

## University accused over building plans



An aerial view of Chaucer Fields. Whitstable Road is on the left, and University Road snakes through the centre of the picture. The highlighted area could be bulldozed to make room for a new complex

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Writer

The University administration has revealed plans for a massive new accommodation and commercial complex, sparking outrage from local residents and campus' Conservation Society.

The plans, which include a 4-star Holiday Inn, townhouses and a 200-space car park, would necessitate the destruction of a sizeable portion of the Univer-

sity's green space. The proposed development site is on Chaucer's Fields, which lie between University Road and the lane leading from Whitstable Road through to the Eliot Footpath.

Supporters of the project argue that the development will create hundreds of new accommodation places, as well as generating much-needed revenue for the University, which will shortly be entering a 4-year period of extreme cuts in government investment (see p8). Some oppo-

nents of the scheme are furious that the University is attempting to build accommodation for up to 700 students in close proximity to local residences, pointing to the inevitable noise generated by students returning to their homes after nights out.

The Conservation Society are concerned that the building of a vast new development will further reduce the proportion of campus given over to natural, green space, and claim that they have been previously

worked with the University in the cultivation of wildlife on the proposed development site. At a public exhibition of the plans (held at the St. Stephens Community Centre on Hales Place last Saturday) angry residents gathered to view the proposals and vent their anger to representatives of the proposed scheme. Among those in attendance were, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Keith Mander, who found himself on the receiving end of

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some particularly intense questioning from outraged locals. The London-based public relations firm "Local Dialogue" which the university has contracted to deal with the public had arranged the exhibition, but drew the ire of attendees, who accused them of "gloss and spin." The University has contracted David Morley Architects, who are also currently overseeing the construction of the Keynes College extension and who designed the Virginia Woolf complex in 2007. A student consultation was held in the Woolf building on 19th January, and the aforementioned public exhibition took place on Saturday 22nd, though the Conservation Society claim that the consultations were not well-enough advertised, describing the plans and the lack of advertising as "outrageous". Students with queries regarding the project are advised to contact [jessica.stewart@localdialogue.com](mailto:jessica.stewart@localdialogue.com) and can view detailed plans of the project at [www.uok-consultation.co.uk](http://www.uok-consultation.co.uk). A protest website has been created and can be viewed at [www.savechaucherfields.com](http://www.savechaucherfields.com). Planning permission is likely to be applied for during March.