

Reference: Canterbury City Council Local Plan

18 July 2021

Sent by Email to planning@canterbury.gov.uk

We wish to object in the strongest of terms against the council including in the new Local Plan, land off The Hill in the village of Littlebourne. The land in question is currently prime agricultural farmland, and should this land become developed for hundreds of homes it would be an absolute travesty.

There are many questions that require answering before this development should even be considered.

Why do we need to build thousands more homes than the Government has mandated? The answer of course being that our misguided council has yet again failed to balance the books, and is scrambling around trying to find ways of funding the eastern bypass due to their wasting of public funds on white elephant investments such as the millions of pounds squandered on the purchase of Whitefriars, at a time when it was obvious to nearly all, but our council officials it seems, that retail was not a sector to invest in, let alone squander money that would be better spent elsewhere. Development of prime sites has time and time again been wrongly allocated to student accommodation blocks that have failed to attract the students who prefer to live in family housing stock that has turned whole estates into student ghettos and fueled house prices to rise out of reach of first time buyers, families etc. If the issue of HMO's that do not bring in any council tax revenue was addressed and homes were brought back into the City housing stock, we doubt there would even be a need to build so many thousands more houses at all. Student numbers are in decline, and as the University has been granted planning permission to build even more on campus accommodation it is not necessary for the Council to take such a narrow minded view about accommodating and prioritising the transient student population of Canterbury as has happened in the past. It's time to put the permanent residents of Canterbury, who pay Council Tax first!

In the local paper last week it was reported that Howletts Wild Animal Park is to relocate the entire elephant herd to Kenya. Damien Aspinall has previously said how he supports the idea of zoos being phased out within 30 years. The elephant enclosure alone apparently covers 8 acres of land, and the whole park is a massive expanse of land that borders the land off The Hill in Littlebourne. Why even consider development of the farmland when it's an almost certainty that the Howlett's site, which is considerably larger, will come up for development in the future? Surely if any development is to happen in the Littlebourne area at all it is this brown field site that should be the preferred option?

Our objections to further development in the village of Littlebourne, or elsewhere in our City for that matter, are also because the thousands of homes planned will not actually alleviate the housing needs of our residents. We need more social housing, affordable homes – truly affordable homes and not just a small percentage as dictated to greedy developers in order to push these land grabbing developments through, alongside the bribes of new hospitals, schools, doctors surgeries and the like. Planning permission is granted and we end up with executive/luxury, over priced new build homes with multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, and hardly an energy efficient consideration in sight.

So, let's assume that large scale development of our villages is granted without any consideration for what is actually needed, as has happened previously. The homes that are to be built, will they be built with electric car charging ports, solar panels, heat pumps, triple glazing, insulation, electricity only (no gas energy supply), sustainable materials etc? All of these one would assume should happen if the Council is truly committed to reaching its carbon neutral status, however how likely is it that even one truly carbon neutral home would actually be built? The answer is probably no carbon neutral homes would be built as there is nowhere near enough profit for the greedy, land grabbing developers in adopting that environmentally friendly model!

The other huge, and hardly ever considered, issues are that these developments are built without ensuring we have the infrastructure to cope. Littlebourne has suffered frequent power failures in recent months. We have frequent problems with slow broadband speeds and outages. We have endured burst pipes, fluctuating water pressures, and flooding. The sewerage and drainage systems cannot cope at the moment. If land off The Hill is developed we will be subjected to even more flooding and drainage issues. This land has huge run off of rainwater, if the land that soaks up a lot of the water currently is concreted over the water will simply flood the valley and the homes in our village. Canterbury and surrounding areas is in urgent need of a new reservoir. How can we consider increasing demand without addressing these issues? The traffic and congestion in the City, and surrounding towns and villages is already an issue and huge development will exacerbate the problems, and again how is increasing the traffic working towards the Council's bid for carbon neutral status?

New build developments attract home buyers from London and further afield. They have the money to spend and push our house prices up to extortionate values. People have realised that if they can work from home they can live anywhere, so they are moving here in their droves, making demands on our local services, hospitals, GP surgeries, schools etc. We simply cannot continue to increase our local population without considering improving our infrastructure.

Please Canterbury City Council wake up, take notice and get it right this time. Once our precious green space is gone, it is gone forever!

Having tried and failed to navigate our way through your dreadful online system, we are emailing this to you as per your announcements on Facebook.

Our final comment on the proposed Local Plan is that we OBJECT most strongly for the Council to even consider building 8,000 more homes than the government is telling them to build. We do not even feel that it is necessary to build the 9,000 homes you are being told to build. Put right your mistakes from the past. Redevelop brown field sites as affordable and social housing. Get HMO's reverted back into the family housing stock – maybe the council could invest in buying back homes from private landlords who are already struggling to fill a glut of rentals with students and rent them out as social housing instead? These would be far better investments than wasting public funds on ill thought out investments that do not actually resolve any of the issues that actually matter. Keep our villages as villages, leave the green belt buffers between Canterbury, the villages and the seaside towns and where development has to take place, ensure it is actually the type of development that will solve the housing crises, be truly affordable to LOCAL residents and prevent investors from buying second, third or however many homes to rent out privately at exorbitant prices as seems to happen now with every new housing development that is built. Above all, and before any further development happens, the primary aim must be investment and improvement of infrastructure, consideration of the environmental impact, and how the development will affect our schools, healthcare and public services must be considered above all else!

Teresa & John Shiel

