

Oaten Hill And South Canterbury Association.

Mountfield Park/ South Canterbury Urban Extension

Objection to Planning Application 16/00600 21 January 2022

We object to the current set of Addenda lodged on 8 December as revisions to the quashed permission of 2019, for reconsideration.

Some information from CCC suggests that only the grounds cited in the Judicial Review opinion of 2021 need addressing – the Hotel use of the Local Plan designated possible Hospital site, the lack of a Viability Study supporting the reduced Affordable Housing offer, and (despite protests from CCC) the non-compliance with the Environment Agency refusal to accept Package Treatment Plants for waste water.

The new addenda do cover these points, but they also submit a side variety of other environmental statements covering traffic, water, ecology, housing, Section 106 agreements, and other topics, presenting in our opinion a comprehensive set of new information for the whole scheme, and all aspects must therefore be re-examined.

While we accept that the site is designated in the current Local Plan as site for 4000 dwellings plus commercial uses, we believe that the impacts of the scheme are misunderstood and misrepresented in the submissions, and the supporting statements ignore, or attempt to devalue the changes in local and national planning policy, and new developments in economic and environmental frameworks.

Traffic:

An independent Railton Transport Consultants have identified core weaknesses in the traffic assessment. The development trip rate is significantly too low because it is modelled on the wrong baseline (Barton Outer Ward), the modal shift is unrealistic, and it contains numerical and methodological errors. One further basis of the applicant's Transport Assessment – the considerable degree of autonomy of the development - is incorrect, as in fact the application Planning Statement makes clear:

“While the Proposed Development incorporates some small scale retail, commercial and leisure uses, it would rely principally on the city centre for its higher order services, shops and the evening economy. Consequently, clear links from the Site to the central area of the city are required and would be secured as part of the Proposed Development.”

The point is that apart from use of cars there is no real mitigation that provides such links.

The Railton Report lays out how the mitigation and modal shift strategies proposed by the developer are not feasible. The Transport Statement addendum does confirm there is to be a Monitor and Manage Framework (MMF) as required as an ancillary Condition in the 2016 Permission, but asserts that this will show that the traffic flows will be so low that proposed mitigation measures would exceed their target, and can be delayed or reduced (eg new A2 junction). In fact, to conform to the EU norm of prudential planning for reasonable worst case scenarios, the developer should have a plan for proposed mitigation measures failing to perform, and have additional measures planned that could be introduced to compensate.

Real-world mitigation planning would in essence be the same as what we recommend should be provided as an enhanced public transport offering in in any case, to bring the development up to the broad level of a car-free settlement :

It would be possible for the developer to radically increase the take-up of of non-car travel modes, by subsidising or providing a full complement of public transport services to the level that would qualify the development as a car-free development

- permanent subsidy to bus service links to Canterbury centre
- rail link to Canterbury East via Bekesbourne Station / new station
- upgraded fast bus link(s) not reliant on existing congested road layout
- in-estate bus shuttle service feeding public transport, in-estate transport hub(s)
- safe and fully connected e-cycle lanes to city centre with cycle priority
- fully developed safe and connected walking routes

Instead in essence, we believe the development ignores totally the direction of NPPF 2021

73. The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes). Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way. In doing so, they should: .

Section 106 Settlement

The last Viability Study published for the development in 2015 showed a 19% profit on a £1B market out-turn value. The current market conditions have clearly improved to the point where the developer is willing to provide the affordable housing proportion for Phase 1A within the phase, rather than at a later date in other phases.

We urge CCC to use its negotiating power to require a full updated Study to be published, revealing the increased market value of the housing, and base its S106 negotiations on this figure, which should allow the greater levels of subsidy to be paid into mitigation schemes for

- transport
- affordable housing
- environmental habitat on site enhancement
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Affordable Housing

The developer has corrected their earlier failure to provide affordable housing from the earliest phase onwards, which is a welcome improvement, and we acknowledge that the whole development conforms to the current Local Plan requirement for 30% affordable housing.

