

A Green Plan for Canterbury District Council

- ▶ Canterbury District Green Party
response to the proposed CCC Plan

An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood, showing a grid of streets, numerous houses, and a winding river or canal. The image is dark and serves as a background for the text.

The new Plan is the same as the old one: developer driven not people-focussed

- We have reviewed the proposed plan and find it wanting
- It is essentially the same plan as the last Conservative Plan
 - It remains a developer-driven charter.
 - It builds even more homes than the last awful plan.
 - It is substantially uncosted – nearly 70% of all projects in the infrastructure budget have no budget and there is nowhere near enough developer funding to pay for the huge wishlist.
 - It still focuses on greenfield sites and massive housing projects for well-to-do buyers.
 - It overbuilds enormously, adding 60,000 to population as opposed to 10,000 in the Census.
 - It ignores the needs of the elderly, renters and the disadvantaged.
 - It ignores the effect of housing on sewage, both in the Stour Valley and on the North Coast.
 - Hoping for more buses, it produces more cars.

Sustainability of the Proposed Plan

It is not a green plan.....



It is not really a green or a sustainable plan. The entire Stour Valley Plan is based on fixing contamination but is entirely uncostered and unfunded. It is silent on the North Coast sewage problem.



It is focused on out-of-town, greenbelt developments of large houses that overuse resources and promote road traffic. These will hugely add to sewage production without any commitment on processing.



The bus-led concept is a misnomer – owners of large >£350,000 houses in out-of-town estates are unlikely to use buses – and without control of bus routes it is just a hope.



It does not have a real plan for sewage production or a commitment to challenge the Government if the water companies do not comply.



It does, to its credit, commit to higher efficiency standards and self-generation in its housing standards.



It has no integral green energy infrastructure plan, scant commitment to building renewable energy for council use. Not building around self-generation is scandalous.

Principles of our Plan



Sustainability at the heart of what we plan



No expansion of housing in a way that adds to emissions, sewage or water extraction



No plans as if the world will expand forever – everything will be based on a strategic plan that takes account of change of climate, extreme weather events, sustainable resource use and care for scarce resources



Highest of standards on construction, self-generation of energy, and energy efficiency



Compliance checking and validation of developers' commitments



All built around sustainable transport, short journeys by building close to where people work and shop

Our key pillars

- We will change the housing mix only to our own need.
- Local needs will drive housing, not national party diktat.
- We will prioritise demonstrated need for our elderly.
- We will prioritise demonstrated need for rental properties.
- We will focus on demonstrated need for affordable homes.
- We will adjust the focus to brownfield sites, not greenfield.
- We will prioritise the environment, in sewage, water provision, energy use, sustainable transport and genuine biodiversity (and police it).
- We will promote only the infrastructure needed to meet population growth and ensure it is distributed throughout the District.





What would we do ? Housing Mix

- The housing mix is a Council choice, not a statutory measure.
- Population growth through 2040 is less than **10,000** people. (ONS 2018)
- Household growth is **8,281** households₁ – so just over one person per new home required – we are getting older and families are smaller.
- Yet the housing mix builds **22,400** houses, 70% of which are 3+ bedrooms.
- That adds **30%** to the population vs **5%** as per Census – up to **6 x** population growth – we are building houses for people from outside Canterbury.
- **We would adjust the housing mix to be legally compliant but build only the type of homes needed by our own community – over 70% 1-2 bed homes in higher density developments.**

Higher density, smaller homes on brownfield sites: not developer homes on our countryside



The proposed Plan builds the homes wanted by developers – large resource-greedy homes built only at the pace to deliver them the profits they need without lowering the market price.



The District needs **8,281** homes in the period. Government rules require **22,000**. Where feasible, we will challenge that.



The homes we will promote will however be inside our existing communities, dominated by flats and smaller properties.



The well-off can meet their own need – we view the Council's job as meeting demonstrated local needs and protecting our environment.

