

PLANNING DEBATE

Professors argue over campus field

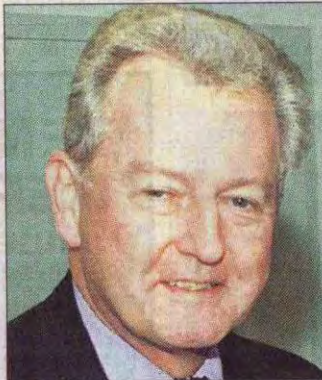
THE University of Kent will seek to justify its controversial plans to build hundreds of student flats and a hotel on the Chaucer Fields during a debate planned on the campus next week.

Head of the estates department Prof Keith Mander, who is leading the proposals, will put the case for the development at the discussion which will be taking place between 1pm and 2pm on Thursday at Eliot College.

Other contributors making the opposing view that Chaucer Fields should be retained as unspoilt green space include Professor of philosophy Richard Norman and Professor of environmental social science Chris Rootes.

The debate, organised by the University and Colleges Union, the largest staff trade union at the university, is a follow up to earlier findings on staff sentiment about the proposal.

It has been convened following the electronic poll, which revealed the overwhelming majority of staff supported a motion in favour of protecting the fields.

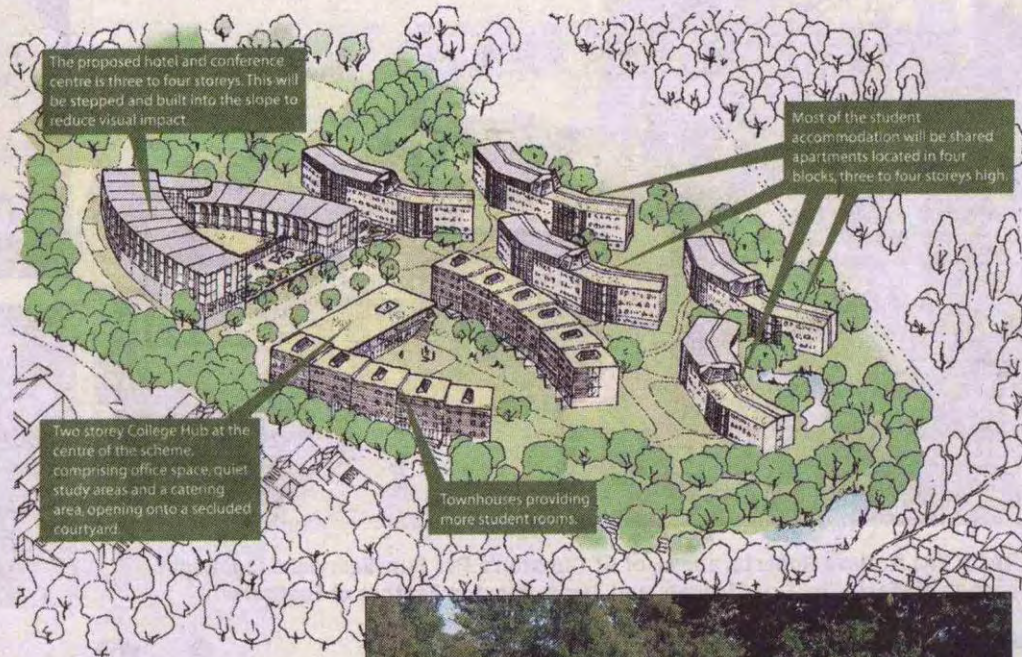


University of Kent deputy vice-chancellor Keith Mander

Campaigners against the development say the scheme could be accommodated elsewhere on the campus and have lodged an application with the Kent County Council for the fields to be designated as a village green.

In a bid to support the application, local residents have produced hundreds of witness statements describing the free community use of the land for generations.

The university has deferred



Plans for the new development on Chaucer Fields at Kent University's Canterbury campus; right, a picnic on Chaucer Fields

lodging its planning application and says it will make a 'robust' defence of the application for village green status.

The Chaucer Fields Picnic Society has been formed by



campaigners to promote the fields and southern slopes as open space.

Weather permitting, another open invitation picnic is planned for Sunday, May

13 between noon and 3pm.

■ For more information and updates from a regular blog, visit <http://chaucerfieldspicnic.society.wordpress.com>

'We want people to express views'

The Canterbury Society fears the district will undergo 'rapid change' and says it is concerned about the impact extra housing will have on traffic congestion, pollution and loss of open space.

It is holding a public meeting at the Dominican Priory at 7.30pm on Tuesday, May 22, for a discussion.

John Walker from the society said: "We want to give local people a chance to express their views and say what sort of place they want Canterbury to be over the next decades.

"With these and other evidence we have collected, a residents' 'Vision of Canterbury' will be produced and submitted to the city council which we hope will influence the new Local Plan."

The guest speaker at the meeting will be Prof Richard Scase, from the University of Kent, who said: "The Local Plan should respect the views and preferences of local residents about the size and location of proposed development."

What do you think of earmarking greenfield land around Canterbury for housing? Write to the Kentish Gazette at Gazette House, 5-8 Boorman Way, Estuary View Business Park, Whitstable, CT5 3SE or email kentishgazette@thekmgroup.co.uk