

Cambridge City Council Design & Conservation Panel

Extract from notes of the meeting Wednesday 12th July 2017

Attendees:

David Grech	Co-opted member (formerly Historic England and Acting Chair)
Mark Richards	RIBA
Russell Davies	RTPI
Stacey Weiser	Cambridge Past, Present & Future
Ian Steen	Co-opted member (retired architect)
Jo Morrison	Landscape Institute
Jon Harris	Co-opted member (architectural historian)

Officers:

Susan Smith	City Council (items 1&2)
Mairead O'Sullivan	City Council (item 1)
Michael Hammond	City Council (item 2)
Jonathan Hurst	City Council (item 3)
Charlotte Burton	City Council (item 3)
Sarah Chubb	City Council (item 3)

Observers:

Graham Whitehouse and Bonnie Kwok -
Design Enabling Panel (South Cambridgeshire District Council)

Apologies:

Di Haigh, Tony Nix and Robert Myers.

3. Presentation - St Regis & 108 Chesterton Road, St Regis House, 47 Hamilton Road (17/0970/FUL).

Erection of student accommodation comprising 53 student rooms – in clusters (incl. 2 x DDA rooms), 9 student flats and 15 student studios (Sui generis), and ancillary facilities including kitchen/communal areas, laundry room, plantroom, bin and bicycle enclosures; refurbishment and minor works to 108 Chesterton Road with the retention of 8 student rooms and 14 residential flats (Use Class C3) comprising 1 bed and 2 bed units (following demolition of existing buildings), together with landscaping and associated infrastructure. Presentation introduced by Justin Bainton of Carter Jonas with Henry Freeland of Freeland Rees Roberts Architects and Tony Edwards of Place Design & Planning (Landscaping) accompanied by Deborah Hoy from Clare College.

The Panel had previously supported the principle of redevelopment on this site, but felt that the scheme lacked a coherent vision; the design appearing to be driven by a desire to maximise capacity and to maintain the approximate footprint of the existing blocks.

The presenters were requested to focus on amendments made since the pre-application presentation in February 2017 (that verdict RED – 6, AMBER – 2)

The Panel's comments were as follows:

- **Chesterton Road Block.**

Previously the Panel had considered the decision to express the street frontage as a series of gables as positive, but considered the chimneys to be an empty gesture. Utilising these chimneys for the ventilation of the rooms is therefore a welcomed

improvement. The Panel also welcomed the development of a landscape design strategy for the Chesterton Road frontage and noted that, in the event that disabled students are not occupying the two accessible rooms, then the parking bays on the south side of the Chesterton Road block would become additional amenity space for use by the students. The Panel continue to have a concern that the architectural treatment of the Chesterton Road frontage has no relationship to that adopted on the rear.

- **Hamilton Road Block.**

- Orientation and Entrances. The re-orientation of this block to align with Hamilton Road is a significant improvement, though the Panel continued to have concerns that the stepping forward of the central elements would not help in integrating the new block into the street-scene. The Panel questioned the need for the ground floor passageways on the north side of this block, and considered it would be preferable for each of the ground floor flats to have a front door. Removal of the rear passage might then allow the block to be remodelled and to avoid the need to step the central bays forward.
- Parking. The Panel noted that there are 11 parking spaces for the 14 flats. 3 of these spaces are to the rear of the flats and require a disproportionately large turning and manoeuvring area of hard paving. Removing these 3 parking bays and revising the frontage parking from 8 to 10 spaces would have very little impact on the provision of soft landscaping to Hamilton Road, but would have very significant benefits for the amenity space of residents. The Panel therefore strongly recommended that careful consideration is given to this matter.
- No 49. An awkward niche has been created between the new block and No 49, its neighbour to the east. The Panel would request further information as to how this negative triangular space is to be managed. It is strongly recommended that the space is treated as a single entity along with the small triangle of space in the ownership of No 49, and that there is no attempt to define the boundary with a fence.
- Architectural Treatment of the Front and Rear Elevations. As with the Chesterton Road block, the Panel continue to have concerns that the architectural treatment of the front elevation has no relationship to that adopted for the rear elevation. Had the gabled approach of the front elevation been repeated on the rear elevation, then that might have reflected the projecting rear wings on the housing to the east.

- **Central block.**

The removal of the single storey building to the east is welcomed as this has allowed for additional green space and a better relationship to the neighbouring houses. However, the Panel would suggest that pivoting the central block clockwise about its NW corner would make for a better relationship with the Hamilton Road block, and allow more light and southwest sunshine to penetrate into the garden on the east side of the central block. Alternatively, the plan of the central block might be 'stepped' westwards to achieve a similar effect.

- **Landscape.**

The Panel broadly welcomed the landscape strategy but noted that the planting for the scheme is yet to be developed in detail. As noted above, the relationship between hard and soft landscaping in the central area would be significantly improved through the removal of the 3 parking bays behind the Hamilton Road block.

Conclusion.

The Panel welcome the improvements made since last time, not least the removal of the single storey block within the centre of the scheme and the re-orientation of the Hamilton Road block to the south.

However, it was felt that there is scope for further improvement. The general architectural treatment of the two blocks facing Chesterton and Hamilton Roads, and in particular how the front and backs relate to each other, could be improved, and thereby improve their relationship with the existing houses. The Panel would also encourage further revisions to the Hamilton Road block to remove the need for it to step forward in the centre and to provide front doors for the ground floor flats. Finally, the removal of the single storey appendages on either end of the central block, along with the removal of the 3 parking bays behind the Hamilton Road block, would dramatically improve the provision of green space within the site.

Therefore, while this scheme has less of an impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area than the existing buildings, it was felt there was potential for even more enhancement to this part of Cambridge.

VERDICT – AMBER (6) with 1 abstention.