



Canterbury City Council
14 Rose Lane
Canterbury
CT1 2UR

Our ref: MB/AN/38211

18 May 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL DRAFT LOCAL PLAN 2042/43 (REGULATION 19)

REPRESENTATIONS IN RESPECT OF THE LAND NORTH OF COURT HILL, LITTLEBOURNE

Introduction

This representation has been prepared on behalf of H W Twyman in response to the Canterbury City Council Draft Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation, which runs until 18th May 2026. Canterbury City Council ('CCC') is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to set out a strategy for development across the district and has prepared the Draft Local Plan, which has led to the current Regulation 19 consultation.

In respect of the process to date, the Council started the process in July 2020, with an Issues consultation. Following this, an Options consultation took place between June and August 2021. Between October 2022 and January 2023, the first Regulation 18 draft Local Plan consultation took place; after this, a revised Regulation 18 consultation took place between March and June 2024, with a further focused consultation between September and October 2025. Now, the Council have published a full draft of the Local Plan, for which the consultation is open for comments and representation. The current schedule proposes a full submission for Examination in September 2026.

H W Twyman are pursuing a mixed-use allocation through the Local Plan process. The site is immediately available and has been included as a draft allocation for mixed-use development under Policy R10. On this basis, our client wishes to register support for its allocation.

This letter has been emailed to CCC directly. This letter is structured to give context to the proposed site, the proposals and the draft Local Plan itself, with subheadings provided to indicate where comments are made in respect of specific policies.

The Site

The site is located north west of Court Hill, Littlebourne and consists of two distinct land parcels, which are herein referred to as the 'developed' and 'undeveloped' parts of the site. The site area amounts to approximately 1.95 hectares. The site has been included as a draft allocation under Policy R10 (Land north of Court Hill) for a mixed use development. The boundary of the draft site allocation is shown below:



Figure 1.1: CCC Local Plan- Indicative Concept Masterplan

The developed area amounts to 0.45 hectares and consists of three former agricultural buildings, which are in part occupied by a café/farm shop, blacksmith, a small engineering firm and vehicle repair centre. There is an existing vehicular access to these buildings from Court Hill and the site is enclosed by residential development along Cherry Orchard to the southeast and dwellings that front onto Court Hill to the south west.

The undeveloped part of the site is in agricultural use, albeit is not cropped and left fallow, and has an area of approximately 1.5 hectares. It extends to the north west of the existing buildings and shares a boundary with the new Doctors Surgery and residential development along Court Hill to the south. There is a hedgerow that runs along the shared boundary with Court Hill, and the northern boundary of the site.

The land in the undeveloped area is shown by the high-level Agricultural Land Grading Map (Defra) to be of Grade 1 (highest value). However, the land comprises stony ground that has historically been used for growing blackcurrants as they are the only fruit that can cope with poorer quality ground, albeit the yield of the crop has continually been low. A variety of other crops have been tried; however, the yield of each has been poor therefore they were not viable to continue. As a result, the decision has been made to leave the land uncropped for food production as it currently constitutes an unproductive / negligible income for the farm.

Littlebourne is home to the 'Friends of Littlebourne Primary School', shops, restaurants/cafes and several local businesses. There are also good bus links to Canterbury and Sandwich from the High Street, with the Public Right of Way ('PROW') network providing excellent access to the countryside.

Planning Constraints

The Council's adopted Policies Map includes the developed area of the site within the settlement confines of Littlebourne. The undeveloped area sits directly adjacent to it. The site forms part of a KCC Minerals Safeguarding Area; however, is otherwise unaffected by the current adopted Local Plan by policy-specific allocations or designations.

In the draft Policies Map prepared for the purposes of the Local Plan Review, the site is shown to sit within the Rural Service Centre in its entirety (including the developed and undeveloped areas), in two Landscape Character Areas (Wickhambreaux Horticultural Belt and Central Mixed Farmlands).

