

Slopes inquiry gets under way

The public inquiry over the future of the University of Kent's southern slopes got under way this week with campaigners trying to persuade a planning inspector to designate the land as a village green.

Numerous witnesses for the Save Chaucer Fields group have been taking the stand, including chairman David Smith, who spent three hours giving evidence and being cross-examined by counsel for the UKC.

The group is hoping to get the picturesque fields protected to prevent the university from building student accommodation, a hotel and conference centre on the land.

The hearing at the Westgate Hall opened on Monday and the applicants took the stand first,



with as many as 20 expected to have given evidence by the end of today (Thursday).

Mr Smith said: "It's been quite stressful, especially for some being cross-examined by the university's barristers, of which they have three.

"Essentially, we are arguing across a broad spectrum of points, including the historical use of the land, the legality of the

signage and permissive rights.

"But it is impossible to gauge how our arguments are being viewed by the inspector."

The university's witnesses are expected to take the stand tomorrow (Friday) and the hearing will resume again on March 16.

■ A quiz night to raise money for Save Chaucer Fields will take place at St Dunstan's Church hall on March 7 at 7pm.