However in view of the housing need register figures for Canterbury – over 2000 and rising, and the minimal impact that the government standard of 20 -30% reductions for mortgage or rent payments will have in a market where market mortgage prices are 1000% of the local median wage, and rent levels are 200% – 300%, we urge CCC to introduce a level of support that exceeds the Local Plan policy, and to devise local housing subsidy schemes funded by the development. If this is not done, the Councils own figures (see the Housing Needs Assessment for the 2040 Local Plan Review) show that it will take 20 years to create enough affordable housing to satisfy the current waiting list, disregarding new additions.

Sustainability

Given Canterbury City Council’s commitment to the Climate Crisis and reducing carbon emissions the goal should be to reduce carbon emissions to zero. The developers state that they will “deliver an exemplary net zero development” but this is not borne out by the actual proposals. The stated aim, for the buildings to be ‘zero carbon ready’, rather than built as zero carbon is a significant drawback to the scheme. In addition claims about water use, wastewater disposal etc do not meet best environmental standards or emerging guidance on planning and development to achieve sustainable development.

Water

The inclusion of a Waste Water Treatment Works in the new scheme has been accepted by EA on face value, but it calls for a detailed design to be submitted and approved before construction commences. The developer’s statement merely says it will to the satisfaction of the EA . The detail of the design is clearly crucial, and must be published to all when completed, but we question whether the small area allowed for the plant – 0.4Ha – is sufficient. It must service 4,000 homes plus 75000

commercial uses. The much larger Vauxhall Rd treatment plant services approximately 20,000 houses.

Carbon

The developer has specified only the minimum level of carbon reduction – to the level of the very soft Future Homes Standard promoted by the government – aiming at near-zero carbon performance by 2050. This is not good enough – evidence for the need for more urgent action is mounting.

The development should be designed to avoid fossil fuels from day 1, by not installing a gas supply, and this should be imposed by the council as another planning condition. This will lead to no gas boilers being installed (which is in any case the government's aim from 2025), Instead buildings of all types should involve the installation of sustainable energy technology such as heat pumps, solar thermal panels (for water heating) and solar PV panels (generating electricity). Commercial premises should similar be zero carbon and zero emissions and have heat pumps, solar thermal panels (for water heating) and solar pv panels (generating electricity).

The revised sustainability statement states that “*The scale of potential renewable energy generation could potentially mean South Canterbury is a net exporter of renewable energy during periods of low demand and high generation*”. Yet no details of how energy production will be achieved is provided.

It is also noted with concern that the Sustainability Strategy Addendum part 2 doubts that local generation of power will be needed because electricity will be decarbonised.

Such a provision would accord with the 2021 NPPF guidance, which should be implemented.

155. To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:

a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);

b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and

c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply

Additionally, we urge the carbon reduction measures include not only what are called fabric measures (designing envelopes to higher insulation standards) but also embodied energy – the energy used to extract, fabricate and transport the materials to site, which should be minimised, and verified by adopting one of accredited carbon reduction schemes.

Broadly - all carbon reduction measures must be monitored and managed by accredited third party schemes – eg Passiv Haus.

Air quality:

Given the traffic assessment under-quantifies the number of car trips no confidence can be had in the statement that no re-assessment of air quality impacts are required (Para 4.46 in the Planning Statement).

Any additional traffic along New Dover Road will further place an upward pressure on air quality in New Dover Road. St Georges Place and as far as Canterbury College already experiences levels of NO2 and potentially PM2.5 above current regulatory limits. Thus the development should be contributing to reductions in pollution at these points. No allowance has also been mad for recent evidence on the health effects of NO2 and PM2.5 which has led to the World Health Organisation significantly lowering its upper limits for these pollutants.

