

## **SECTION 4: ALTERNATIVE SITE SELECTION ANALYSIS**

- 1. Introduction**
  - 2. Sites which are Not Intended to be Analysed in this Section**
  - 3. Estates Department Site**
  - 4. Giles Lane Car Park**
  - 5. Land to the North of the Innovation Centre**
  - 6. Parkwood Residences**
  - 7. Central Woodland Zone**
  - 8. Southern Slopes East**
  - 9. Southern Slopes North, Central and West**
  - 10. Conclusions**
- Appendices**

## **ALTERNATIVE SITE SELECTION ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

A number of sites within the ownership of the University, including Chaucer Fields, are analysed for their suitability for the proposed purpose in Section 3.0 of the submitted Planning Statement, and in Planning Statement Appendix at Section 4. This section of the report addresses those issues and will employ similar, but not identical, criteria. Reference will also be made to the Estates Strategy 2009 - produced by the University of Kent at Canterbury - and to relevant Planning Policies.

In general terms, the aim is to consider sites for broadly the same uses as proposed by the University, but not to restrict the sites by attempting to fit all intended uses onto one area. It is felt that this is an unreasonable constraint as it limits site selection and therefore does not maximise the use of the University's land assets, or allow for minimising the impact of the development.

The Planning Process should take reasonable note of the applicant's needs, but this must always be conditioned by the needs of protecting the environment and attempting to maximise the use of previously developed land and infilling between existing buildings. In addition, whilst addressing the University's requirements, the amenity of and impact upon the City of Canterbury as a whole must be factored into the analysis.

The University of Kent prides itself on its site; it is within what the Estates Strategy describes as "...an exceptional estate: over 500 acres in a parkland setting overlooking the City of Canterbury." This parkland was created by the University; previously the site had been orchards, other farmland and woodland. Further woodland was created, including that to the south of the Innovation Centre - half of this woodland is now threatened by the current proposals. In the Planning Statement, it is incorrectly stated that, when built, the University was set in "private parkland to the north-west of the city", thus implying that the parkland was pre-existing.

The importance of this image, of a University set in the midst of a parkland/campus setting, has been emphasised in all its associated publicity. A recent example is to be found in the leaflet advertising the Innovation Centre. The front cover shows, somewhat enhanced from reality, the building set in a wild flower meadow and within the document it is claimed that it lies in a "Campus parkland setting amid rolling Kentish hills overlooking the vibrant city of Canterbury."

This Alternative Site Selection Analysis asserts that it will give a greater priority to the location of the student housing on campus, than to that of the hotel and conference facility. Within the community it is widely understood that the provision of student housing is an essential part of the core business function of the University. It is difficult

for the community to perceive that the provision of a hotel/conference facility is an equally essential part of the business function of the university. It is noted in the University's submission that the provision of a hotel on campus would restrict the use of like facilities in the city. What is even more difficult to agree is that these two functions together with the existing Innovation Centre are so co-dependent that they have to be located adjacent to each other. This in itself prejudices a logical analysis of land use on campus.

Several of the sites are dismissed in the Planning Statement as being clearly unsuitable and to limit the extent of this section, where possible, the Statement's reasoning will be accepted.

#### **4.2 Sites which are Not Intended to be Analysed in this Section**

The Estates Strategy looked at the entire land ownership of UKC which amounts to 230 hectares (575 acres). The actual campus land amounts to 121 hectares (302 acres) with the remaining agricultural land, purchased in 2006, amounting to 109 hectares (273 acres).

The original campus has a natural edge along the northern ridge, defined by existing development. For the purpose of this analysis it is felt that to propose development to the north or east of this would not be justified in planning terms. It is felt that that it would be an unwarranted extension of the built up area into the countryside. In addition it would be unjustifiable to suggest that removal of the proposal from Chaucer Fields to another sensitive location would have any merit.

It is therefore not proposed to consider any sites on this land - described by the university as "Agricultural Land to the north of the campus boundary" and the "Eastern Fields" (Alcroft Grange). In addition, for the same reason, it is not proposed to include the "Sports Pitches to the north and west of Parkwood Road".

Obviously no consideration will be taken of the sites listed as already developed.

#### **4.3 Estates Department Site**

The Estates Strategy describes the Maintenance Section and Ground Maintenance Section as structurally unsound. It is presumed that these are the single storey timber framed and clad buildings. The submitted site selection overview states that the Estates Department site has been allocated for future academic development. The immense size of the current planning application should, in the view of this report, allow the whole land use strategy and the planning framework of the City Council to be reconsidered. If the University requires a hotel on campus this site has a lot to recommend it.

