

Consultation on Our Future District 2040

Consultation response from
Mrs Ann Davies



Submitted 29th September

Good things about the district

- Geographical location
- Landscape
- Mixture of rural and urban
- Culture and Universities

Things to Change

Amount of road traffic

Plans to build more roads and lack of focus on public transport and cycle/walking. Strategic deployment of resources- sports, shopping is antagonistic to transport strategies and town centre regeneration.

Road -centric planning of new development.

Climate Change

Issue 1. Heath and well-being.

Addressing the issue.

There was a measurable and significant dip in deaths and ill-health associated with air pollution during the early stages of lockdown. This combined with the urgency of checking climate change must put great emphasis on reducing vehicle emissions, not just within the Air Quality Control Zones but over the whole area. Plan new development around public transport routes. Reduce travelling distances to community facilities, keep them local and resist centralisation. Insist on more home composting – there is no justification for sending out polluting lorries to collect garden waste and then transporting the compost back again to homes.

Issue 2. Energy efficiency and energy capture in new homes (and other buildings)

Addressing the issue

We need to be more insistent that development does comply with tougher requirements on energy efficiency and energy capture and refuse permission for building that do not comply. We also need to more supportive of the retrofitting of energy saving and generation measures in existing buildings including listed buildings. Insist on the upgrading of public transport vehicles to modern less polluting engine design.

Issue 3. The Local Plan should pay more attention to the whole picture when it comes to carbon fixation.

Addressing the issue.

Planting a few trees is pathetic. There should be greater acknowledgement that grassland, sports pitches, agricultural land and water bodies are also vitally important for carbon fixation and need to be protected, not just in total area but in their biological health – especially water bodies. Resist the total paving over of front gardens.

Issue 4 The amount of waste we generate and its disposal

Addressing the issue.

Generally, reduce waste and packaging especially plastics at source – recycling is not the long-term answer and is a polluting process. We need a waste to power plant in the district so that we are not transporting waste over such a long distance. This proposal needs revisiting.

Housing and New Communities

Issue 1 Our approach to sustainability is not sufficiently encompassing.

Addressing the issue.

We have focussed on low carbon homes and flood prevention neither of which has been sufficiently followed through. Much more attention needs to be given to the long-term social, cultural and environmental health of communities. Particularly we need to look much more carefully at:

- the long-term cost/benefit balance of community provision including green open spaces.
- The cost/benefit equality throughout communities, especially getting rid of service charges for public spaces where a narrow section of the community foots the bill for spaces available to the whole community. This is contra to the very principle of providing new affordable homes.
- A stronger emphasis on the multifunctionality and flexibility of community buildings and public spaces with a view to their future long-term financial sustainability and ability to respond to changing circumstances.
- Putting community facilities and green spaces at the heart of new development, well connected to all residences and other centres via green walkable routes. Insisting that green spaces are not relegated to peripheral and left over, undevelopable areas.

Issue 2 matching housing supply to needs

Addressing the Issue

Our needs will become a little clearer after the 2021 census but going on existing projections of future household the main need is for more homes to accommodate independent elderly people, and more accommodation for single people and young married couples. Why are we allowing development to continue to be profit –based rather than needs-based?

We need to be resisting the government’s proposals to temporarily increase the affordable homes threshold to 50 dwellings.

Homelessness cannot be solved by providing affordable housing, it needs special attention as the majority of homeless people, for different reasons, cannot secure or

sustain either a mortgage or a tenancy. The affordable homes will not therefore be available to them and good alternatives must be a priority.

We also need provision for policies on the tenure of new housing to be flexible in order to respond to needs identifiable from the 2021 census.

Issue 3.

Addressing the Issue

Accessibility to existing public transport routes, especially rail should be a major determinant of the spatial planning of areas for new homes. This is currently not the case.

Issue 4. The calculation of open space requirements.

