

Jeremy Kendall feedback to District Plan review, 27th July 2021¹

Response to “Preferred option”

Strongly Disagree. This is inconsistent with the vision and objectives in fundamental ways. The scale of new house building planned is excessive and would undermine the environment, heritage and social dimensions of the vision and objectives. Housing need can better be met by more sensible use of existing properties, often experiencing very high vacancy rates, and with building strictly circumscribed to take place on brown field sites. Many of the sites flagged in the current draft for potential development are in fact part of our heritage and have high environmental value, and building on these sites would presumably be forced through if this option were preferred, undermining the strategic objectives set by the council in relation to the environmental and heritage dimensions.

Please note that some of the sites put forward for potential development are on land owned and controlled by the University. It is shocking that these have been put forward, as it makes a mockery of the entire University Masterplan process, which made enormous demands on the local community and other stakeholders in terms of submitting their views. It is also an insult to the Council, because the Council collaborated in the process and was expected to sign it off in 2019/20 as a stepping stone to make planning in relation to the University land holdings more defensible and predictable and less chaotic/disorderly than it has been to date.

It should be recalled that the Masterplan explicitly states that developments on this land must be concentrated on the central part of the campus. In a follow up to this commitment, it was also requested that ‘development’ should be defined to include any car park development proposals, which had been treated in a confused and opaque way in the original proposals. The inclusion of sites in the middle range of peripheral parts of the campus therefore treats the University’s own Masterplan with contempt. Not to mention the many local people and experts who contributed to its development. The obvious thing to do here would be to turn this disastrous misunderstanding into a positive situation for the District. The relevant land – including Chaucer fields, and the relevant Northern and Eastern Land Holdings - should not only be dismissed as inappropriate for development as per the Masterplan principles, but actively be given “open space” or higher level protected status, ideally in perpetuity. This would seem to be the only way to anticipate and deter the University authorities from making the same mistakes in the future.

¹ Please note: This supercedes any feedback which was submitted via the online process, to the extent that was registered (but it is impossible to tell from the online process whether it was actually submitted or not.

The other obvious problem is the so-called "upgrade" of the A28. The actual plans do not suggest an "upgrade" but a major road building programme, which would be perverse, and directly contradict the council's strategic objectives to circumscribe car use, whilst damaging valued open space in the District.

Actions to modify "Preferred option"

1. Downscale to more realistic levels the proposed housebuilding target
2. Abandon the damaging A28 roadbuilding project
3. Assert the value of the threatened open spaces, especially in the vicinity of the university, and implement the campus Masterplan principles (subject to clarification on some of its potentially damaging ambiguities regarding car parks).

Taken together, this means the "Preferred Option" is not desirable or viable, and instead the Council should adopt a reverting to the "Canterbury focus A+" option – please see below

Response to option A

Agreed as the best offered alternative - but conditionally only

The following condition should be attached:

- Assuming the new housing aspirations involved with this option are non-negotiable (due to anticipated central government fiat) this new build should be concentrated on brown field sites. This means rejecting development of most of the land put forward as options elsewhere in the documentation. Rather, the high value green open space sites should not only not be developed, but be given special protections to ensure they are not lost, and support the Council's open space, environmental and heritage vision and objectives
- The new housing must obviously avoid those locations where environmental, heritage and open space damage would be especially intense, and also involve other adverse impacts for the local community and local stakeholders. In this context, rule out those proposed development sites which directly contradicts the University of Kent's campus Masterplan commitment to restrict development to the central core of campus
- It is proposed that Option A with these conditions attached be referred to as "Canterbury Focus A+" for ease of reference.

Responses to options B – D

All other *Options*: *Strongly disagree with all on the following grounds*:

- *Coastal focus*: Skewed development would disproportionately damage coastal locations and fail to distribute new build housing appropriately
- *Rural focus*: Skewed development would disproportionately damage villages and fail to distribute new build housing appropriately;
- *The 'new free standing settlement' option*: This is too vaguely specified and not set out with the level of clarity required for a meaningful choice to be considered