



**Peaceful protest:** Campaigners held a picnic to demonstrate against development plans

# Picnic protest to save fields

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CAMPAIGNERS against the proposed student hub at Chaucer Fields fear the University of Kent has postponed meetings in order to create a winning plan.

The first planning meeting for the £60million student accommodation, hotel and conference centre was deferred on June 28, after university bosses said they needed more time to gather information.

The "green belt" between the university and housing estate at Hales Place has been earmarked for the site of a 150-room hotel, 800 student rooms and conference centre with 200 parking spaces.

A site visit planned for Thursday, July 7 was also cancelled for the same reason.

Sebastian Ross, from protest group Save Chaucer Fields, said: "They are building up a better case, seeing as they went in all guns blazing and didn't select a site that was very suitable. Now they've realised they need a stronger case with stronger evidence, and will use the next months to potentially build on that."

## Campaigners

Campaigners held an impromptu picnic at the fields last week to demonstrate how valuable the site is to the community.

Organiser Jeremy Kendall said: "People can't believe that the destruction of this place – to be lost forever to make space for a profit-maximising hotel, soulless conference centre and ugly student accommodation blocks – is

being considered, let alone taken seriously.

"Environmental, heritage, economic and social considerations all point in the same direction: proceeding in spite of this tide of opinion and evidence would be a foolhardy gamble and a massive mistake, whose cost will be borne by future generations."

University officials said a report to the city council drew attention to economical benefits, but other aspects of the scheme were not fully explained.

Deputy vice-chancellor Professor Keith Mander said: "The university has requested that detailed consideration of the planning application be deferred until later in the year, to allow all issues associated with the application to be properly understood.

"The university believes this will be in everyone's interests."

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