

A letter from Chairs of the Parish Councils of Blean, Hackington, Harbledown & Rough Common to Acting Vice Chancellor, Professor Georgina Randsley de Moura, University of Kent

CC: Canterbury City Councillors

Professor Jane Harrington, Vice-Chancellor, University of Greenwich

Rosie Duffield MP

Dear Vice Chancellor,

We write on behalf of our residents in the three Parish Councils adjacent to the University.

You and your colleagues must be acutely aware of the overwhelming and well evidenced opposition expressed by the local community who wrote in large numbers (1,244 responses in the March-June 2024 Regulation 18 public consultation) to convey their deep anxieties about the proposal to build 2,000 houses on University of Kent land (policy C12 in the March 2024 draft District Local Plan). Our three Parish Councils (Blean, Hackington and Rough Common), on behalf of their (and your) communities, submitted detailed commentaries explaining why the proposal was not sustainable. A petition which attracted over 25,000 signatures was presented to the District Council, an extraordinary demonstration of public resistance. Kent County Council, National Highways, Natural England, The Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust, CPRE Kent, Kent Wildlife Trust and other organisations all condemned the C12 policy as environmentally damaging and technically non-viable.

The depth of local opposition was captured in a participatory social research report, [*Voices of the Blean*](#), published in August 2025 by UCL Anthropology Department, CPRE Kent, Kent Wildlife Trust and the Community Planning Alliance (CPA), which documents the strength of local communities' attachment to the land proposed for development and the significant impacts on their health and wellbeing (64% of respondents said that the development plans had impacted their health and wellbeing). This is not just a fringe objection: it is a unified cross-sector rejection of a deeply flawed and damaging plan.

Having considered the representations and the body of evidence our (and your) elected representatives in the District Council rightly decided that C12 was not viable and deleted it from the draft Local Plan.

Our residents, your neighbours, learned with a mix of emotions - ranging from disbelief and dismay through to considerable anger - that the University proposes to ignore the decision of locally elected representatives, the views of our local communities and the weight of evidence from regional and national bodies, in pursuit of its plan for extensive, irreversibly destructive building on its farmland. The suggestion that the University alone knows what is best for Canterbury and the South East strikes as not only presumptuous but politically tone deaf, environmentally reckless and socially divisive. It is a betrayal of the university's "civic mission" laid out in its [2025 Kent Strategy](#) to serve local communities "by contributing actively and sustainably to their health, wellbeing, prosperity and success." On the contrary, the university's development plans have already negatively impacted the health, wellbeing, prosperity and success of surrounding communities, as documented in the [*Voices of the Blean*](#) report. For example, 28% of respondents said that the development plans had

already forced them to change their plans for the future, with 62 respondents planning to move away from the area.

We appreciate the significant contribution which the University has made over many decades to the local area. However, we have viewed with increasing concern its decline and apparent disarray over the last few years. While acknowledging the external financial pressures, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the University seeks to pass their financial burden onto the local community by sacrificing irreplaceable farmland and green space for short term financial relief. This is not responsible leadership. The University should not underestimate the deep level of resentment and betrayal this has generated.

You claim that the development 'offers a critical opportunity to generate capital that can be reinvested directly into our core mission'. The evidence from the University accounts suggests that it will in fact be used to service capital debt. Only sustained high level recruitment and academic excellence will lead to a long-term resolution of the financial challenges, not the liquidation of environmental assets. The community is not fooled by this narrative. It seems clearly that the proposed development is a financial manoeuvre not a strategic vision.

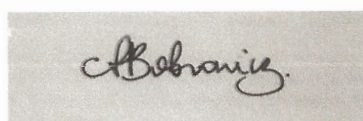
We welcomed and endorsed the commitments in the University 2019 Framework Masterplan that "The Sarre Penn Valley (C12) is a great asset to the campus in providing a green setting to the north of the University as well as a more rural landscape character, **which is a major part of the University's attractiveness to students, academic staff and visitors ... contributes to the University's reputation of a very verdant campus** recognises the high value of this character area as predominantly open amenity space and agricultural land, to balance with the consolidation and intensification of the Campus Heart. The masterplan is intended to conserve and enrich the natural landscape features of our campus, including in the areas identified within the Sarre Penn character area; the proposals therefore include only very limited development within the Sarre Penn Valley."

For long term recruitment and institutional reputation, the vision in the 2019 Master Plan remains critical. As one of our constituents has suggested 'imagine the University positioning itself as the UK's leading institution committed to green transformation and biodiversity'. That is a future worth investing in: a future that inspires students, staff and the community.

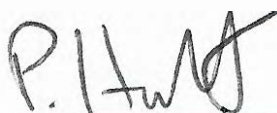
We are committed to work closely with the University for a sustainable future benefitting all our communities. But we urge you to unequivocally abandon the plan to overturn the deletion of C12. We appeal to you to be part of our mission to secure a thriving, biodiverse and environmentally sensitive future or to stand isolated against the will of your neighbours, your city and your region.

On behalf of our communities:

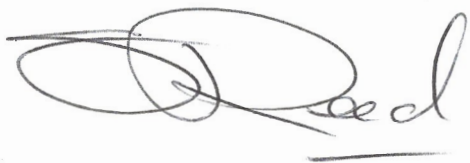
Ania Bobrowicz, Chair of Hackington Parish Council



Phil Hutt, Chair of Blean Parish Council



Sarah Reed, Chair of Rough Common & Harbledown Parish Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Reed', with a horizontal line underneath the name.