



CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL

REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

Scheme: Cambridge North West Parcels M1 & M2

Date: 9th April 2015

Venue: Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Cambridgeshire County Council

Time: 9:15 – 11:00

Quality Panel Members

Robin Nicholson (Chair)

Meredith Bowles

David Birkbeck

Simon Carne

Nick James

Steve Platt

Panel secretariat and support

Judit Carballo – Cambridgeshire County Council

Colum Fitzsimons – Cambridgeshire County Council

Local Authority Attendees

Mark Parsons, Principal Planner - Cambridge City Council

John Evans, Senior Planner – Cambridge City Council

Glen Richardson – Urban Design and Conservation Manager, Cambridge City Council

Jonathan Brookes – Principal Urban Designer, Cambridge City Council

Katie Parry – Senior Planning Officer, South Cambridgeshire District Council

Applicant and Representatives

Heather Topel – University of Cambridge

Jamie Wilding – Hill Residential

Joanna Thorndike – Hill Residential

Alison Brooks – Alison Brooks Architects

Teresa Borsuk – PTE Architects

Melissa Robertshaw - AECOM

Robert Myers – Robert Myers Associates



1. Scheme description and presentation

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| Architect/Designer | Hill Residential/Alison Brooks Architects/Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects/ Robert Myers Associates Landscape Architects |
| Applicant | University of Cambridge |
| Planning status | Pre Reserved Matters Submission Stage |

2. Overview

Lots M1 and M2 cover an area of 2.3ha and are positioned centrally within the North West Cambridge development.

The scheme comprises the following:

- 241 market residential units (93 market housing units in M1 and 148 market housing units in M2)
- Access roads (including cycling and pedestrian routes)
- 669 cycle parking spaces
- 335 car parking spaces (including 38 visitor spaces)
- Landscaping
- Utilities and associated ancillary structures

The development will achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 and accords with the University's site-wide drainage and potable water strategies.

North West Cambridge is designated as an Area of Major change within the emerging Local Plans for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District, both of which acknowledge that the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan is the underlying policy document against which the planning application will be assessed.

The majority of the application site falls within the Neighbourhood Village Character Area, as set out in the over-arching Design Code, with a small area to the south falling within the Local Centre Character Area.

Hill Residential has been selected by the University of Cambridge to develop parcels M1/M2, the first market lots to be released on the North West Cambridge site.



3. Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views

Introduction

The Panel praised the applicant for the comprehensive presentation and congratulated the applicant in developing the masterplan into a credible scheme.

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 was impressed by the complexity and variety of elements presented in what is one part of a larger scheme. The Panel was concerned for the safety of children playing in certain areas, such as the swales for example, and questioned how these features will be managed both in terms of steering children towards safer areas of play and who will be maintaining them. It was pointed out that a formal play area is provided in the Neighbourhood Park which is within walking distance of both parcels.

In addition, the provision of community facilities outside parcels M1/M2 is exceptional and all are located within easy walking distance of these lots.

Connectivity

The site is very well connected with its surroundings. In particular, the Panel praised the permeability to the south and the inclusion of car free roads.

All houses will have internal cycling storage with provision at either ground floor or basement level which was broadly supported. It will be necessary to demonstrate further that the cycle parking in the apartments is adequately addressed.

The Panel asked for further information about visitor car parking arrangements as it appeared very modest but accepted that provision is in line with Cambridge City parking standards. The arrangements for managing and controlling parking across the whole site should be developed further.

Character

The applicant described all character areas in detail and the Panel considered this site has plenty of character. The Panel praised the Green Street landscape concept which includes a pedestrian link and a central linear drainage swale with decked bridged paths connecting the two sides of the space.

However, the Panel were concerned about the Mews which have a concentration of garages with blank walls, limited entrances and lack of active frontages. The applicant explained that the mews design is currently being developed further.

The Panel highlighted the importance of good design in underground car parks and suggested that natural lighting and ventilation should be incorporated wherever possible. Convenient, secure and private access to parking areas from the apartment should be



provided. The applicant explained that they are currently looking at natural ventilation solutions.

There is a good degree of consistency across both lots in terms of material, colours and other features. Therefore, the Panel wondered whether there was an opportunity for introducing some material variety.

The Panel noted that ground floor apartments are shown as less attractive designs throughout the scheme and questioned the rationality behind that. It will be necessary to ensure that the demarcation between private and public space at ground floor is thoroughly addressed through design and management.

There was further discussion around the height of the veteran oak apartments, the top floors of which have had to be reduced in height due to maximum build height constraints. There is some concern over the difference in scale and massing between the apartments and adjoining villas.

The arrangement and design of the North-east corner plots needs to be revisited to create the entrance into the site from Huntingdon Road.

The Panel recommended a section through the proposed Villas and the existing property located off Huntingdon Road.

Climate

The Panel was pleased that the development will achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 but recommended balancing the amount of glazing and solid wall to avoid the risk of overheating.

The Panel welcomed the University commitment to install a district-wide heating system and queried how the landscape is going to be managed in drought conditions and how it will deal with rainwater in wet weather conditions. The Panel noted the absence of rainwater downpipes and gutters.

4. Conclusion

The Panel was very supportive of the proposals and impressed by the integration of landscape and the sense of variety of place although it was felt that a plan showing the wider context would be helpful. The Panel considered that the detailed delivery of the landscape will be crucial to the successful delivery of the scheme.

The Panel made the following recommendations, further details can be found above:

- The ground floor apartments in the three apartment blocks should be better designed as well as some of the detail design for cornice treatments at roof level.
- The buildings at the north eastern corner could be further enhanced.
- Further design work for basement car parks including the internal treatment would make for a better environment.

- Details of balcony and garden designs would have been helpful as important private and semi-private spaces.



During the closed discussion, on reflection, the Panel questioned the relentless use of buff brickwork and buff metal roofing and suggested it might be worth considering more animation in the final materials and design. And there was reference to an inhabited Bridge linking two of the blocks but no details were offered.