

Student leader backs new hall

by Alex Claridge

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KENT University's Union vice-president Sam Kennedy has come out in support of the controversial Chaucer Fields development.

She says the development, which would create an extra 800 study bedrooms, is needed to plug a shortage in student accommodation on the Canterbury campus.

"In terms of whether more accommodation is needed on campus, I am absolutely convinced that it is," said Miss Kennedy, pictured.

"This year 500 students were emailed just two weeks before term started with a message that there were no more rooms left on campus so they were to



look in the City or to defer.

"This put many students in a horrible situation.

"They had been accepted at University but had nowhere to live to be able to accept the place, others found rooms in the city sharing with non-students, Christ Church students or in expensive studios or one-bed flats.

"I regularly receive messages from students who want to move back onto campus for a

whole range of reasons from financial issues to problems with housemates. We need these extra rooms."

However, the plan to build these bedrooms on Chaucer Fields south of the current university buildings has generated opposition.

Terry Westgate, the chairman of the St Michael's Road Residents' Association, wants to see the fields left as they are.

But Miss Kennedy said: "Build-

ing beyond Parkwood [on the university's Blean side] would leave students so far from the City that walking wouldn't be an option for most and so far from campus facilities that they may as well not be living on-campus.

"It would also mean building on our sports pitches which would limit facilities for sport."

A debate on the future of Chaucer Fields takes place in the university's Senate building from 5pm to 7pm today (Thursday).

■ I PICKED up a copy of the Kentish Gazette and was shocked to see the headline Student Leader Backs Plans For New Hall (Kentish Gazette, March 3).

I've never said this, and in my role as vice-president (welfare) at Kent Union, I've not taken a stance for or against this specific development.

The article contained quotes from my personal blog on the issue which I wrote opposing a motion coming to our student council, a blog which I open with "I'm mainly writing this to pull my thoughts together".

This is a blog which explicitly states on its front page "opinions expressed on this page are not necessarily those of Kent Union and do not, unless otherwise stated, reflect the policy of Kent Union".

The motion in question proposed that

Kent Union oppose the development. I argued in my blog that Kent Union shouldn't do this because there needs to be more accommodation on-campus and because 500 students turned away from campus just two weeks before term started this academic year.

I did not suggest that another motion should be brought for Kent Union to support the development.

I simply stated support for more on-campus accommodation and against Kent Union fully opposing the plans.

I didn't write the blog to produce sensational headlines, the issues surrounding student housing in Canterbury are too important and complex for that.

Sometimes the debate isn't black and white, but then that's not something local Press often appreciates.

Samantha Kennedy, vice-president (welfare), Kent Union, Mandela Building, University of Kent, Canterbury.

Editor's note: You can read Samantha Kennedy's original blog posting at <http://tinyurl.com/6xhdgss>