



## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL**

### REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

#### **Scheme: Cambridge North West (Lot 8)**

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> July 2013

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

**Time:** 11:10-12:35

#### **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)  
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  
Andrew Turton, AECOM Sustainability  
Richard Lavington, Maccreanor Lavington Architects  
Anna Tenow, Maccreanor Lavington Architects  
Steven Witherford, Witherford Watson Mann  
Freddie Phillipson, Witherford Watson Mann  
Sam Archer, AECOM Sustainability  
David Smith, URS  
Melissa Enderby, AECOM Planning  
Heather Topel, AECOM Planning



## 1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer	Maccreeanor Lavington Architects/ Witherford Watson Mann
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 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.

1.5. 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 8 of Cambridge North West Development. A development centred around 2 apartment buildings, with Cambridge walk up stairways and courtyard gardens to rear, there is also frontage onto the ridgeway and

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the primary street. The Panel considered this as a transitional development lot between the Veteran Oak and the Market Square. The development block will also contain other uses, including a hotel and an older person/care home facility within the masterplan. These elements have not been commissioned yet and so were not part of this review.

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

## Community

The Panel viewed this proposal to be part collegiate and part town with limited public access. The southernmost block was designed to be capable of conversion to retail and this was considered a sensible option.

The site could be an appropriate location for the management office on site to manage all key worker homes and new arrival issues. The pastoral role of the University for short term tenancies could be located on this site. It was also said that if more offices are needed they could be opened elsewhere on other Lots.

The Panel welcomed the quality of the inner courtyard although this was marred by the need to accommodate a large number of bicycles under cover in the garden. As this was the first key worker housing development reviewed the different approaches to bicycle housing were not apparent or discussed in detail. It appears that other solutions have been developed and this scheme could benefit from reconsideration of this important facility. The units were an interesting typology and generous in space standards.

How they will be used by the evolving key worker residents, including the accommodation of small children, will be interesting to observe in the future and a subject touched upon in other reviews.

## Connectivity

Access and vehicular movements in and around the site would depend on how potential neighbouring uses especially trade waste refuse collection from the proposed hotel evolved.

As the private courtyard and parking court will be enclosed by future developments, more detail on the adjoining hotel use would have been helpful. Reference to the masterplan block model indicated a significant parking court for the hotel.

## Character

The Panel appreciated the elegant character of the proposals. There is a clear and attractive treatment of the massing, with variation in height to express corners and important parts of the three outward facing elevations. The restrained colour palette of neutral pre cast concrete and brickwork, accentuated by colourful incidents was particularly appreciated. Particular reference was made to the north facing corner elevation which creates a visual cohesion. The building demonstrated a texture and depth with deep reveals in the windows.



The Panel were pleased to see the response to the height of buildings at the Ridgeway. The change is managed by giving flexibility to the ground floor that can be converted through different retail uses in the future.

The Panel questioned the use of north facing flats, but it was pointed out that most units were dual fronted. There are no private balconies but the walkways are slightly deeper than required and the Panel welcomed the use of the access balconies as a social space.

The Ridgeway view of entrances with a small private garden could be an attractive feature, but will depend on tenants taking ownership and the quality of site wide management. The lack of cycle parking to the front elevation of the development was also noted as a deficiency.

The diagonal entrance at the southern corner with its splash of colour was particularly appreciated.

## Climate

The Panel questioned how the roof is used. As with other schemes, to meet the demand of code 5, the roof needs to be dedicated to photovoltaic panels. The opportunity to use flat roofs as social spaces was mentioned by the panel. This was to become a recurring theme with different provision across other lots.

There was a detailed exposition of the design team's approach to the use of load bearing masonry to achieve code 5 insulation and energy requirements.

The Panel were concerned at the lack of shading to some south and west facing windows leading possibly to overheating. Most units benefit from dual aspect or at least corner situations which was considered a positive benefit. All units will be naturally ventilated and will also include a mechanical system.

## **4. Conclusion**

The Panel highlighted that this as a very solid scheme with a heartening depth of detail. The concern remains over the new hotel proposed adjacent to the site and the need to ensure that it blends in with the surrounding area with regards to materials and design.

Key observations included:

- Allocation of other spaces for bicycles and other ground floor storage.
- Lack of balconies and private open space.
- Concern that the generous space standards and elegant design could be delivered within the budget.

In general, the Panel were very satisfied with the architectural approach. They were pleased to see such a well thought through and detailed proposal in which the construction detail had also been considered. The Panel also were very comfortable with the minor deviations from the parameter plans.