Addressing the Issue

Calculations are currently based on hectares per 1,000 population. Developers try to play down the occupation level in new housing in order to reduce their obligations. In one recent application for land in Broad Oak a measurement of the claimed occupation rate against the number of bedrooms showed that, at this occupation rate, half the bedrooms would be unoccupied. Either we are building homes that will be only half occupied or the occupancy figures used for calculating open space is too low. Why aren't we using the number of bedrooms as the basis for open space calculations? This would align needs with the levels of provision much better.

Issue 5. Meeting the needs of new communities and off-site developer contributions

Addressing the issue

Developers are supposed to provide for the needs created by new development. Why are they not being required to so and where on-site provision is not made why are off-site contributions not being used to provide community facilities nearby within walking distance of the new development? (I refer to proposed major development in Sturry)
The pocketing of developer contributions by the LPA for its own projects remote from the development and the point of need has to stop!!

Local Economy and Employment

Issue 1 Too narrow an economic base.

Addressing the issue

We have too many eggs in too few baskets, and we need a broader economic base. Why aren't we working with KCC to look at feasibility of further mineral extraction – the long-term aftermath of this is a greater diversity of wildlife habitats and landscapes. It would provide local employment and cut down on imports and long-distance transportation. We need to link this and other prime producing industries to new rail freight services and get past the NIMBY. As we are putting up so many buildings what about reviving some of the local brick making and cutting out some of the transport-based pollution? We are always going on about sustainability and buildings reflecting local character.

Issue 2 Blaming the planning system

Addressing the issue

One of the main threats to employment is that cheap imports are pricing home producers out of the market The lack of production-based industry in this country is beyond the remit

of the planning system and we really shouldn't be looking to the construction industry to dig us out of this hole, it is not sufficiently long-term and is too damaging to the environment and flexibility of future land-use.

Issue 3 Greater reliance on home working.

Addressing the issue

Many people are having to work from home without enough room for a dedicated work space. This is bad for both productivity and for home life. One small help might be for people with unused rooms in their house to let it as low-cost office space for those who need to work from home but don't have enough room at home for a dedicated work-place. No business rates should be attached and no planning permission for change of use required.

Movement and Transportation

Issue 1 The wrong approach

Addressing the issue

Transportation is fundamentally about moving people and goods it is not about moving vehicles or building evermore expensive and damaging roads. We must move on towards an approach that looks at avoiding the need for such high mobility and the best future options for providing it where it is essential. We must take the production of transport strategies out of the hands of Highways Authorities and compel rail providers and operators to contribute to sustainable transport plans.

Issue 2 Congestion

Addressing the issue

Look at introducing congestion charges.

Peak-time congestion around Canterbury begins a long way from the city, for instance, at Milton Bridge to the west. Getting to our park and ride sites, and out again, at these times inevitably increases congestion around the city. Buses are the only transport option from the park and ride site to the city centre, direct cycling routes involve going along busy main roads. If park and ride facilities are to be of any help in the future they need to intercept traffic much further away from the city and offer more variety of transport from here. Place them beside rail stations – new rail halts if necessary, and (new) direct user-friendly cycle routes.

Issue 3 Poor cycling and walking provision

Addressing the issue

Cycling and walking are still the Cinderellas of transport planning and cycle and walking routes are still all too often a second-rate experience with far too much wishful thinking over what is acceptable (and what will make a difference to travelling habits) with regard to convenience, travelling environment and safety.

Issue 4. Minimising future pollution from new development

Addressing the issue

We need developments that genuinely minimise pollution instead of taking money for mitigation, this is effectively just a license to increase pollution.

Town centres and local facilities.

Issue 1 Out of town shopping

Addressing the issue

Out of town shopping centres increase car usage and land-take and drain commerce and life out of town and village centres. This trend needs to be reversed and a case made for conversion of these sites to housing. This will bring the double benefit of supporting town centres and saving some greenfield areas from development. As these places are dedicated entirely to parting people from their money it might also help to reduce the amount of debt incurred. It would be very good to see the employment provided by these centres moved back into towns and into occupations other than retail which is essentially non-productive. The same thing goes for those entertainment and cultural facilities which have low land requirements – cinemas, theatres etc.

