

Appendix 3- Report from Cambridge Quality Panel meeting dated 11 June 2014

CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL

REPORT OF PANEL MEETING



Date: Tuesday 13th October 2015

Venue: Council Chamber, the Guildhall, Cambridge City Council

Time: 11:30- 13:15

1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer NBBJ Design

Applicant NHS Trust

Planning status Pre – Reserved Matters Stage

2. Overview

This development is to be the first building of Phase 2 of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC).

Phase 1 (2009 Planning Permission) is under construction with AstraZeneca and Papworth Hospital the next buildings to be completed. CBC Phase 1 amounts to 215,000 sqm; Phase 2 is to be around 78,000 sqm. Phase 2 will be utilised two-thirds for commercial biomedical research and related uses and one-third for clinical and related uses for Addenbrooke's Hospital. This is the same split as per the Phase 1 expansion.

Abcam Plc is a global biotech company currently headquartered at the Cambridge Science Park with offices in the US, China and Japan. It is a Cambridge success story as the leading supplier of protein research tools to life scientists and they now have the requirement for a new global HQ which would form the first building at the western end of the developable area in CBC Phase 2. The proposed development comprises the following:

- c.9,750 sqm of net internal space for commercial biomedical research and related use;
- c.11,000 sqm gross space (excluding plant);
- three-storey laboratory building and four-storey office/support building linked by glazed atrium;
- Atrium allows full north-south permeability, both visually and for accessibility;
- Cycle links from Dame Mark Archer Way and Sustrans route and provision of c.185 cycle spaces;

- Vehicle access from Dame Mark Archer Way to disabled parking adjacent to building, informal service area and 147 space surface parking solution if preceding delivery of future Multi-Storey Car-Parks;

The applicant will be submitting, in parallel with the outline application, this full application for the first building on the Phase 2 site. This building is situated to the west of the site and will help form the gateway into the site from the Addenbrooke's Road.

3. Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views

Introduction

The Panel welcomed seeing the Abcam Building at such early stage of development, especially in conjunction with the phase 2 of the CBC development which was also reviewed by the Panel on the day and gave the overall context to this scheme. The Abcam Building is important as it will set the standard for the rest of the development.

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 noted that Abcam Plc is a local biotech company and a successful firm with youthful employees. The Panel noted that work/life balance is of a great importance to them.

The Panel questioned how much the brief for the scheme has been provided by the architect and how much arises from Abcam Plc and Abcam employees? The applicant described how due to the nature of its work, the Abcam building has been designed to a specific brief.

The proposed Café is well glazed and feeds into the atrium linking the two buildings. The café is located at ground floor level; however access to the café is by invitation only which limits opportunities for employees to mix with other people from this part of the CBC campus. The Panel considered that if the café were to be open for everyone it would have been more beneficial. The social area and rooftop access need to work to bring the community together and help with the informal meetings and conversations that underpin the more open and collaborative approach to modern research environments.

Connectivity

The Panel noted that cycle parking will be provided within the service building which provides bike sheds and shower rooms. Cycling to work is very important to the firm and the site has already a direct link to the Sustrans cycling route.

The Panel praised the clarity of the entrances but noted that the front door appears to be on the southern side 'back' of the building, although the Panel felt that the front

door won't be used extensively. The character, transparency and quality of the atrium will be crucial in achieving a more two sided approach to the development.

The Panel asked about the car park and the multi storey car park. This could be greener by including a vertical garden. The Panel would have preferred the multi-storey car park to have been submitted as part of this planning application as it will have a long-term impact on the grouping.

Character

The Abcam Building has a key role to play in being part of the gateway into the site from the Addenbrooke's Road and will be viewable from the railway and the south.

The Panel liked the clear diagram but wanted to see a clearer plan. It was explained that the gateway laboratory building uses 600mm deep finned panels arranged as acting as brise soleils on elevations likely to receive the most solar gain which alters and changes on each façade according to the aspect of the building. These are arranged on a piano key basis that had been transposed from the block masterplan.

The Panel questioned the vertical emphasis and were concerned that the extent of vertical glazing between the finned panels could cause glare issues as the sun changes its position along the day; they were not convinced that the protection offered would be sufficient. The applicant brought a model to the meeting to see the elevation in more detail. The Panel noted that the building would be a combination of glass and metal panels with the remaining parts of this structure being brick including the corners being indented as solid brickwork.

The Panel welcomed the gold colour of the frame and metal panels proposed, the gold façade and dark brick colour in the research building with more a recessive colour in the office building behind. The Panel noted that the roof plant is proposed to be within a well-defined enclosure to reduce the possibility of a cluttered roofscape. The top floor roof terrace provides south facing views towards the countryside.

The colour and tree choices are related to the gold façade dark brick. The Panel questioned the planting and recommended using planting as shelter in winter and shading in summer to encourage outside meetings. There is an opportunity to get some green onto the parking enclosures. They noted that orchards don't like wet feet and cautioned the use of a wild flower meadow. What other things can be the landscape doing? It was noted that the productive landscape includes fruits and herbs. Trees of a greater scale are also needed to compliment the scale of the proposed building.

Whilst accepting that the proposals are at an early stage, the elevations presented at the meeting weren't clear, and the Panel found it difficult to see the logic in the elevations. The Panel considered that a plan showing the lab and office layouts would have helped them to consider the elevations better as there were some concerns about the glazing position relative to benches and desks inside. The applicant explained that the top floor fenestrations are higher to give verticality and proportion to the building and that the plan and grid allows maximum flexibility, but the Panel was not convinced.

The Panel suggested the extension of rain gardens and swales to the front to create a more dynamic landscape. The Panel noted that the aim is to integrate the trees along the southern edge and to create an iconic landscape at the front but it wasn't clear how this is going to look like if it is all wooded. The drawings are too diagrammatic to be considered in detail.

Climate

The Panel were pleased to see the modelling. However, they were concerned about the risk of hot spots on the laboratory building elevations. The Panel questioned the elevational logic with the proposed shading and wondered if the aesthetic would lead to solar gain? The applicant explained that in the office space there is some more flexibility; however, the Panel considered that different shading is needed on different façades, e.g. on south it should be horizontal. The Panel suggested to worry less with the pattern and to look more at the function of the building.

The Panel considered that BREEAM 'very good' was a low aspiration for a company like Abcam, especially in a pre-eminent location like the CBC; it would have been good to see greater ambition from the applicant, in particular given the form of the buildings and that there is not community power that they can be connected to.

The Panel recommended the consideration of water recycling and the heat rejection from the site by trying to put it back to the system. This building could be much more ambitious in terms of energy performance given the high energy demands of this type of use.

The proposed reliance on mechanical ventilation was questioned by the Panel which were of the opinion that although the customer's preference is to have this mechanical ventilation, the air conditioning system should be unnecessary on this rural edge site and wastes too much energy. A fabric first approach should be employed and alternatives explored.

4. Conclusion

The Panel thanked the applicant for bringing this development at an early stage of the design and highlighted the importance of setting up the standards for the site. The Panel enjoy the general approach but more detail needs to be provided by the applicants.

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

- To open the café space to everyone to bring the community together.
- Provide furnished plans and some sections so as to understand the elevation. This needs to be provided to the city council before the planning application is submitted.
- Extend the rain gardens and swales to the front of the building.
- Aim for a higher performance building with a fabric approach as part of a higher aspiration in terms of carbon reductions.

- Put the recycled water back into the system.

The Panel noted that the plans show a surface level car park, however, the intention is that there will be a NCP multi-storey car park which will have a significant impact on the Abcam building and its environs.