



## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL**

### REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

#### **Scheme: Cambridge North West (Lot 7)**

**Date:** 06<sup>th</sup> August 2013

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

**Time:** 09:00-10:30

#### **Quality Panel Members**

John Worthington (Chair)  
Simon Carne  
David Birkbeck  
David Pritchard  
Lynne Sullivan

#### **Panel secretariat and support**

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

#### **Local Authority Attendees**

Sophie Pain (Cambridge City Council)  
Sarah Chubb (Cambridge City Council)  
Ian Dyer (Cambridgeshire County Council)

#### **Applicant and Representatives**

Stuart McKnight, MUMA  
Emma Askew, University of Cambridge  
Heather Topel, University of Cambridge  
Sam Archer, AECOM Sustainability  
Desmond Tan, URS  
Melissa Enderby, AECOM Planning



## 1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer	MUMA
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 Madingley 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 between 1.5 – 2 km from the site and within easy reach on both foot and bicycle. To the north of the site, approximately 4 km 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 Gravel 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 7 of Cambridge North West Development. This lot comprises the community centre and the nursery.

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



## Community

The Panel highlighted the importance of using the buildings with a long-term strategy in mind, and noted that different uses have been tested providing enough flexibility by making the rooms independently from each other, but making them complementary at the same time..

The Panel noted that there are currently three artists engaged with the NW Cambridge site, the first commission was the eastern edge and most recently, artists have been shortlisted and interviewed for the local centre. Through the briefing and development process for the new building and relationships with the surrounding communities and the temporary community centre opened up on the site, there is an opportunity at this early stage to start building a sense of community.

The architects showed an admirable concern for understanding users' requirements. This project could be used as the focus for developing community involvement and integrating the development with surrounding communities.

The Panel raised some concerns about the budget and queried how the site is going forward in terms of procurement and also queried whether there are different budget pots for the building and fitting out. It was noted that there are still discussions with Cambridge City Council at this stage and that the applicants are aware of the situation.

The Panel highlighted that the management involvement is very important and it would be crucial to have someone appointed on site as soon as possible, as this facility will be on site before any of the Key Working Homes.

The lot is related to the Market Square, school and bus and cycle routes becoming a natural hub for community interaction and communicating information about functions. Using construction hoardings during the building stage for telling the story of what is to come will establish the location, as a place of interchange and connection.

The final scheme should consider notice boards, a showcase window and friendly settings for casual encounters.

## Connectivity

The Panel liked the use of sharing drop-off spaces with the proposed primary school situated to the north of the site. To accommodate this, the Panel commend the attention the architects have shown to liaising with surrounding sites. The panel was also pleased to see that parents and carers arriving by cycle were also accommodated.

The Panel recognised that the demographics of this development are very important. It can be assumed that the majority of people are healthy, nevertheless it was good to see that there are disabled car parking spaces and step free access to the centre provided to the west of the site which allows level access for disabled people.

The Panel were impressed by the depth and quality of thought that had gone into the development of a clear and logical building plan that related its functional relationships to its surroundings and internal movement patterns.

## Character

The Panel welcomed the explanation of the design development that led to what was felt by the entire panel to be an elegant, sensitive and sophisticated proposal. The height of the main hall, though outside the parameter specification functionally relates to the

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acoustic of the building and its natural ventilation. The Hall's scale and character were liked. The panel supported the need for the additional height which though exceeding the parameter threshold was justified by the location, social prominence of the buildings, interior functions, quality of architecture and kept within the spirit of the parameter plan.

The panel was impressed by the organisational and technical analysis of this complicated brief. The panel liked the courtyard composition and use of external circulation to the garden. The courtyard landscape design will need to address privacy and the potential needs of children's play and more formal functions

In relation to the nursery, the Panel noted that although there is not a corridor for internal circulation, the classrooms are self contained for services.

## Climate

Photovoltaic panels weren't shown in the presentation, but it was noted that the design includes photovoltaic panels over the roofs.

## **4. Conclusion**

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 commended the quality of the design and the thoroughness in understanding the brief. The opportunity for this Lot to be a focus for early community involvement is being pursued positively, with input from artists in residence. The development team might usefully share experience with Clay Farm, Hobson's Square (Master Developer, Countryside) who are more advanced in the development process

- The height of the main hall exceeds the parameters but within the spirit of the plans and codes. The Panel felt that the design made a positive contribution to the identity and wayfinding within the central area.
- The buildings are an asset to the community, and the adaptability of the spaces to be most effectively used and managed by the community should be explored by the community in parallel with the construction programme
- Further consider the building plans according to the relationship between public realm, semi public, privileged and private spaces.
- Work with Townshend Landscape Architects developing the interface between the public realm and surrounding areas, focussing on the drop off space for nursery and primary school and mingling space outside the community hall entrance.