Brownfield, not Greenfield

- About **82%** of the proposed Plan's developments are on greenfield, out-of-town sites.
- They parasitise our towns and villages with large, resource-hungry homes.
- They are built for cars. No-one buying the houses will use buses so the proposal will hugely add to traffic and emissions. You can't build a bus-led policy with a focus on developer-led houses.
- **We will focus on denser, higher-occupancy buildings within our existing communities, where people can walk or ride to where they want to go.**

▶ We will meet the needs of the elderly

The Census says that by 2040 one-person households will have increased by 33% to 30% of all households.

More than 42% of our population will be over 65 by then. Most of the growth in households is in single households of older people.

The proposed Plan says we need 605 age-exclusive units – it delivers 0. It says we need 1,818 sheltered units – it delivers 205. It says we need 1,208 care-home beds – it delivers 382.

It plans to fail the housing needs of the elderly. On all the critical targets, it accepts failure to hit them.

We have many elderly people in large houses who can release the equity in their properties, recycle homes to younger families and are ready to move to affordable, quality facilities with on-site care near their families.

We will prioritise this area, promoting in-town facilities with quality developers and social housing groups. We will regulate well and ensure responsible, affordable developers are given priority.



We will prioritise rentals to meet demonstrated need.

- The average Canterbury house costs £360,000 (vs £200,00 for the national average).
- **34%** of our households rent their properties.
- **44%** of the households formed between 2011 and 2021 were for renters – higher than the number of buyers – yet the Plan focuses almost exclusively on buyers.
- The proposed Plan states that it does not have a **single** developer willing to build rental homes – so the Plan provides zero homes for the largest sector of demand.
- **We will put a stop to that and seek to only permit houses for sale on large developments (windfall in-fill developers are welcome) and focus on attracting builders of higher-density rental properties. If there are not enough, we will commit to return to building our own social housing.**

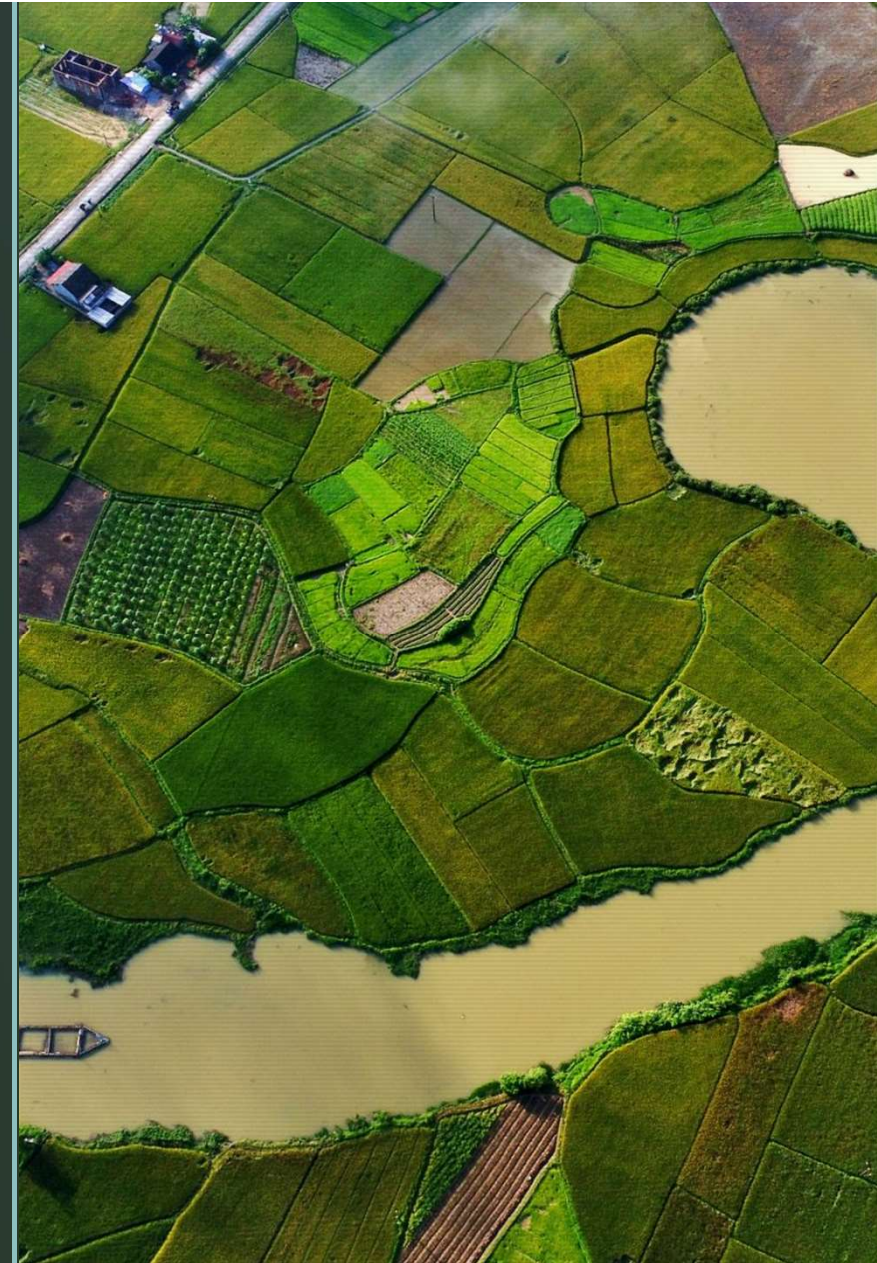
We will not outsource social-needs housing to private developers.

