

60 YEARS OF GROWTH

A changing campus landscape

“The land on which the campus has been developed over the last half century includes three former farms: Brotherhood, Beverley and Hothe Court. The names of these farms and some of the former farmhouses and other agricultural buildings remain embedded in the University Estate as a ‘palimpsest’ or memory of past use. In addition, former field lines, tracks and paths, woodlands and evidence of agricultural workings can be seen in the open spaces of the campus.

Beneath these layers of historic land use, the underlying topographical features of landform and watercourses shaped both the former agricultural use and the original campus plan” (*University of Kent Canterbury Campus Masterplan 2019*) and now inform much our Landscape and Biodiversity Plans for the future.



Aerial view of the current campus. Credit: University of Kent

Managing the campus green spaces

Our work through the [Biodiversity and Landscape strategy](#) is to enhance the natural spaces that encompass our built environment, providing valuable amenity space to support people’s wellbeing, the University’s overall look and appeal, and importantly conserve and boost the natural environment for wildlife. The campus is not one environment, but several, and is composed of a complex collage of land parcels and habitats including: ancient woodland, orchards, grassland, meadows, watercourses and amenity landscaping.



Bluebell Wood. Credit: Emily Mason.

Management of these habitats is informed by the habitat makeup itself, species survey data, and expertise on campus. We utilise a range of techniques to manage the site including the use of modern equipment alongside traditional techniques such as coppicing. Design of new spaces, like the 60th Anniversary Orchard, are informed by the history of the land as a former orchard and the need for faster aging trees, which provide a unique habitat for birds and invertebrates, providing forage for both them and us, as well as decaying wood. As part of the 60th celebrations we are also working to link the new orchard to another growing project, Kent Community Oasis Garden, through the design of a new walking trail that celebrates our natural environment.

The River, whilst not an actual river, is a meandering trail that winds through campus connecting key habitats and plant communities that are being celebrated for their impact on wildlife, food provisional, medicinal properties and more.

Looking forward: Food, Nature and Wellbeing

Food, Nature and Wellbeing are three elements that tell the story of how we use the campus green space going forward.

These bring together the goals of several projects such as the Kent Community Oasis Garden (KentCOG), Nature Positive Universities, Right to Food, and University of Sanctuary, that all together build a picture of using our natural spaces more intentionally to support our wellbeing. This could be through growing more food to support nutrient rich diets and access to fresh produce; engaging people directly with wildlife building back our relationship with nature; and opening our doors more to the community to share this incredible space with.



Demonstrating mammal footprint tunnels to local children as part of the BioBlitz. Credit: Holly Atkinson. Students at the Kent Community Oasis Garden. Credit: Chris Wenham.

KentCOG aims to bring all of these three things together as it redevelops and expands into the old Hothe Court Farmhouse, fundraising to transform it into a Nature in Wellbeing Centre in partnership with East Kent Mind. Hothe Court Farmhouse, one of the original three farms the University was built upon will see itself become the heart of food growing once again as well providing opportunities for hands on engagement with nature and supporting students, staff and community members with their wellbeing.