



CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL

REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

Scheme: North West Cambridge Lot 2

Date: 15th July 2014

Venue: Castle Court Room 0A2, Cambridgeshire County Council, CB3 0AP

Time: 13:00- 14:30

Quality Panel Members

John Worthington (chair)

Lynne Sullivan

Simon Carne

George Hazel

Stephen Platt

Panel secretariat and support

Judit Carballo – Cambridgeshire County Council

Sinéad O’Donoghue – Cambridgeshire County Council

Local Authority Attendees

Sophie Pain – Senior Planning Officer, Cambridge City Council

Nelia Parmaklieva – Senior Urban Designer, Cambridge City Council

Applicant and Representatives

Heather Topel – University of Cambridge

Jim Strike– AECOM Planning

Ginny Jukes – AECOM Planning

Gavin Henderson – Stanton Williams

Henry Williams – Stanton Williams

Gary Alden – Townshend Landscape Architects



1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer Stanton Williams/ J and L Gibbons/ Robert
Townshend Landscape/ URS/ AECOM SDG/
CAE

Applicant University of Cambridge

Planning status Pre Reserved Matters

2. Overview

Lot 2 covers an area of 1.8ha. It is bordered by primary and secondary accesses including Primary Street to the west and Busgate Street to the east, and a dense mix of uses including the Market Square. Lot 2 also includes a small section of land that is hugged by Lot 3 to the north, east and south; Primary Street forms its western boundary.

In addition, Lot 2 includes the Market Square at the heart of the Local Centre, which will provide a destination and urban setting for the new buildings of this development.

This scheme comprises the following:

- 264 key worker units (98 bedroom units, 163 two bedroom units and 3 four bedroom units)
- 1884 sqm of commercial uses (A1,A3 and A4)
- Flexible community space
- Car and cycle parking
- Landscaping
- Public realm
- Utilities
- Associated ancillary structures

It contains 9 buildings and 3 typologies with varied façades and 3 'object' buildings. The landscaped areas are based on routes through the site and are semi permeable, semi-public spaces – not private. The detail of 'arrival courts' is being worked on.

The new residents will be a mix of the University's key workers and their families, as well as market housing residents and students.

Four meetings have taken place with developers at which building heights were discussed, with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) questioning if there was enough variation in terms of palette used. The LPA considers that the object buildings may need further emphasis through variety of materials used.

It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted in October (this will be preceded by a ghost application) with a view to a decision being made at JDCC in December or January.



3. Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views

Introduction

The Panel were pleased to see the proposals at the pre-determination stage and as part of an iterative and on-going process. Having Quality Panel involvement at a number of stages of the scheme ensures that the Quality Panel principles are embedded and reinforced into the design of the development.

The Panel welcomed the model provided by the applicant which was considered very helpful.

The Panel's advice reflects the issues associated with each of 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 closed session discussions.

Community

The Panel discussed the social spaces within the development. They noted that in general establishments such as cafés, pubs and restaurants are associated with these types of spaces and questioned if there was any brief for the social spaces proposed within the development and if the spaces would be flexible. The applicant confirmed that they were working on a brief for these spaces but also noted that other social facilities would be available via the hotel, the retail offering and the community centre. The Panel acknowledged that the 'pastoral care' element of the development should be left to define themselves as the development progresses. The social space should be flexible and perhaps not commercial. They noted that consideration should be given to how social spaces operate throughout the day.

The Panel highlighted the fact that all colleges within the University have communal areas for worship and eating and appreciated that it would be difficult to replicate these in this development but suggested a possible link with the social space and wondered if communal kitchens might provide a solution. They suggested that in landscaped areas of open space provision could be made for barbeque facilities which would further encourage social interaction. The applicant noted that opportunities for community gardening were being considered.

Connectivity

Following the presentation the Panel queried the number of car parking spaces relating to the development and the applicant provided a detailed explanation of parking across the site.

They questioned if internal residential unit space standards (e.g. London standards) were used given the limited amount of private open space. The applicant confirmed that the emphasis was very much on providing generous communal space. This led to a question from the Panel about the nature of the terraces and whether they would be planted. The applicant confirmed that these were not public spaces but for the use of residents and that they would be planted and paved. A description of the servicing arrangement, for both the residential and commercial parts of the development, was also provided by the applicant.



The Panel were positive about the connectivity of the site. They commended its sustainability and its reduced car parking provision. They encouraged the applicant to build on existing good practice and consider initiatives such as reduced public transport and ticket pricing which would help to ensure the site would work as it is envisaged. They noted however that the issue may be outside the applicant's control as people will ultimately do as they wish.