- The Housing Needs Assessment says we need to build 464 affordable homes a year – that is **40%** of all homes to be built.
- Only **358** affordable homes have been built in our area since 2020.
- The Plan proposes to continue outsourcing affordable-home delivery to private developers – setting aside a few homes in large private estates to buy the right to build the rest.
- The proposed Plan again plans to fail to meet need. It leaves a gap of **3,264** or **34%** of need. It is also silent on how the social housing commitments by private developers will be met.
- **We will change that. We will return the Council to constructing homes by lowering Council debt and moving existing rental homes into a not-for-profit trust that will manage them and service ownership costs from the existing rental book.**



We will tie development to environmental compliance.

- The Plan is entirely silent on the sewage issue on the North Coast. The planned development will increase sewage levels in an already failing system.
- The Plan is required to follow Government policy by eliminating nearly half the increase in sewage by “promising” that the water companies will build the capacity needed.
- The Plan’s proposal to build homes for up to 6 times more than Census projections is almost certainly not in the plans of Southern Water.
- The Plan is for developers to have to build on-site treatment and hugely improve run-off. That is fine if delivered. It also promises to build over 40ha of wetlands and multiple treatment plants.
- **But** - none of the Stour Valley plans are costed or have any funding source. The entire Stour housing plan is based on no budget and no funding.
- **We are a green party. We will not sustain a housing policy unless sewage, water and utility provision are committed to by the utilities. We will commit to a nutrient-neutral Plan that halts development if not met. We will police developer commitments to ensure that treatment facilities are built on site or the funding needed to build them by utilities are paid in S106 fees – no houses if there is any nutrient gain. We will pursue Grampian Condition rulings if we do not see credible commitment by Southern Water on the North Coast. We will be totally transparent about the incremental draw on resources of new houses and require equal transparency by the providers on how they will meet that.**



