

Chaucer Fields/Southern Slopes and the University of Kent “Masterplan”

Information from the Chaucer Fields Picnic Society (CFPS)

(<https://chaucerfieldspicnicsociety.wordpress.com> & email: Chaucerfieldspicnicsociety@gmail.com)

The University of Kent is currently in the process of settling its “Masterplan”, as required by Canterbury City Council for the District Plan (to which it will be linked). The District Plan is the key statutory document determining where buildings/developments will be permitted up to 2031 in Canterbury and the surrounding area. **It has now been revealed that a discredited plan to build a 150 room “conferencing hotel” and associated facilities on Chaucer Fields/the Southern Slopes has been incorporated within the draft Masterplan.** (In a wooded part to the north of historic Dover Down field, east of Chaucer College and south of the Innovation Centre/University Road, see overleaf.)

Why discredited? The proposal directly contradicts the Masterplan’s own, widely welcomed, core aim of concentrating development at the centre of the campus. It also flies in the face of huge opposition from local residents, University staff, students and alumni, local government, and local civil society and voluntary sector groups expressed over a 7 year period (when earlier plans to “develop” the Southern Slopes on an enormous scale were first mooted). This opposition stems from the extent to which this landscape currently functions as shared unspoilt green space, a “green lung” or “green gap” with high heritage value. It is treasured for its spectacular views of the city and cathedral, its historic mosaic pattern and ancient field structure; its natural and semi-natural beauty; and its constant use as a tranquil place for relaxation, recreation and leisure, play and wide range of pastimes. To force through “development” here would destroy this precious legacy, and poison the University authorities’ relationship with its own staff and students, as well as with local residents. It would also set a dangerous precedent for further “development” on other parts of the Southern Slopes.

There is a further window of opportunity this month for those who wish to see the fields retained as shared unspoilt green space to express their views. The schedule below shows the “consultation events” as part of “step 2” of the Masterplan process. Please try to attend one of these events to register your views about this aspect of the Masterplan, and any other aspects of the proposals where you would like to feedback to the University authorities. Please share a copy of your feedback with CFPS (Chaucerfieldspicnicsociety@gmail.com.) If you are unable to attend any of the events, please email Masterplan@kent.ac.uk and copy in Chaucerfieldspicnicsociety@gmail.com. (No timeframe for email submissions has been made known, but it is recommended that you submit your feedback by the end of October. The need to copy your material to CFPS arises because the Masterplan Team have been opaque concerning the use of feedback, despite requests for clarification. So making it available to CFPS can ensure it is taken seriously, and manage the risk of it being lost or summarily disregarded)

- Saturday 6 October 10.00-16.00, Westgate Hall
- Thursday 11 October 14.00-20.00, Tyler Hill Memorial Hall
- Friday 12 October 14.00-20.00, Blean Village Hall
- Thursday 18 October 10.00-16.00 Darwin Conference Suite, University of Kent, Canterbury

