

your letters



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YOUR LETTERS

Independent businesses driven out by landlords



It's time to practise what they preach

Why are Canterbury's property owners apparently so greedy? Are all landlords genetically programmed to be avaricious? Even the Dean and Chapter, an organisation that should be closely following the teachings of Jesus, is in on the act. How can they justify demanding such exorbitant rents? To my knowledge the Church of England isn't short of a bob or two. As Palace Street begins to increasingly resemble ancient Egypt after the exodus of the Israelites to Mount Sinai, isn't it about time for the Cathedral's estate managers to start practising what they preach?

Clive Wilkins-Oppler, Canterbury

Development driving us to an early grave

A report from a House of Commons committee that says more could be done to prevent 50,000 early deaths ever year from pollution must be considered by Canterbury City Council in reaching its decisions on the Local Development Framework. The all-party environmental audit committee published its report on March 22. Pollutants such as ozone, nitrogen oxides and particulates from transport and power stations have been blamed for contributing to early deaths.

The committee's report says "particulate matter is estimated to reduce people's lives by an average seven to eight months, while in pollution hotspots vulnerable residents, such as those with asthma, could be dying up to nine years early".

The report should be seen as an impartial and scientifically accurate analysis and should be carefully studied by councillors and officers. Some 2,500 new homes in south Canterbury could mean up to 5,000 more cars in a small area that already has to live with traffic pollution from the A2 and the A28.

A giant new development will bring more traffic and more pollution. This development is a threat to health and the city council would be derelict in its duty if it ignored the Commons report.

Clive Church, Canterbury

Feeling stitched up over football hub

The football hub has become a big issue for residents in South Canterbury, because while they are promised consultation, the reality

your blogger

Each week we get a mystery writer to air their views on living in and around Canterbury...



LET'S take a nostalgic look at the nursery rhymes so beloved by children.

Altogether now: "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. There was none as extreme weather due to climate change had caused a drought."

The reason why: "Extreme weather conditions such as flooding, heat waves and storms will become more frequent and intense." Or how about: "Rub a dub dub, three men in a tub - a necessary course of action due to flash flooding caused by climate change."

This is of course because: "Climate change is happening. Temperature and sea levels are rising. Extreme weather events such as storms, floods and heat waves will become more frequent and intense. If we carry on at this rate, life in 25 years could be very different." Maybe: "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall - to escape rising sea levels caused by climate change melting the polar ice caps."

Okay, so the last one is made up, but the first two are not and the Advertising Standards Authority has ruled them unnecessarily alarmist. And who made them up? Why the Government, of course, showing nothing is safe from the nanny state. Not even innocent children's verse.

Even plans to re-run the famous TV ad from the 1960s featuring Tony Hancock - to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the "go to work on an egg" strapline - fell foul of the Broadcast Advertising Clearance

Centre. BACC felt the ad "goes against what is now the generally accepted advice of a varied diet".

And Shelter has fallen foul of the radio equivalent, RACC, for a campaign that promotes its housing advice service because the ads are deemed to be too political and denigrate the Government.

The ads, which point out that there is a three-year waiting list for council houses, were deemed to breach the 2003 Communications Act. So maybe it isn't just a load of interfering busybodies. Perhaps there's an agenda, to stifle debate on subjects the Government doesn't want highlighted - a frightening thought.

The advocates of climate change are targeting the young to ensure they grow up maintaining an orthodox viewpoint. Any deviation puts the proposer firmly in a corner occupied by the likes of Jeremy Clarkson and Richard Littlejohn. So let's hear it for trendy causes across the spectrum:

"Georgie Porgie, Pudding and Pie,

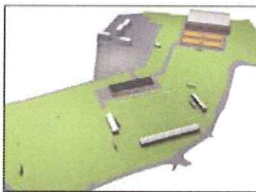
Kissed the boys and made them cry,

But when they complained to No 10,

Gordon Brown did nothing, as Georgie was a member of a minority group which can legitimately state opposition to its practises constitutes harassment and perpetrators may find themselves charged with a hate crime."

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If there is a story in your area you think we should be covering contact the editor, Gareth Arnold, on 01303 817025 or email him on the details above. If you want to be the next Canterbury blogger then all you have to do is submit an article to us (of around 550 words) and email it to the editor. And don't forget, for all the latest news and video from your town log-on to www.yourcanterbury.co.uk.



OPEN GOAL: Canterbury football hub plans

becomes ever more secretive.

First, a single preferred site at Ridlands Farm was selected by officers without reference to residents or their councillors.

