

Protesters reject university's Chaucer Fields 'compromise'

by Gerry Warren
gwarren@thekmgroup.co.uk

SAVE Chaucer Fields campaigners are refusing to accept the University of Kent's 'compromise' development plans which went on show at the weekend.

More details of the revised scheme, which includes building a conference centre and hotel on the upper slopes of the field, were revealed at the exhibition at Keynes College.

The university had hoped relocating the planned new student accommodation blocks closer to the centre of the campus and moving the proposed centre and 300-bed hotel further away from homes would placate objectors.

But campaigners are sticking to their view that all the grassy slopes, which are subject to a village green application and public inquiry, should not be developed.

Dozens of residents attended the exhibition to view the latest plans and hear a presentation by deputy vice-chancellor Professor Keith Mander and the architects.

He told the Gazette: "We have taken into account residents' views and are



Save Chaucer Fields campaigners Ursula Harris, David Smith and Mike Blissett examine the University of Kent's plans

now proposing pulling the conference centre and hotel back behind the line of the Chaucer College and screening it from the lower slopes with landscaping.

"We have separated the developments because we need to urgently build more student accommodation as the number of applications we are receiving is well above what we can currently provide."

But Prof Mander said while there

were no foreseeable plans, he could not guarantee the university would never build on the lower slopes in the future.

There were heated exchanges between protesters and the university during a question and answer session.

After the meeting, Save Chaucer Fields chairman David Smith said: "The planned 4/5 storey conference centre with more than 300 bedrooms and large car park would have a dra-

'We continue to believe there are other sites on the campus available to the university'

matic negative impact on the landscape, residents, students and environment.

"We do not have a problem with the new location for the student accommodation but made it very clear to Professor Mander that we will continue to robustly oppose the proposal in order to save the slopes.

"It was evident there is still huge concern within the local community.

"We continue to believe there are other sites on the campus available to the university."

The university has yet to decide whether it will be making two separate planning applications for its student accommodation and hotel proposals.

Copies of the presentation exhibition boards are available at www.kent.ac.uk/consultation2012.

Kentish Gazette - 27th September 2012

Reproduced with the kind permission of the KM Group