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To: Consultations
Subject: Policy SS3 and Policy C10 (Merton Park)

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Dear Sirs

Policy SS3 and Policy C10 (Merton Park)

I consider the Draft Canterbury District Local Plan Regulation 19, particularly the proposed 1,950-home development at Merton Park, to be both unsound and legally non-compliant due to significant shortcomings relating to transport infrastructure, brownfield prioritisation, and environmental protections under the Habitats Regulations.

A review of the Council's own supporting evidence reveals three major legal and technical concerns which, in my view, require the proposal to be reconsidered.

1. Transport and Infrastructure Concerns

(Failure of the "Effective" and "Duty to Cooperate" tests)

The Council has replaced the originally proposed relief road infrastructure with a predominantly "bus-led" transport strategy. However, the Council's own Draft Transport Strategy (Table 5.1) acknowledges that severe congestion is still expected at the A2/A28 Wincheap interchange and at Junction 7 of the M2.

I regularly need to wait for the traffic lights at the merge of Homersham and Gilbert Way to turn green three times during rush hour to be able to get onto Wincheap, what will this be like with the addition of 1950 house with no option but to use Wincheap. We are not talking about only that number of cars, each house will have an average of 1 to 2 cars.

Furthermore, there is currently no signed Statement of Common Ground with National Highways confirming agreement with the proposed transport arrangements and their impacts. In the absence of such agreement, the Local Plan fails to demonstrate effective strategic cooperation and therefore raises serious questions regarding legal compliance.

2. Failure to Prioritise Brownfield Development

(Failure of the “Justified” test)

National planning policy makes clear that previously developed (brownfield) land should be prioritised before greenfield land is allocated for development.

Despite this, the Council proposes a large-scale greenfield expansion at Merton Park, resulting in the loss of Canterbury’s historic rural setting, while overlooking substantial opportunities for sustainable regeneration elsewhere. Potential brownfield sites, including the Wincheap Retail Estate, underused city-centre car parks, and vacant student accommodation, could instead provide higher-density and environmentally sustainable housing solutions in more appropriate locations.

3. Environmental and Habitats Regulations Issues

(Failure of “Legal Compliance” and national policy requirements)

The Stodmarsh Nature Reserve is already experiencing serious ecological pressures linked to water pollution. The Council’s March 2026 Habitats Regulations Assessment (paragraph 5.5.22) expressly states that there remains uncertainty as to whether the necessary environmental mitigation measures for the proposed 1,950 homes can be successfully delivered.

Under established UK planning law, including the Waddenzee judgment, a plan cannot lawfully proceed where there is scientific uncertainty regarding adverse impacts on protected habitats. As such, the current proposal appears inconsistent with both the Habitats Regulations and national planning policy.

I wish to participate in the oral examination hearings regarding these matters.

Anne-Marie Reynard

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