Then consultants were appointed (at a cost of £80,000) to look at site options. No residents or councillors were allowed to talk to them. The consultants produced three versions of their report using an arbitrary scoring system to find the preferred site - surprise, surprise - Ridlands Farm. They recommended an elaborate hub to include a fitness centre, multi-purpose studio etc. It needed a lot of land and was designed to meet the wishes of schools and the hospital to share facilities. Officers then rejected this in favour of a smaller and simpler 'hub'. However, the original scoring system was not revisited, despite its reasoning now being invalid.

Eventually the secret report was published (six months late) and went to the Canterbury Area Members' Panel on March 8.

No Conservative councillors attended the meeting. Noticeably

absent was the portfolio holder in charge of the whole thing. Residents and councillors unanimously slated the report. The consultants' scoring system was not even available to residents and not put on the website. It then went to the overview and scrutiny committee but no copies of the consultants' report were available to councillors or residents, so the committee could not make a judgement.

However, one former cabinet member did say that as the consultants had looked at all the sites then clearly Ridlands must be the one. Well, if there really is a choice of only one, why pretend to consult at all?

Finally we heard that the portfolio holder had been having private discussions with the trustees of an alternative site behind the Sturry Road park and ride - an option he has publicly opposed from the outset - and whipped his fellow ward councillor into reporting his opposition.

Is there any wonder that residents find this a complete stitch-up? It really is high time the administration understood that consultation means talking to people before they close the options down. If that had been done from the outset then Canterbury City FC - who have been piggy in the middle during this nonsense - would have had a proper home by now.

Clir Nick Eden-Green, Lib Dem, Wincheap ward

Asperger's factsheet

In celebration of World Autism Day on Friday, I want to draw attention to the needs of a particular subgroup of autism, namely children with Asperger's Syndrome.

Children and young people with Asperger's usually have difficulties in socialising with others and making friends. They also like to have routines, even if they do not appear to be useful. They can have restricted interests and difficulty with language development.

Their apparent 'oddness' can lead to teasing, social isolation and possible mental health problems.

Most professionals agree that early diagnosis offers the best outcome. The most appropriate treatment is a package of measures - depending on the needs of the child - which includes training in social skills, social communication intervention and therapy to reduce obsessive interests.

However, perhaps we should as a society, instead of labelling the difference, celebrate the diversity of human talents and ways of being. In the world of maths, computing, engineering, cataloguing and science there is great value in a precise eye for detail which many people with Asperger's have.

For parents of children with Asperger's the choice of school is all important. Many children with Asperger's are educated in mainstream schools. A smaller number attend specialist schools. Whatever school is chosen by

parents, it will need to celebrate diversity, to have an inclusion policy which is genuine rather than illusory and which meets the child's needs in a holistic and caring way. I have written a free Asperger's factsheet which can be downloaded at www.appleford.wilts.sch.uk or you write to: Asperger's Simplified Factsheet, Appleford School, Shrewton, Wiltshire SP3 4HL.

Dr Peter Gardner, British Psychological Society

Share a caring brew

We are asking your readers to support a campaign which helps to tackle the problems of isolation and loneliness among millions of pensioners in Britain.

Bupa Care Homes' Communi-tea Week' is a national initiative and supports older people who may be struggling on their own by providing a friendly face and reaching out to them over a cup of tea. More than 3.7 million pensioners in Britain live alone.

So throughout the week from Monday, April 19, older people across the country are being invited to join in hundreds of tea-related events, from tea dances to afternoon tea parties, taking place in Bupa Care Homes. We are also encouraging communities to host their own tea parties. For information about your nearest event, or ideas about hosting your own, call 0845 600 4622 or email communi-teaweek@bupa.com.

Siobhan Drame, Bupa

Stub out meningitis

We welcome the recommendations in a report which shows that children subjected to passive smoking are at an increased risk of bacterial meningitis.

The report for the Royal College of Physicians, undertaken by the UK Centre for Tobacco Control Studies at the University of Nottingham, calls for legislation to prohibit smoking in all vehicles and in entrances to public buildings, parks and outdoor play areas. The report estimates there are at least 200 cases of bacterial meningitis caused by passive smoking every year. The report also calls for measures to encourage parents to stop smoking in front of their children at home. The findings show that living in a household in which one or more people smoke, more than doubles the risk of sudden infant death.

More than 9,500 children are admitted to hospital every year as a direct result of exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke.

Passive smoking weakens the immune system in babies and toddlers, which puts them more at risk from diseases including meningitis and septicaemia.

Parents who smoke increase the risk of their babies catching meningitis because smoke helps the bacteria adhere to tissues lining the throat. For more information about Meningitis UK, or to support the charity's Search 4 a Vaccine Campaign, call 0117 373 7373 or visit www.meningitisUK.org.

Steve Dayman, Meningitis UK