1. It is separated from student accommodation and uses by Giles Lane and Parkwood Road.
2. The site occupies a prominent corner position able to be visually exploited by a bold and appealing design with the ability to have prominent signage. At the rear it would have woodland and rural views.
3. It would reinforce the concept of density and centrality of the University.
4. The adjacent arts facilities, the Gulbenkian Theatre, Cinema and proposed Colyer-Fergusson Concert Hall, with their attendant restaurant and bar venues, would give a hotel the ambience of being within a vibrant University location rather than in the “suburban” location of Chaucer Fields.

The displaced academic development could be located to other sites at the centre of campus. It is perhaps beyond the remit of this analysis, but two suggestions are made, which would augment the worthwhile aim of enhancing the centrality and density of the university:

- A. The site running north-north-east to south-south-west, at the west side of the library. This abuts a somewhat unsuccessful square having the School of Architecture on the opposite side. As a central diagonal “feature” it has a curious pathway enclosed in chain-link fencing which demonstrates the poor functionality of this space. A dramatic 3-4 storey building at the side of the library could improve the sense of purpose of the space and remodel its design. The initial thought was to propose this as a student residence but it is probably better as an academic building. The library itself is arguably one of the most visibly successful buildings on campus but its side elevation makes no contribution to the “square”. Any new building in this location would have to be equally well designed.
- B. The space to the south east of the Gulbenkian Theatre is another unsuccessful square. The south-south-east edge of this is also ill-defined and could benefit from the addition of an academic building.

#### **4.4 Giles Lane Car Park**

To an extent it is accepted that to overbuild student housing above the car park may not be valid. However bearing in mind the additional high costs that would arise with the Chaucer Fields site, further cost analysis may be appropriate for this site.

#### **4.5 Land to the North of the Innovation Centre**

The submitted documents indicate that this site is safeguarded in the Canterbury Local Plan (2006) for a “Business Innovation Centre”. As stated earlier, it is felt that the present requirements of the University are so different and extensive, when compared

to what was envisaged in 2006, that previous planning policy is rendered redundant. The Masterplan for the University seems not to have been structurally adjusted to take account of these changes. It appears to the community that this centre is really a business park, which is not part of the core function of a University. The extant Innovation Centre is again felt to be a building for businesses with the outward academic veneer of research or innovation grafted on to give it a seemingly valid home at UKC.

Thus it is felt that this site of 8.8 hectares (22 acres) should not be ruled out as a location for student housing. It does require sensitivity of design especially at its south-south-west edge, where any development would need to diminish in height and be screened by extensive planting. The student housing currently under construction as an extension of Keynes College appears not to have been well considered in its relationship to the domestic housing of Giles Lane.

As with Chaucer Fields, this site is sloping, which would add to the build costs and could lead to an over-dominant appearance.

The Innovation Centre is a dramatic building which has been designed with some panache. Unfortunately its landscape setting, especially at the rear, has not been handled to the same standard as its intrinsic design. Since its construction, certain minor additions have been made to the detriment of the original concept. This building provides a visual screen to the south side of this site. Until the recent application for the Chaucer Fields site was made, it had been assumed that it was intended that this building - with its curved profile - was to define the southern edge of this part of the University development. The woodland opposite screens the building from the south but the current proposals, felling half of its trees and proposing to develop to the south, negate this concept.

Adjacent to the Innovation Centre to the north-east is the listed Beverley Farmhouse. Any development adjacent should be mindful of the need to respect its setting. The increased use of the access road may require widening, which would be to the detriment of the setting of the farmhouse. However the current proposals for Chaucer Fields, opposite, also have a very negative effect upon its setting.

Siting the hotel behind the Innovation Centre would not allow it to have a street presence, which could diminish its appeal. If it were to be as tall as that proposed at Chaucer Fields on rising ground, it could have a negative effect - both upon the farmhouse and the Innovation Centre.

## 4.6 Parkwood Residences

This site of 10.2 hectares (25.5 acres) was investigated in the Application as a location for the new development, but only complete demolition and rebuild to a higher density was considered. This area houses 2,700 students at 265 bedspaces per hectare (106 bedspaces per acre). Understandably, comprehensive redevelopment is rejected in the submitted site analysis because of the need for a phased development which would not deliver the new student housing at the required time. Additionally, it is correctly noted that “this would result in an overall net reduction of student bedspaces during the early phases of development”. This factor, it is said, “would place further pressure on off-campus accommodation in the District”.