The English Government's air quality strategy as set out in the 2019 Air Quality Strategy Plan sets an ambition to meet WHO limits for pollutants. Therefore any assessment relying on measuring future

emissions against current AQ limits is fundamentally flawed. New WHO limits mean that the development site already experiences levels of NO₂ higher than that deemed safe for human health.

A radical solution would be to make the development zero carbon and zero emissions. Probably unrealistic in practice, but more stress needs to be placed on limiting vehicle and building emissions to the fullest possible extent.

Bio Diversity

Recent reports confirm that as for temperature rise, damage to ecosystems is now accelerating fast and is producing measurable effects on our way of life – eg pollinator destruction.

We do not think providing habitat mitigation in areas away from the site and outside of Canterbury is acceptable. Who will monitor the delivery of this and what benefit will it be to local people? 69 hectares of the current 233 hectares will be green. Of the built environment only some 20% will be non hard landscape. Consequently **the current 220+ hectares of open landscape will be reduced by nearly 50%. The loss of such land which allows water retention, creates habitat etc is significant and cannot be mitigated by creating up to 30 hectares of habitat elsewhere.**

There should also be a principle of water neutrality as this is an area of water supply stress and wastewater problems. Essentially this means the development being designed to include grey water recycling, water efficient fixings, soak aways, porous paving etc. and undertake water offsetting – funding water efficiency savings in the wider Canterbury housing stock, commercial and public services buildings.

The developer asserts in a Predicted Ecological Gain report that there will be a 15% net gain in ecological assets of all kinds, comparing the proposals with the existing farmland.

This is not difficult to believe as the habitat areas on the existing land has been stripped to a bare minimum. 15% of current provision is virtually undetectable.

The new estate should incorporate significantly larger interconnected habitat zones that permeate the whole scheme, well linked to the bordering countryside, some linear eg broad hedges, some as larger areas.

A mixed diet of habitats is obviously required – meadows, wetlands etc but structural elements are vital:

- Internal linear woodland borders to both sides of the Pilgrims Way path.
- Edge buffer zones should be substantially increased in depth and include linear woodland, to all edges adjoining existing development or open country, and internally bordering the motorway.

World Heritage Site

The developers Planning Statement notes the various heritage assets near the site, and the existence of the World Heritage Site – the Cathedral and St Martin's complex.

It discusses the various sites and the WHS, and refers at some length to the NPPF, picking up as favourable references for the development the various policies that introduce formulae for measuring harm done to assets, and measuring these against benefits which the NPPF states are to be allowed to offset the harms.

However, the Statement deliberately edits out the most important NPPF policy

199. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

The consequence of formula is that since the WHS asset is acknowledged to be irreplaceable and this means 199 has to be balanced against 200:

200. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional⁶⁸.

Thus we assert that the intervisibility issues of the development are critical:

- the visibility of the northeast edge of the development on the skyline visible from the cathedral area – destroying the sense that the city rests in a rural bowl whose natural edges are tangible
- the interruption of the classic city approach view of the Cathedral from New Dover Road, by the 15m high buildings in the community centre area of Phase 1A.

These cause irreversible and measurable harm, and must be resisted. The Height Parameter plan must be revised to reduce development heights bordering New Dover Road, and the housing on the northeast edge set back sufficiently to overcome these problems.

Rural Character, Open Spaces

In passing, the Planning Statement recognises that the rural character of Mount Farm etc will be lost and reviews the particular impact of street lighting with a view to minimising it to the degree safely possible, but comes to no useful conclusions. To reinforce their woolly thinking we note that the NPPF states in policy 185 that developments should

- c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

In other respects, notably the habitat enhancements referred to above, we urge the council to draw back from supporting the current design based on compliance with a notional Garden City Design code, aiming at adding minimal small scale streetscape enhancements to a basically standard suburban housing estate design, and require the developer to start from an alternative objective - of emulating true village streetscape design with a strongly rural character. Recreational, leisure and ecologically rich spaces are needed for a development playing its part in the increased sustainability of the city.