Poor Air quality – we will deliver improvement

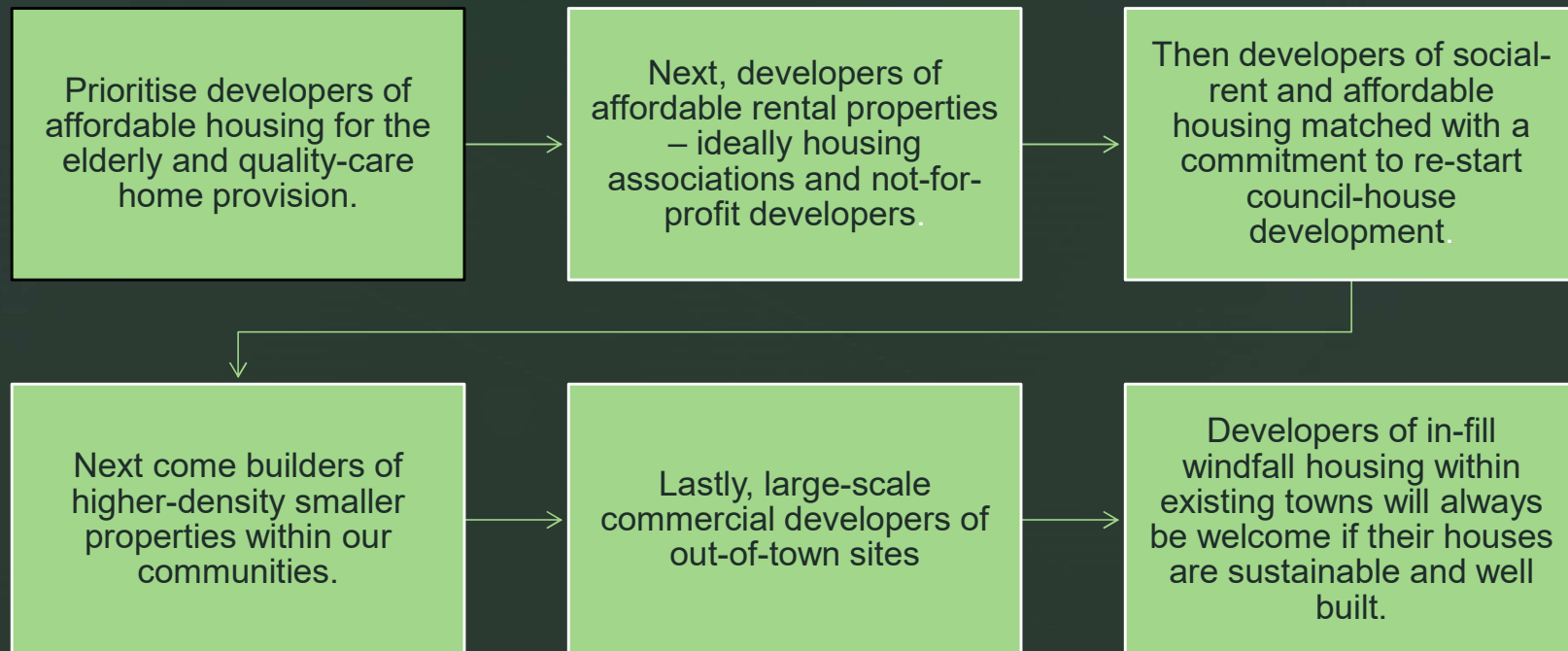
- CCC's roads, especially Canterbury at at the limit of national air quality rules.
- The proposed plan does not comply with government policy – S 192 of NPPF. No public health specialists were consulted on the Plan.
- To meet WHO standards we are going to have to reduce vehicle emissions by up to 78.5%.
- **We need a radical reduction in vehicle traffic – we will change the housing mix and dramatically lower the population growth anticipated, we will change where houses are to be built, we will invest heavily in vehicle charging on street and at car parks, we will electrify the council fleet including all Park and Ride buses, we will promote genuine advances in walking and cycling by focusing development on existing communities, not on greenfield sites.**



▶ We will prioritise local needs.

- The Plan adds 50,000 people who will not be from the District – the Census says we will grow by 10,000 citizens.
- Yet the children of families who have been resident for years cannot afford homes in new developments.
- **No large-scale developments will be permitted that do not prioritise local needs for homes throughout the District at prices that can be afforded.**
- **We will also be transparent in the use of CIL and S106 fees paid by developers and channel a fair portion back into the communities that host new developments.**

Priorities with developers – meeting community need before profit



Infrastructure – schools and transport

Schools

The Census says there will be no more children in the District in 2040 than there are today.

Yet the Plan proposes a new senior school in Whitstable and Herne Bay, a new SEND school in the same place and four junior schools for more than £110m funded by developer S106 money.