Again, it is considered that the desire to have all the intended uses on one site has prejudiced a thorough analysis of the land resources of the University campus. Parkwood is an unusual design for student housing. The original build is of two storeys to a low density such as might be encountered in a post-war New Town. The development is set around courtyards, which are not quite squares. Mature trees have been retained and further trees planted. There is tree screening to the south and west with the “Central Woodland Zone” of 4.2 hectares (10.5 acres) to the east. It is felt that the concept of infill should have been considered; this is analysed below:

According to the Transport Plan, submitted in support of the current application (at 3.5.4), Parkwood contains some 636 parking spaces out of a total of 2361 on campus (27%). The plan accepts that these are underused, as the students who reside there are not permitted to bring cars into the area. It is not used by other University personnel. Visits have been made to the site on a random basis on weekdays and at the weekend, which reveal large areas of unused tarmac with only a few parked cars and vans.

The Estates Strategy, at 4.1, asserts that “Parkwood provides a more independent environment, yet near enough to the heart of campus for those who want to take full advantage of it to do so”. It would seem therefore an ideal location for further infill housing intended to take HMO housing for students out of the District.

The site includes a shop and “Woody’s Bar”. In addition there is a bus service at an eight minute frequency. Any further provision of units at this site would augment the viability of these facilities. It is understood that at the Chaucer Fields site, the provision of a non-residential hub building would add £3.4 million to the cost of the project. Augmenting the shop and Woody’s Bar to service the increased occupancy of Parkwood would be more cost efficient.

In the submitted site analysis for Parkwood, it is accepted that “the provision of new accommodation would offer wider socio-economic benefits for Canterbury; however, the site’s dislocation from the existing Innovation Centre would reduce the overall economic

benefit of providing hotel/conference facilities.” Again it is this insistence on providing all of the suggested development on one site that is preventing an appropriate land-use critique of the whole campus. The essential link between the Innovation Centre and the currently proposed development is not accepted by the community. Moreover, as other sections of this report demonstrate, the Planning case for the proposed development is insupportable. Therefore if the Application is refused, other sites will have to be considered.

It is claimed above that due to the low density of Parkwood, infill is possible. It is not the brief of this analysis to design the additional units, but it is necessary to demonstrate that such a concept is viable. Plans of Parkwood as existing and showing the infill, which is explained below, are attached, together with photographs to illustrate the possibilities. (Appendices 1 - 3)

The housing at the site is set around walkways with a curving spine road leading to *cul de sacs*, each having parking areas. The walkways in some cases pass between blank end gables of the housing terraces. In these locations it is suggested that three-storey infill units be built with a ground floor walkway below. These could give a sharper identity to the entrances and a better sense of enclosure.

In other locations blank end walls of terraces could have units added with windows to the new gables in order to add interest.

As mentioned earlier, the layout in some parts has the form of incomplete squares. It would be logical to complete these squares - possibly at three storey height - giving a sense of enclosure.

There are further sites where entirely new terraces could be built, utilising open land and some of the redundant car parking. A large amount of car parking has been retained including that adjacent to Woody's.

The design of any new units would have to be mindful of overlooking and in some cases may need to be of single-aspect format.

Provisionally it is felt that up to of 130 five person units could be inserted at Parkwood, this allows for additional accommodation for up to 650 students.

The submission by the University of Kent consistently stresses financial viability as a key issue. The infill at Parkwood has the following cost benefits:

1. It is a level site.
2. It has a full infrastructure of roads and services.

The lack of services, and the sloping nature of the Chaucer Fields site, is said to have added £3.4 million to the budget.

The nature of the construction needed to infill at Parkwood would be of a simple domestic type. Such infill is done in the private sector on local housing estates such as London Road, Canterbury. Single units have been added and are viable to let out and in these cases there is a cost of land to bear, which is not the case within the UKC campus. Additionally the University would achieve cost savings from the scale of the operation.

It is proposed that the Chaucer Fields site would only be put out to tenderers having a turnover above £200 million, which would rule out local builders. Infill at Parkwood could be broken down into discrete smaller contracts which could be undertaken by local builders, allowing more of the financial benefit to stay in the local community.

