

Canterbury District Local Plan 2040

Regulation 19 Representation on Behalf of the

The Westbere Gazzete

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Policy R6 Bread and Cheese Field (SLAA 163)

The proposed allocation and development of Bread and Cheese Field should be rejected as it would result in the clear coalescence of the villages of Westbere and Hersden, contrary to long-established planning principles and policies intended to maintain the separate identity and setting of rural settlements.

The Bread and Cheese Field currently forms an important and recognisable area of open land separating the two villages. Development of this site would significantly erode this natural gap and would, in practical terms, merge the settlements into a single continuous built form.

It appears that, in order to facilitate development on this site, the developer proposed an amended settlement boundary for Westbere excluding the upper section of Bushy Hill Road. This revised boundary appears arbitrary, lacks transparency, and has the effect of artificially creating the impression of separation where none would meaningfully exist.

The proposed boundary revision attracted numerous objections from local residents. However, despite the strength and consistency of those concerns, Canterbury City Council chose to proceed without providing any robust or publicly evidenced justification for the change.

When challenged on the basis and methodology used to define the revised settlement boundary, the Council either refused or was unable to provide supporting evidence. Freedom of Information requests submitted to obtain clarification and supporting documentation were met with procedural refusals. Requests for internal review were subsequently rejected, and the matter is now the subject of an appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office.

In the absence of transparent evidence, robust assessment, or clear policy justification, the proposed settlement boundary changes and resulting site allocation cannot be considered sound, justified, or positively prepared under the requirements of the Regulation 19 process. The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate compliance with the fundamental planning objective of preventing settlement coalescence and protecting the distinct character and identity of existing communities.

We suggest that this proposal is unsound for the reasons detailed above and is potentially not legally compliant and possibly fraudulent, since the only evidence Canterbury council could provide to justify the settlement boundary was a suggestion from a planning consultant employed by Wates, the construction company proposing to develop the Site.

The attached document labelled Settlement Boundary will help as a picture paints a thousand words.