



CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL

REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

Scheme: Cambridge North West (Streets- Lot A)

Date: 30th July 2013

Venue: The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP

Time: 9:30-10:55

Quality Panel Members

Simon Carne (Chair)
David Birkbeck
David Pritchard
Lynne Sullivan
Canda Smith
Oliver Smith

Panel secretariat and support

Juliet Richardson (Cambridgeshire County Council)
Judith Carballo (Cambridgeshire County Council)

Local Authority Attendees

Mark Parsons (Cambridge City Council)
Michael Osbourn (South Cambridgeshire County Council)
Sophie Pain (Cambridge City Council)
Sinéad O'Donoghue (Cambridgeshire County Council)
Ian Dyer (Cambridgeshire County Council)
Nicholas Wyke (Cambridgeshire County Council)

Applicant and Representatives

Emma Askew, University of Cambridge
Roger Taylor, University of Cambridge
Jonathan Rose, AECOM Masterplanning
Rosanna Law, AECOM Masterplanning
Warren Osborne, AECOM Landscape
Jason Shinoda, AECOM Landscape
Sam Archer, AECOM Sustainability
David Smith, URS
Melissa Enderby, AECOM Planning
Heather Topel, AECOM Planning



1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer AECOM/URS
Developer Cambridge University
Planning status Pre Application Stage

2. Overview

The North West Cambridge site is located to the north west of Cambridge City and straddles land within the administrative areas of both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council. The site sits at a strategic gateway location between key approaches into Cambridge City, Huntingdon Road and Maddingley Road. The site is screened by existing development and does not have significant frontage, aside from the M11 which defines the western boundary of the site. The historic core of Cambridge is 1.5 – 2 km from the site and within easy reach on both foot and bicycle. To the north of the site, approximately 4 kms from the city and the other side of Huntingdon Road is Girton, a village of 4,500 people. Adjacent sites which impact the development of North West Cambridge include Darwin Green (1, 2, & 3), and West Cambridge.

The development is the subject of a planning permission, dated February 2013.
The development proposals include:

- At least 3,000 new homes (of which 50% will be for University and College staff), including family, detached, semi detached and terraced housing and apartments;
- 100,000 sq.m. of academic and commercial research space, providing further research facilities for the University, along with specialist employment premises and local job opportunities.
- Accommodation for 2,000 University students;
- A local centre including a supermarket and unit shops, a new primary school, a nursery, public health care, police touchdown facilities and community facilities (two additional nurseries will be provided in other locations across the site);
- Sustainable Urban Drainage systems to manage flood risk, encourage wildlife and to provide an attractive landscaped environment; and
- New green spaces and improved access to the countryside.

The development will be delivered to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 for residential development and BREEAM Excellent for non-domestic buildings.

The community centre at Gravell Hill farm is expected to open in autumn 2013. This gives an opportunity to Cambridge University for working closely with Local Authorities.

First completions on site by March 2015.



3. Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views

Introduction

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review lot A of Cambridge North West Development which includes primary, secondary and tertiary streets. It is crucial that the quality and design of the roads are of high quality in order to provide a positive impact for those living and using the area.

The Panel were pleased to see that Cambridge University has encouraged discussion between the different lots.

The Panel's advice below reflects the issues associated with each of the four 'C's' in the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter.

Community

The Panel recognised the importance of Cambridge University managing parking zones by an application parking permit system, prioritising who needs them the most, and the option of free club car membership from day one.

The streets will be the glue that holds the development together. However the designs were poorly presented and understanding the aims behind the detail rather than the coding advice was not possible.

Connectivity

The Panel raised some concerns about how much traffic this development would generate from people coming from Histon Road to the Park and Ride but it was noted that this development is unlikely to generate high volume of traffic.

"Incidents" in the less urban parts of the primary street have been introduced but there was no detail to describe how these would affect the connectivity through the site.

Character

The Panel recommended that primary, secondary and tertiary roads should be named as streets to avoid confusion. It is important that their quality as low speed environments is part of the design.

The Panel criticised the lack of design development, sketch ideas and detailed drawings on the proposal, the absence of a narrative, made it difficult to see what takes place as you travel along the road. This reduced the opportunity for the Panel to comment on the proposal.

When the infrastructure development is built, the street appearance will require signing and other features that were completely absent from the design. Ill considered signing will deteriorate the quality of the place.

Reliance on design code diagrams meant that consideration of each form for secondary and tertiary streets and their relationship to the emerging lots was not possible.

There was no discussion possible of street lighting and the quality of lighting across the street public realm.

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Climate

Refuse collection depends on street containers. These are significant objects and will require a high level of maintenance and management. They will have a major impact on the street scene.