Issue 2 Accessibility of town centres.

Addressing the issue

Better public transport has to be the answer as punitive anti-car measures on their own will simply be a deterrent. Our existing park and ride facilities (Wincheap, Sturry Road and New Dover Road) are too close to Canterbury to avoid congestion on the approaches to the city and new park and ride centres preferably served by railway stations as well as bus need to be built several miles away from the town. See also the comments on Movement and transportation.

Better off-road access by cycle and walking also needed see comments on Movement and transportation

Issue 3 The rise of internet shopping

Addressing the issue

This continues to take in increasing share of the retail market. The increased dependency on internet shopping brought about by the COVID19 lockdown has brought many new customers and is likely to permanently change shopping habits. Town centres don't have much defence against this unless they can provide a shopping experience that has over-riding social and environmental attractions. For this we need town centres that look and feel like sociable welcoming places not like soulless, bog-standard shopping malls – **not** another Whitefriars please.

Issue 4. The night-time economy.

Addressing the issue

This will be hindered by over-provision of office space or by too much conversion of commercial space to housing. It will be helped by development of town centre culture and entertainment and by safer streets. Need to work with the police and pub owners to curb alcohol related late-night antisocial behaviour.

Issue 5. Other existing deterrents to use of the town centres .

Addressing the issue

The number of people sleeping rough and begging is a deterrent to practically every other town centre dweller and visitor. Options for people needing accommodation and other aid need to be made more flexible and more acceptable to those that need it combined with more enforcement of anti-begging laws. This is not about affordable housing – see comments on Housing and new communities.

Also there is the amount of litter and mess around our town centre. Not very directly a planning issue but needs to be considered from all angles. I know the city council has

recently been stepping up anti-littering action but this needs to be extended so that there is more focus on problem areas, times and activities. Business that generate a lot of litter should have to pay to help with its clearance.

Historic and natural environment

1. Issue 1. Direct loss of habitats and biodiversity

Addressing the issue.

There needs to be much more acknowledgement of the contribution to biological health played by all types of land over large areas and much less contentment with confining concerns over biodiversity to discreet, designated sites. Of especial concern is the loss of permanent grassland of all types.

Issue 2. The direct impact of development on the viability of retained habitats

Addressing the issue.

The interdependence of adjacent habitats has far too often been ignored especially between woodland and grassland and other agricultural land where loss of open land reduces feeding and foraging opportunities for wildlife. Also the introduction of lighting, noise, increased disturbance, physical damage associated with higher levels of recreational use and predation by domestic cats. There are planning and design methods of protecting habitats against all these which are currently being ignored - to the immense shame of our planners. This needs urgent review and a firm commitment to improving this situation

2. Issue 2. The wider-reaching impact of development on natural systems. Especially the Stour valley water catchment area.

Addressing the issue

We need to prevent new development that increases the level of pollutants collected by the Stour which eventually impact upon the Stodmarsh SSSI.

We need to pay more attention to the long-term impact and effectiveness of flood attenuation. The SUDS schemes proposed for most developments are not satisfactory. They severely impact up the amenity space within development and should not be allowed to be counted as part of the developer's obligation to provide open green space unless they are genuinely useable by people and accessible to people with impaired mobility. It's time to stop developers getting away with filling public open space with steep holes in the ground. The long-term effectiveness of these areas is not proven and there is too much risk of poor maintenance reducing their volume and effectiveness. Much more use of swales and better consolidation of other types of above ground attenuation measures.

3. Issue 3. The future level of water extraction.

Addressing the issue.

Water is a limited resource, we do not know how climate change will affect it but the indications are that rain is becoming more erratic with more tendency towards floods alternating with drought. Extraction of more ground water with lower the water table with the loss of springs and natural wet areas. Winter water levels in the Stour have been very low at times and the opportunities to pump water in to proposed Broad Oak reservoir are reducing. Water efficiency measures have limited effect and demand needs to be taken into account when planning new housing targets.