

The Canterbury Society

Ms Katie Miller,
Development Control
Canterbury City Council
Military Road, Canterbury
Kent CT2 1YW

18 April 2011

Dear Ms Miller

Re Chaucer Fields Site CA/11/00528 and CA/11/00531

On behalf of the committee of the Canterbury Society we would like to make the following representations concerning the above applications.

Damaging impact on the site

Building on this site would have a destructive effect on a valuable open space located between the city and the university. It would spoil the views currently available up, down and across the entire landscape. This development runs counter to the whole layout of the University site and its gradual enhancement and conversion to a parkland setting over the last forty five years.

Development of this site is contrary to Local Plan Policy, in which the site is described as having High Landscape Value.

To the north of the site is a visually-significant woodland, which largely hides the Innovation Centre from the south. In spite of the statement in the proposal's "Executive Summary" that the "development is set into a clearing in woodland...", the truth revealed by the plans is that the proposals would lead to the destruction of about half of the woodland, leaving nothing of it on the south and east sides of the proposed hotel.

The track to Beverley Farmhouse, which would appear to date back over five hundred years, is also proposed to be eradicated (CA/11/00531). Currently this enhances a delightful walk up the hill. Further hedgerows are proposed to be removed as part of the application.

Problems with the proposed design

We would suggest that the designs are in themselves quite poor. However, we are more concerned about their height. The plans envisage a development on land rising about seventeen metres from the bridle path on the south edge. The hotel at the top rises to five floors and the whole development would have an unreasonably dominant effect upon the two-storey, family housing to the south.

Impact on the local community

The impact on the neighbouring housing, both in terms of the visual effects and the likely parking and vehicle movement, is not acceptable. Students coming and going late at night could well disturb residents.

The southern slopes have been understood to be a valuable open space, both for members of the University itself and for the people of the city. Indeed this is recognised by the area's inclusion in the City Council's Open Space Strategy.

Alternative locations for this development.

The insistence by the University on having all the proposed buildings close to each other and to the Innovation Centre has limited its ability fully to investigate other locations. The policy of locating student accommodation, a business park and a hotel together on the campus has led to a very constrained analysis of a group of buildings with a variety of different functions.

There are plenty of other less visually sensitive sites on the University's land. For example, locating student accommodation along the road to Parkwood could turn what is currently a rather scary walk for students going home at night into a safe, well lit and attractive part of the university campus. The hotel and conference centre could well be located behind and to the north of the Innovation Centre where they would be close to the main campus and to transport into the city, but would not be visible from the south.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Society feels that no development should be allowed on this important site. For all the above reasons we trust that the report to the Development Control Committee will recommend to Members that the application be refused.

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Blake and Jan Pahl, for the Canterbury Society

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