There were some concerns raised over SUDS and swale capacity and its proximity to the primary road. It was noted that the extension of swales is based on studies after 70 years of rain. The Panel questioned why the designers have selected plants that demand a lot of water and the number of plant variations used.

Secondary and tertiary roads will not be adopted as they offer flexibility for permeable paving.

4. Conclusion

The Panel considered the proposal to be poorly illustrated, lacking character and failing to provide a description of the overall plan and its development as a design from the stage of coding. It would have been beneficial to have a set of drawings referring to “vision” to demonstrate the character of the possible public realm, then taken into detail for the Panel’s discussion.

The flythrough shown went some way towards a better representation but suffered from lack of character, difficulty in orientation and speed. If this is to be used again it needs to be properly prepared.

The key issues and recommendations raised by the Panel are highlighted below (these replicate the comments made in the main body of the report, further details of which can be found above):

- The Panel recommended reducing the amount of tarmac initially proposed.
- The design and access statement for this design (which was not presented) is a key document. Lack of detail and cross sections means the design fails to provide a full perspective of the overall scheme. A clearer picture of the street appearance such as what a primary route will look like needs to be covered.
- Street corners, lot access points and incidents, all require design input and explanation.
- What are the important views and how does the street design bring focus?
- How are street signed and destinations signposted?
- Location and quality of lighting was not addressed?

Further comments were made on the public realm in the discussion on Lot 4 and 5.



CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL

REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

Scheme: Cambridge North West: Streets (Lot A)

Date: 10th September 2013

Venue: Room 0A2, Castle Court, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge

Time: 9:30-12:15

Quality Panel Members

Robin Nicholson (Chair)
David Birkbeck
George Hazel
Lynne Sullivan
Oliver Smith
Simon Carne

Panel secretariat and support

Antony Proietti (Cambridgeshire County Council)
Judit Carballo (Cambridgeshire County Council)

Local Authority Attendees

Dinah Foley-Norman (Principal Landscape Architect, Cambridge City Council)
Mark Parsons (Principal Planning Officer, Cambridge City Council)
Sophie Pain (Senior Planning Officer, Cambridge City Council)
Bonnie Kwok (Senior Urban Designer, South Cambridgeshire District Council)
David Hamilton (Landscape Design Officer, South Cambridgeshire District Council)

Applicant and Representatives

Heather Topel (University of Cambridge)
Gavin Coull (University of Cambridge)
Jim Strike (AECOM Planning)
Tom Smith (AECOM Landscaping)
Warren Osborne (AECOM Landscaping)



1. Scheme description

Architect/Designer Aecom

Developer University of Cambridge

Planning status Reserved Matters Stage (Pre-application)

2. Overview

The North West Cambridge site is located to the north west of Cambridge City and straddles land within the administrative areas of both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council. The development is the subject of an outline planning permission, dated February 2013.

The Panel reviewed the design of the Streets (Lot A) on 30th July 2013. Since that time, and following the Quality Panel report, further work has been undertaken on the design of the scheme.

The Panel's advice reflects the issues associated with the four 'C's' in the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter. The comments below include both those raised in the open session of the meeting and those from the close session discussions.

3. Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views

The Panel were pleased to note that the issues and recommendations provided by the Quality Panel on the Streets proposals at the previous meeting had been addressed.

The Panel considered that signage and street lighting for the scheme will be very important elements and impact on the design of the overall proposals. It was acknowledged that these issues were still being worked on.

The Panel noted that the scheme used a number of different materials and questioned whether this could be simplified. There could be long-term maintenance issues in terms of matching the quality of the original material after maintenance work has been carried out, particularly considering the range of materials that are proposed. This could have an impact on the look of the public realm.

The Panel questioned the rationale of having cycleways on both sides of the road and whether this resulted in the street sections being particularly wide.

The Panel noted that the design of the scheme is now much clearer. However, they questioned whether the low design speed could be achieved particularly in the early stages, when the character would be one of a road rather than a street. This would encourage the use of higher speeds and potentially set behaviours which would then be difficult to change. The Panel also discussed the difficulties of designing the street layouts ahead of the designs of the adjacent buildings.

The Panel queried the planting regime on the vacant plots and whether there is an opportunity for using these productively before they are developed. The Panel considered the interim treatment of the primary road and whether the western edge of the road could be sheltered through planting.

The Panel questioned the relationship of the primary street to the secondary streets. The Panel was pleased to learn that there would be a hierarchy of materials marking the transition from primary to secondary and tertiary roads'.

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The Panel raised the issue of rat running, but noted that this proposal was in line with the outline approval and the County's transport strategy for North West Cambridge. The Panel advocated the use of a "monitor and manage" approach in order to respond to the future transport implications.



The Panel noted the continuing role of the master developer and long-term responsibility.