The Panel questioned if any consideration had been given to where short stay visitors might stay within the development. The applicant mentioned that a hotel would form part of the adjacent development but also acknowledged that this was an issue that still had to be resolved.

Character

The Panel were positive about the scheme, with the majority of comments and suggestions relating to the use of spaces. They commended the Market Square for its generous space and integration with the landscape but raised concerns about the arrival courts within the residential element of the scheme and how blank some of the associated walls seemed in the presentation material. They questioned if these might end up being dead spaces and noted that the enclosed nature of the cycle parking did not work particularly well in its current form suggesting that more landscaping might be required. The applicant accepted this point, saying that the character of the spaces could be looked at. The Panel referred to another development on the CNW site which proposes to use an alternative colour brick at the entrance to the buildings for orientation purposes. They said the arrival courts are hard surfaced with little variation in material, but could provide more of an opportunity to be more welcoming, soft spaces with more contrast. The Panel noted that colour and texture should come with planting and wasn't necessarily apparent from the presentation material. In addition, they suggested that even though the bike sheds needed to be secure and weather proof they might not need to have opaque façades.

The Panel continued to discuss the spaces within the development, asking if spaces had been tested to be adaptable to different uses as the project matures. They also asked about the potential for additional storage space. The applicant responded in relation to storage requirements noting that this does form part of the brief for the development now. The Panel reiterated the ability to vary the development and leave some unknowns and in response the applicant noted that the buildings will be adaptable based on the method of construction.

Regarding the internal space, the Panel raised the point about space within the residential units noting that they would only have Juliet balconies. However, they noted that they understood the strategy behind the development which places emphasis on shared communal space. The Panel commented on the object buildings questioning if there was enough differentiation between façades and suggesting that some contrasting in the grain of the buildings might help. It was noted that identity would arise not only from form and materials used but from the specific functions at ground floor.

The Panel questioned the planting in the green corridor towards the northern edge of the development, specifically asking about the composition and levels. The applicant

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responded saying that planting would be more significant in this area and provided details of the gradients. The Panel also questioned the thresholds of Ridgeway Square with Busgate Street, asking if it would be landscaped or deliberately a hard edge. The applicant noted that space and planting would be limited.

The Panel further asked if the north facing balconies on the top floor of building H were orientated in the best way and the applicant responded saying that the residential units would still benefit from floor to ceiling windows within these rooms. The Panel asked about the suitability of the drainage conduits in dry/wet weather and if they would cope with debris when it was dry. The applicant said that they were confident that the conduits were designed correctly and would also be cleaned and maintained. They also noted that there was an opportunity to cobble them in order to differentiate them and provide an attractive edge when dry.

The Panel questioned what the dimensions of the square are and also asked how the space compared with other comparable squares. The Panel queried if greenery would be growing up the walls of the buildings as alluded to in some of the presentation boards and the applicant confirmed that this was the aim, in keeping with the orientations of the different façades and as part of the landscape.

The Panel asked about building 'C' and why it is considered an object building. The applicant conceded that it might not be as prolific as the other two object buildings but that it is the building leading from the Ridgeway and providing a focal point for a long view, so it will have significance. The Panel had a concern that all object buildings do not offer enough differentiation in treatment something needs to be added.

The Panel questioned the terraces and how they would be used with the applicant confirming that they would be shared amenity space for the residents. The Panel followed on from this with questions about the ground level squares and the applicant confirmed that these were being viewed as spaces for social interaction.

The Panel queried who would be responsible for the two surface parking areas and the applicant confirmed that Turner and Townsend would be responsible for one and Aecom the other but that the design for both was the same. The Panel commented that there should be thought given to the use of these spaces and questioned if it was too functional. Officers confirmed that these two spaces had been approved as part of the application for Lot 3 (Mecanoo), but noted the comment.

Climate

No climate aspects were discussed at the meeting.

4. Conclusion

The Panel considered this an excellent scheme with a quality and character that was enhanced by its simplicity and clarity.

The Panel made the following specific recommendations (further details can be found above):

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- Ensure that the wider community benefits from social spaces are considered as places of interaction for the wider community. Social spaces should not look inward.
- Special gardens of particular character might help to break up the brick massing in the cycle parking to make the arrivals more welcoming.
- Facilities should be considered to draw the public in.
- The strategy of planning for future adaptability, by using a frame structure should be tested for different internal planning options and the opportunities explained to the management team as the scheme progresses.
- Consideration of whether there is sufficient difference on the facades of the 3 types of buildings and if there are further opportunities to sophisticatedly consider other contrasts of the grain to assist with orientation.
- The treatment of the arrival courts and opportunities to reduce blank walls to cycle parking enclosures