Obviously students would face some noise and disruption during the works. Only a greenfield site remote from other UKC buildings would deliver no disruption. It would seem more justifiable to disrupt student peace than that of the residents of the city. Indeed, the current provision of new units at Keynes College must be creating some disruption to existing student residents. As is asserted in the submission made by the University, this site would have "minimal impact upon existing residential areas beyond the campus boundary".

This document has noted the existing trees at Parkwood. Most of these in the "squares" could remain. Any loss would be far less than is proposed at Chaucer Fields, where about one half of the woodland below the Innovation Centre would be destroyed. Other parts of this submission discuss this issue.

#### **4.7 Central Woodland Zone**

This is an area of 4.2 hectares (10.5 acres) which is densely wooded; it is known as "Park Wood". It is immediately to the east of the Parkwood housing. The analysis by the applicant describes it as "heavily wooded including a significant number of high value trees and is likely to provide important habitat for a range of protected and non-protected species. The loss of this habitat would have a significant impact on the ecological and conservation value of the campus."

The analysis goes on to say that the site is "a considerable distance from the City Centre which may encourage less sustainable forms of travel, particularly for hotel/conference uses." Oddly, this observation was not made for the Parkwood housing site adjacent.

Again the submitted analysis is constrained by the premise that all the intended development would have to be on this site. It would seem logical to see what some part of this site could offer in conjunction with the infill at the adjacent Parkwood housing site.

The loss of all of this woodland would be unacceptable, but a small part to the immediate east of Parkwood - which is enclosed on one side by Parkwood and on the other two by foot/cycle paths - could be acceptable. This piece is about 0.36 hectare (0.8 acre) if the footprint of the path is slightly re-aligned and could accommodate up to 90 bedspaces. A distinctive wedge shape footprint is possible. Its presence here would improve the security of the female students using this secluded path to the main part of the University.

A smaller piece adjacent to the east side of the access road into Parkwood could accommodate a further 40 bedspaces.

Appendices 1 - 3 again illustrate.

These two areas at Parkwood and Park Wood, taken together, would provide 780 student rooms. The provision for on-campus student rooms in the application is 762.

With this total number of units, the same parking provision allowed for Chaucer Fields would be needed - only five spaces with perhaps a further two for staff. These figures may be seen as low as there is no allowance for visitors. Given the existing 636 spaces at Parkwood it should be possible to retain far more, as indicated on the plans. Unlike the proposals for Chaucer Fields, at Parkwood there are roads which give plenty of opportunity to drop off students from taxis or friends' cars. Again unlike at Chaucer Fields, there would be no risk of resident, visitor or taxi parking in residential roads.

#### **4.8 Southern Slopes East**

It is agreed that this site "forms a highly visible element of the Southern Slopes" and its development "could potentially result in an unacceptable impact on the setting of the University campus". It must be said that in addition the formal layout of the colleges and library rely upon this space to give architectural meaning to their composition. The presence of the disused railway tunnel below is also acknowledged to be a constraint. This area has to be considered also as part of the "continuous landscape" including the other part of the Southern Slopes as described below.

At the eastern edge of this site some modern residential blocks known as Tyler Court have been built. These are of a design alien in concept to that of the original building and to their setting. They argue with their attractive hillside location and do not

effectively close the view. They stand as a warning about designs proposed for new sites on campus.

If it were possible to construct a further student accommodation building on the west side of the Tyler Court buildings, set to run up the hill with a stepped profile, this could provide a suitable containment of this important open space. However, it is not known how wide is the extent of the zone of instability caused by the Crab and Winkle railway tunnel below.

#### **4.9 Southern Slopes North, Central and West**

These slopes are considered together as they form a continuous landscape. It is artificial to divide an analysis into sections. To develop any one would harm the whole. Their continuity is their value. As mentioned in the introduction to this section, it is felt that this swathe of land sets the image of the campus of the University. The wonderful sylvan views diagonally from the south corner or from University Road on the north remain completely unspoilt. From the south the observer has no realisation that a large university lies behind the trees. Nearly forty years of careful planting and management of the site have created the wonderful vistas.

All the analysis in the current application seems to ignore this long history.

Much of the university site is designated as of High Landscape Value and this whole southern area is of mutual visual benefit to both the city and the University. In addition, during the history of the University it has been used as a leisure resource for local people. This is officially recognised by the Canterbury City Council's Open Space Strategy, which includes these Southern Slopes in the allocation of open spaces for the St Stephen's Ward.

Further analyses of these aspects and of the effect of the current application are provided in other sections of this document.

