

MOTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHAUCER FIELDS

The University of Kent UCU Branch opposes the proposed development on Chaucer Fields for the following reasons:

A. ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. ***Undermining Canterbury's 'Green belt' or 'Green lung':*** Chaucer Fields has long been considered a crucial part of the anti-sprawl buffer zone between the City and the University, prized since the 1960s when the Planning Inspectorate stressed the need to preserve open space in this vicinity for the benefit of all. Destroying this green space would reverse such a progressive and inclusive approach, degrading one of the key attractions of the University campus and the City alike.
2. ***Biodiversity loss:*** The development would result in a range of adverse biodiversity impacts, undermining the University's green credentials. They include the loss of habitat for wildlife and many birds species, including the loss of mature native trees and an extensive, historic pair of hedgerows; and the destruction of flora (as nurtured by Kent Union's Conservation Society, with "Creative Campus" support).
3. ***Disregard of recreation and leisure value:*** This unspoilt space currently provides a much valued space for the University's staff and students to walk, run and cycle, other local adults and children to relax, exercise and play. No account has been taken of these extensive benefits of Chaucer Fields as an unspoilt semi-natural space in the University's evaluation of the consequences of the development.
4. ***Pollution and congestion:*** There will also be a dramatic increase in light pollution, while extra traffic would contribute to congestion, journey times, and poorer air quality.

B. ADVERSE SOCIAL AND HERITAGE IMPACTS

5. ***Negative press for the University of Kent:*** There is demonstrably wide opposition to the proposal from all sectors of society. The University has been proud of its overall good relationship with the City and the District, and, given the competitive nature of HE, is keen to maintain a controversy-free image. Negative stories in the press are having and will continue to have an increasingly adverse impact on the University, damaging its reputation at crucial moment of its development.
6. ***Threat to community cohesion:*** The vast increase in student numbers in the area would lead to an imbalanced ratio of students to non-students in the affected neighbourhoods, and increase the likelihood of social tension between the two social groups.
7. ***Landscape:*** Chaucer Fields is within an 'Area of High Landscape Quality' (cf. Canterbury District Local Plan). The development violates this status, and will irreversibly spoil one of the most highly valued and widely experienced views of Canterbury, simultaneously combining a mediaeval field structure with a spectacular City vista, including the Marlowe, the Cathedral, the Westgate Towers, St Dunstan's Church and other historic buildings.

UCU welcomes the university's aspirations to increase capacity in the interests of staff, students and the local community, but urges the university to continue to search for alternative sites elsewhere on campus, including the full range of multi-site options.