The site is shown in the Environment Agency Flood Risk Map to be located in Flood Zone 1 (at the lowest risk of flooding). Land immediately to the east of Littlebourne is within Flood Zones 2 and 3. Surface water flooding is low, with susceptibility to surface water flooding in a small portion of the previously developed area.

There are no designated heritage assets within the proximity of the site whose setting would be adversely affected by the development of the site. The Littlebourne Conservation Area extends south east of the site and covers a significant area of the settlement (although excluding the site itself).

Planning History

An inspection of the Council's online records indicates that there has been one application on the site. Application reference CA/07/00461/LT was submitted to the Council in March 2007 and sought permission for the demolition of the existing buildings and the erection of a medical centre and eleven dwellings with associated parking and landscaping. The application was refused in July 2008.

Most notable recent applications that have since been submitted for land within the direct vicinity of the site include:

- CA/09/00640 – Land Adjacent to 1 Court Hill - Erection of new medical centre with associated access, parking and external works. Approved February 2010.
- CA/14/02489 - Land Adjacent to 1 Court Hill - Erection of a new medical centre (revisions to extant planning permission CA/09/00640/FUL) and erection of 9 houses as enabling development. Approved November 2015.

Notwithstanding the refusal of planning application ref. CA/07/00461/LT, there are other developments that have been approved in Littlebourne in line with the current adopted Local Development Plan that are worth noting. For example, in 2016 the Council granted outline permission for the erection of 87 dwellings at 'Land Off the Hill', Jubilee Road, Littlebourne (15/01711/OUT). The Reserved Matters were approved in March 2019 under application ref CA//18/02035. The decision has been noted to be significant as it alters the settlement geography of Littlebourne and reduces the pool of sites where meaningful development could feasibly be delivered within the existing settlement boundary. Additionally, in July 2025 an outline application under CA/23/00484 was allowed on appeal for the erection of 300 dwellings to the west of Littlebourne, on a site which is included as an allocation in the draft Local Plan (Policy R9).

Response to Draft Local Plan Policies

Policy R10 – Land north of Court Hill

The principle of the proposed allocation is firmly supported. Our client considers that the new Local Plan is broadly sound and in accordance with paragraph 36 of the NPPF.

The site remains available and deliverable and suitable for the proposed development. Parts of the site are previously developed and it remains well related to the existing settlement both in landform and settlement pattern terms, and also in terms of providing easy future access to local services. The site is largely unconstrained and free from any landscape or heritage designations which would constrain development and benefits from an existing and established access. The site when developed would relate well to the existing development immediately to the south and 'round-off' the settlement, making best use of currently underutilised land. The allocation requires a mixed use scheme, ensuring that the site continues to contribute towards local employment provision and will positively contribute towards the overall sustainability of Littlebourne, further securing its status as a Rural Service Centre in the Local Plan.

Whilst broad mapping includes the site within higher grade agricultural land, the land included within the allocation has not been actively farmed for some years. Previous attempts by the landowner have yielded poor results given the unfavourable stony condition of the land on this part of the wider holding and it has not proven viable to crop. Its allocation and development will not therefore have any material effect upon the wider holding or local agricultural productivity.

Whilst the principle of the allocation and Policy R10 are supported, there is one point of detail to which concerns are raised, which we would request the Inspector considers at the Examination stage. Whilst no objections are raised on points of soundness, we would nonetheless be happy to attend the relevant Hearing sessions to discuss further with the Inspector as required.

Allocation Boundary

It is requested that consideration be given to extending the red line boundary as currently proposed to the northwest, to accommodate space standards and landscape requirements for the 50 houses proposed.