#### **4.10 Conclusions**

Many sites within the campus have been considered for development within this section. There may be further minor sites where infill could be achieved. These could maximise the use of previously developed land and augment the central density of the campus.

Extending the built up envelope of the campus away from the core of the site seems to be an approach of "suburbanisation" or ribbon development. It is felt that the philosophy should be to enhance the image of a lively university community within a protected parkland setting. Since its inception this has been the core image promoted by the University and to depart from this now would appear to be incongruous.

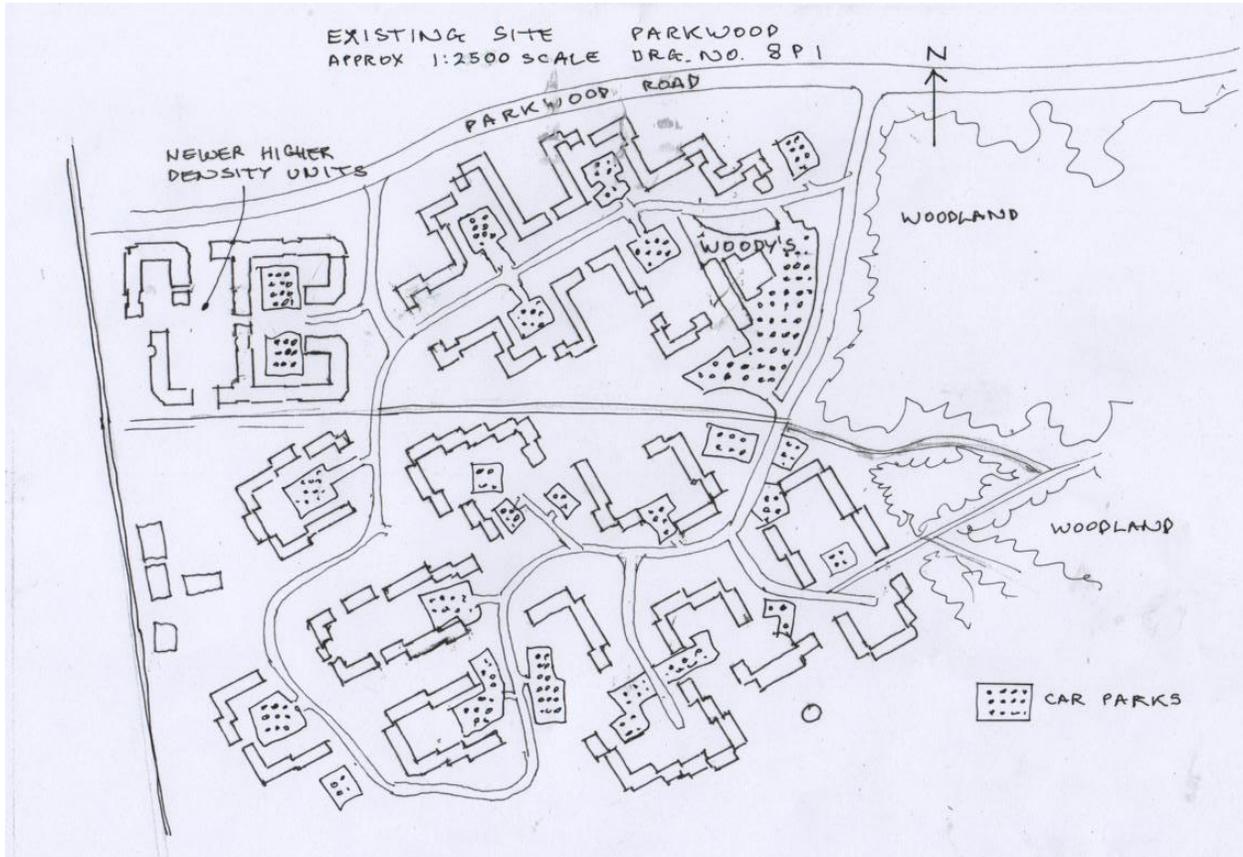
It is felt that the Masterplan is too constrained by previous policy and decisions made, which are no longer relevant today. This has led to an incremental approach to the needs of the University which has not enabled a sufficiently flexible analysis of the most effective use of its land assets.

The interlocking of the need for the Innovation Centre, the hotel and the student housing, has led to a limitation of locational possibilities on campus.

