like-for-like” substitute. The proposed replacement area is farther away, would likely fall under private control, and would therefore limit community access (for example, requiring advance booking to use the pitches).

Loss of Wildlife and Green Space

Alongside traffic concerns, the environmental impact is one of the most serious issues.

This area is extensively used by the local community, offering significant physical and mental health benefits. Replacing it with narrow strips of manicured grass in a densely built estate is no adequate substitute. Once this landscape is gone, it cannot be replaced.

The site’s habitats are far from uniform farmland; they are diverse and ecologically rich. The existing orchard, in particular, supports a variety of species. There are several red-listed bird species known to frequent the area, as well as badgers, bats, birds of prey (amber-listed), and other protected species. A full ecological survey and impact assessment should have been undertaken long before this proposal reached its current stage—it appears this has not been done.

The uninterrupted views of Canterbury’s historic city centre and cathedral, visible from many points in the area, are also of cultural and historical importance. The proposed housing density would irreparably damage these views.

Deliverability and Accountability

Beyond the fundamental flaws in the proposal, there are serious questions about whether this development can even be delivered successfully. The plan appears ill-conceived and lacking in attention to both strategic and practical details. Large developments in Kent have a poor track record of being delivered in a satisfactory or timely manner.

Will there be any legally binding commitments requiring developers to deliver schools, healthcare facilities, and other infrastructure within set timeframes? Without such guarantees, the plan risks repeating the mistakes of previous projects.

Finally, the proposed housing density lies at the heart of many of these problems. A more modest development might be achievable and more in keeping with the existing community—but even on a smaller scale, the fundamental issues of infrastructure, access, and environmental loss would remain.

Conclusion

For all of the reasons outlined above—unresolved infrastructure challenges, traffic and pollution concerns, environmental harm, and the erosion of community spaces—I strongly object to the proposed Merton Park development. I urge the planning authority to reject this proposal in its current form and to demand a comprehensive, evidence-based revision that genuinely considers the needs of Canterbury’s residents and environment.