With the current draft site area, 50 houses can be accommodated, but not comfortably, and not without potentially compromising amenity. Increasing the site area, will ensure that the design of any proposed development will be of a high quality and will better respond to the setting of the local area. The suggested additional site area is shown in blue, below:



Figure 1.3: Location Plan (Blue Line Indicative of Additional Land for Development)

Although it is recognised that the additional area would result in a loss of existing agricultural land; the parcel of land is similar to that of the site as existing and distinctively separate from the arable land to the north and east which is noted to be more productive and contributes a far higher value to the wider farm holding. The loss of a small area of poor quality agricultural land would therefore have no impact on the productivity on the farm. The landowners have further noted that the land comprises poor, stony ground on which very few crops can be grown and as a result, the land has not been farmed in the site's immediate history as it contributes negligible benefit to the farm in general. In this regard, the allocation of this site in comparison to other more productive land within the vicinity is logical as it will not result in the unnecessary loss of productive land, but will instead utilise underused land for development that will benefit the local area and district more generally.

This additional land remains well related to the settlement, being contiguous with existing development and would relate well to existing and established field patterns and boundaries. The site area as originally proposed and included in the draft Plan pre-dated the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain and it has become apparent that a development of c.50 units within the draft allocation boundary would require a density of development which could be at odds with the prevailing density and character of development on this edge of village setting. The proposed inclusion of additional land would not require or necessitate an increase in the proposed number of units, but would better secure development at the yield required to contribute towards the Plan's wider housing provision and better secure high quality, landscape-led development that the allocation seeks. This includes the appropriate provision of open space and landscape buffers which are required by the allocation policy and noting the enhanced BNG and Green Infrastructure requirements of Policy DS25 (also considered further below).

Biodiversity Net Gain

It is requested that the enhanced 20% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for major development proposed in Policy DS25 be reconsidered and that this be reduced to a reasonable level in line with the requirements of the Environment Act. Any requirement to provide more than 10% will undoubtedly have an impact on site yields given the hierarchy requirement to provide gains on site where possible. This is aptly illustrated by the R10

allocation and the concerns raised above in relation to site yield and site area. Whilst it is noted that the draft Policy seeks to include a degree of flexibility over the hierarchical approach for the additional 10% 'local net gain', it will almost certainly always prove more deliverable and viable to provide on site where possible and so will ultimately still apply pressure to site yield and/or development viability.

At present, the 20% is expressed in policy as an absolute requirement where major development "must" deliver enhanced gains and given this goes beyond the statutory requirement, it is recommended that the policy wording be reviewed to incorporate the potential flexibility in providing the additional local gain, subject to viability. Without the benefit of any site by site assessment at the allocation stage, it cannot be demonstrated with any confidence that this policy will not materially impact delivery of sites and therefore the Plan's achievement of the required housing numbers, BNG is inherently bespoke and its implications can vary significantly site by site depending on their own condition and so a blanket requirement for an enhanced provision with no discretionary element or qualification subject to viability raises significant concerns, notwithstanding the broader viability assessment work on which the Council have relied to date.

It is therefore requested that the Inspector reviews the current draft wording, with our recommendation being that draft Policy DS25 be amended to include the ability for the additional 10% local net gain to be subject to viability, as overall delivery of the housing required by the Plan takes precedence over a discretionary increase in BNG above the statutory requirement. This will still ensure that gains are maximised, but in a proportionate and deliverable manner and is particularly relevant in the context of the concerns raised above in respect of the proposed R10 allocation boundary and the consequential potential implications for delivery at the numbers required.

Conclusion

This representation has been made on behalf of H W Twyman in respect of Canterbury City Council's Draft Local Plan Regulation 19. The representation confirms that we support the direction of the Local Plan and welcome CCC's decision to allocate the site for mixed-use development. It is considered, however, that Policies R10 and DS25 could be amended to better secure delivery at the yield and quality that are sought.

H W Twyman are committed to working with CCC to ensure that the allocation within the submission version of the Local Plan is deliverable and represents the optimum development solution for the site.

I trust the above is sufficient, but please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Yours Sincerely,



Matthew Blythin
Director