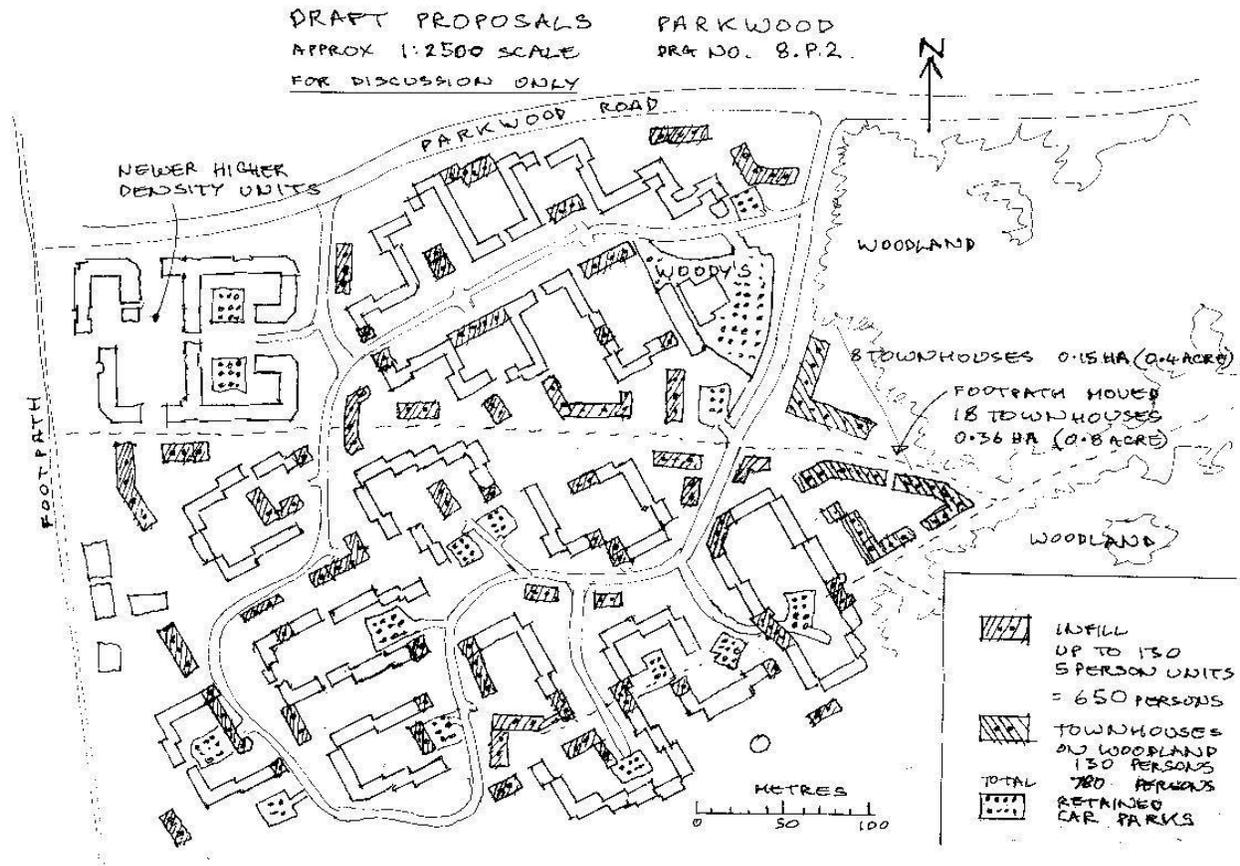
One example of this is the failure to look at the infill and small land area expansion at Parkwood. This is the reason for our detailed analysis of this site.

Obviously, it is hoped that this whole report and the response of the community will result in a refusal of the current proposals. It is clear that generally objectors do not oppose the provision of the intended volume of student housing on the campus but there is strong objection to the use of the Chaucer Fields site. Hopefully if a Planning Refusal results, this part of the report will indicate some positive alternative for the siting of the proposed developments.

# APPENDIX 1: PARKWOOD EXISTING SITE



# APPENDIX 2: PARKWOOD DRAFT PROPOSALS



**APPENDIX 3: PHOTOGRAPHS TO ILLUSTRATE POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN PARKWOOD**

**PARKWOOD ; EMPTY CAR PARKS ,LOW DENSITY,SPACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS TO INFILL**



**Blank End Walls where Student Housing can be Added**



**Infill to Form Gateway with Housing**

**A Partial Square to Complete with Extra Units**



**Small Area of Woodland to the East which could be Developed**