Equalisation of opportunity for school access on the North Coast is positive, but the reality is the plan is to build schools for an influx of up to 50,000 new citizens over natural population growth. **If we do not build for people who do not live here today, we do not need to plan for nearly as many new schools**

Transport

The largest expenditure is still on roads – £25m on a road for the Blean project, £10m at Merton Park, £20m in Whitstable for Chestfield – all funded by developer money. A huge road is planned without funding in Canterbury.

Out-of-town greenfield sites create traffic and emissions. A bus strategy is promoted, which is positive – but a bus plan based around out-of-town greenfield housing estates makes little sense.

We will focus development within our towns, near to facilities and without building car traffic. Such a bus strategy makes sense. Ending greenfield home development is a key deliverable for us and it will lower car mileage and emissions.

Infrastructure - energy

- The District spends more than £1.2m per annum on electricity with no green procurement plan – the Plan is almost silent on renewable energy (Google “renewable” on the Infrastructure Plan and you get zero hits).
- The Plan does basically nothing to roll out renewable energy for all of the Council’s purchases and on all of its buildings. It does not cover Council buildings or houses with panels. It does little on energy efficiency or to wean itself off carbon-based fuels.
- It has no District-wide plan for moving communities off gas and into heat pumps or district heating.
- It has no plans to build its own generating capacity – it just copies the last Plan’s documents about potential sites.
- **We will dramatically change energy procurement. Renewable energy will be the core of our infrastructure plan, both to power our activities on our buildings as well as all housing. We will commit to building links with community-owned energy suppliers, plot a studied route away from carbon fuels, plan for renewable-powered heating networks across the District and build a policy on every building to move heating towards heat pumps or heat networks.**

Where the money is spent

- Canterbury has historically received the lion's share of funding but represents less than a third of the District's population.
- On the roads budget, 56% goes to 29 Canterbury projects, Whitstable 21% in 10 projects and Herne Bay 1.5% in 4 projects!
- The same bias is followed in many of the separate plans.
- **We will publish where all spending is made by ward. We will ensure equity in allocation of resources between our communities. If a community hosts a new development, developer funds will also get spent in that area.**

Funding and budgeting

- Like most of its predecessors, the Plan is an enormous wish-list of projects, without costs attached and without analysis of who will pay for it. The list has 230 projects – 154 (67%) have no budget.
- Everything is to be funded by developers or grants – this means the Council will favour huge projects to get more money – not projects we need.
- Where projects have budgets (excluding utilities), they anticipate more than £270m of CIL and developer funding – there is zero chance this can all be funded from such sources. Maximum CIL funding is around £115m. It is a fantasy list.
- The entire Stour Valley clean-up budget has no numbers and no funding sources – houses will be built – clean-up has zero budget or funders.
- Not one of the 95 open-space and recreation projects has a budget attached.
- **We will not propose projects without detailed budgets. We will not propose projects without a funding source. We will publish reconciliations of our plans to square metres to be developed and show exactly where our infrastructure promises come from.**
- **We will not allow housing in the Stour Valley without annual nutrient neutrality and funded clean-up sources.**

Carbon and sustainability

- The carbon implications of inflating the population by 30% are not calculated.
- The implications of a greenfield rather than a brownfield policy are enormous and are not calculated.
- The failure to convert to green energy and self-generation is not disclosed.
- Changes to building standards will improve emissions and sustainability within the District. So will moving to buses, if delivered.
- **We will not publish a financial budget without a financial budget first that shows our progress to net zero. We will not permit development that harms progress towards a sustainable future. We will use all the facilities the law provides to halt development that harms the environment.**

Plans – ins and outs. Not all bad

- The Plan does lose the crazy plans for roads and ring-roads of the last Plan, as well as the plan to inhibit intra-Canterbury trips.
- It also loses the crazy small town planned in the southern wards on top of two small villages.
- But it then adds one back – with a plan to add 2,000 houses onto green fields near Blean – assaulting a greenfield area, pumping more sewage into the Stour catchment area and piling cars onto a narrow and old road.
- It does produce a sensible proposal for development at Wincheap on a brownfield site.
- It improves building standards to a much better level.
- The idea of more buses is good – if it can be delivered. But much of capital expenditure is still focused on roads for greenfield out-of-town sites.