

The Canterbury Society

Development Management
Canterbury City Council,
Council Offices,
Military Road,
CANTERBURY CT1

30 January 2013

Dear Sir,

Rhodaus Town development: CA/12/02140/FUL

We are writing to express our concern about this development. We hope that the Development Management Committee will decide to return the application for further consideration.

Whilst acknowledging that there is a need for student accommodation in Canterbury and that the area proposed is in need of re-development, there are a number of factors which we must raise in regard to this proposal.

Firstly, this appears to be an independent speculative venture without the involvement or support of the two major universities. Presumably the developers believe that once constructed both the University of Kent and Christ Church University, and even the University of Creative Arts, will become involved, and that their students would wish to avail themselves of the accommodation? Otherwise this could become an urban 'white elephant'. We would prefer such a venture to have the backing of one or more of these institutions, who would then support and manage the student residents appropriately.

Secondly, we are concerned about the look of the proposed development. In viewing the aesthetics of the proposal we have to balance the purpose and need of such a development with the nature of the surroundings and impact on nearby homes. What is proposed will, by its scale, dominate the environment for those living in the terrace housing in Lansdown Place.

The impression gained from the plans and photographs is that this is a development which would be better sited on its own campus. The blocks are too high, up to four floors, and by linkage, too long for this urban location. Obviously we acknowledge the developers' intention to plant lawns and trees to soften the visual impact, but the overall effect will be of large blocks.

Thirdly, there is also the question of materials. This part of southern England is essentially a brick-built area, apart from a few public buildings and the Cathedral in stone. The model and specifications suggest a development more suited to a warm climate such as the Mediterranean, where white or bright colours are used to reduce the heat. The specifications are for thin

coats of insulated render to be grey and white with certain faces, those serving stair wells, clad in grey insulated cladding panels. This will make the setting of long tall ranges very cold during the winter months. The elevation of Block D, which is the maximum height of the development, shows a rectangular wall surface of grey rendering supporting a large rectangular panel of diagonal insulated cladding panels. At first sight this seems like a panel for an advertising display and we feel it is alien to the location, whatever other merits it might have.

We also note that the visible sloping roof surfaces will be of PPC aluminium panelling of anthracite colour. Would something warmer be more appropriate? We also question why one plan shows block B1 and B" linked by a curved infill, not shown on a model or photograph; this will add to its massiveness. Consideration should be given to materials more fitting to the area. High quality warm-coloured brick, similar to recent building at the University of Kent would be more suitable, perhaps introducing bands of another colour to reduce feelings of mass. Grey render is going to quickly weather and look dowdy and for this reason a warm-toned brick would be better.

To sum up, we feel that if this area is to be designated for student accommodation, more thought needs to be put into the scale in relation to the character of this side of the City and into the building materials. We are also concerned that such a large development should be underwritten by one or other university institution before it is given approval. Universities usually ensure that there is someone responsible for the management of the building and without that, there could be problems.

Yours sincerely

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