

CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL

REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

Scheme: Market Lot S3, North-west Cambridge Development

Date: Tuesday 2nd May, 2017

Venue: Hatton Park Primary School, Northstowe

Time: 13:15 – 16:15

Quality Panel Members

David Prichard – Chair

David Birkbeck

Simon Carne

David Taylor

Lynne Sullivan

Nick James

Panel secretariat and support

Alokiir Ajang – Cambridgeshire County Council

Colum Fitzsimons – Cambridgeshire County Council

Local Authority Attendees

John Evans - Principal Planner (New Neighbourhoods) - Cambridge City Council

Applicant and Representatives

Jamie Wilding – Hill Residential

Harry Treanor – Hill Residential

Jonathan Hill – AECOM (Planning Agent)

Michael Mueller – ABA (Architects)

Garry Alden – Townshend Landscape Architects

Ryan Coghlan - Townshend Landscape Architects

1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer ABA (Architects)/ Townshend Landscape Architects

Applicant Hill Residential

Planning status Reserved Matters Application

2. Overview

Market Lot, S3 is part of Phase 1 of the North West Cambridge Development (NWCD). The site is located on the Southern perimeter of North West Cambridge and is near the Park and Ride to the south and Turing Way. The development falls within the Local Centre Character Area in the North West Cambridge Design Code and comprises the following:

- 179 market units
- 153 car parking spaces

The proposed development is situated within a rectangular block and formed of five residential blocks which have four levels of accommodation. A range of unit sizes will be provided from studio apartments to three bedroom units. A total of 153 car parking spaces will be provided within a basement, accessed via a ramp from the south western corner of block A. Each block, excluding block E to the east, would have direct lift and stairwell access to the basement.

Lot S3 has been the subject of two pre-application meetings with Local Authority officers. This is the first time the scheme has been presented to the Quality Panel.

3. Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views

Introduction

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 applicant explained that they intend to focus on community living in the blocks and that they propose internal (and external) co-working spaces to encourage chance encounters. The co-working spaces could be rented out for meetings or used for homeworking as a sociable alternative to working inside the home.

The Panel felt that the co-working spaces appeared as over-sized entrance foyers. They wondered whether the absence of management services and facilities such as WCs, concierge and catering would make them an attractive and viable offering. They liked the external spaces with a large refectory table but wondered whether this had been overprovided and might pose an acoustic management issue.

They understood the ethos of the co-working spaces with temporary social interactions but questioned whether this area could be more intensively used, perhaps with additional cycle storage (see comments below). There was also concern that unregulated use of

communal space could lead to potential for nuisance or anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, might there be an opportunity to create a social space on the roof?

The Panel recommended researching alternative methods of allocation of communal car-parking spaces and local campus experience of take up. The capital and running costs of services will be an important factor given the extensive lobbies, basement/storage spaces, roof mounted photovoltaics, circulation spaces and general facilities that need maintaining. It was noted that 100% of the homes were for market sale.

Connectivity

Cycling is the integral design inspiration for the scheme so the intention is to make it as cycle friendly as possible. The site is located 20 minutes away from the river and slightly further away to the city centre with both highly accessible by bike. The Panel was pleased to see an interesting scheme with cycling at its core. They suggested that the applicant will have to research and use parking studies to demonstrate that the level of parking is justified, since the proposed provision falls below the current standards for the overall development. The potential for car-pooling should be considered, given the life style of the targeted demographic for the development.

The Panel noted the large lifts for bikes but was concerned that the internal corridors appeared too narrow for bikes especially at corners. The Panel felt that the designs should provide a more generous circulation and corridor space. Thought must be given to the practicalities of bringing wet bikes into the communal spaces and generally how the visitor and bike arrival and storage sequence is designed. There is also a need to carefully consider disabled access.

The Panel supported the approach that the scheme is offering a lifestyle based product and suggested looking at a more inventive transport plan, such as providing folded bikes and setting up a car club across the three sites under the applicant's control. The basement plan geometry necessitates two aisles so is inefficient. The omission of a basement under Block E was justified on grounds of reduced dig and construction time to enable early marketing. Whilst the argument for a reduced parking provision might be made, other options for example double stacking designs might be worth investigation.

Character

The applicant described how they have adopted the floor areas and ceiling heights in the London Housing Design Guide (LHDG). They said they have included a set-back south-facing façade to provide for a balcony area with simple balustrades and explained that the majority of the flats will be studio and 1 bed flats. The Panel commented that some balconies appeared too narrow to be useful and that the LHDG gives recommendations.

It was also noted that distances between balconies and living area/bedroom windows was quite tight, particularly between Blocks A and B.

Materials were discussed and the applicant explained how they envisage the scheme to have a fashionable warehouse character which is durable and flexible. The materials are predominantly a glazed “brick” system as the architects want it to use the robust nature of the material to achieve the warehouse aesthetic. It is intended to incorporate curved corner details as part of this reference. The Panel queried whether the brick-tile system would be robust enough on the south side plinth.

The simple approach to landscape design with more formal spaces close to the lobbies and less formal spaces on the south side of the blocks was appreciated.

The Panel supported the industrial character of the architecture and liked the way the material connected the internal and external spaces. Some members were concerned that the south-west facing façade might appear rather stark with a plinth hiding the below ground parking. The Panel also thought that more consideration must be given to the positioning of the studio flats, to avoid quite a high proportion of single aspect units. The desire to achieve a varied and interesting roof profile was supported, and the exposed soffits would further enhance the intended aesthetic.

Climate

The Panel welcomed and appreciated the applicant’s ambition to achieve Code Level 5.

The Panel considered overheating to be a risk and encouraged the applicant to think about the worst case scenario and take experience from other sites. The applicant responded that they have tested pilot homes in Trumpington Meadows.

The Panel hoped that further layout studies could achieve more cross ventilation and that sunlight studies were needed on the NW facing units.

The Panel were supportive of the concrete roof with a high thermal mass and the use of photovoltaics on the roof. Furthermore, they commented that the exposed concrete complements the warehouse design.

4. Conclusion

The Panel felt that the scheme has a great character and liked the proposed lifestyle it was setting for bike conscious people. Generally they supported the cycle-led strategy but highlighted the need to explore a smarter car-parking strategy.

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

- Think about the future climate and ventilation, particularly on the north-western façade.
- Consider alternative/ additional area for social space, such as on the roof. The Panel encourage excellent Wi-Fi and coffee to create a culture or “buzz”.

- Think about how to maximise the use of car-parking spaces, there is a danger that some people who will own parking bays will not have cars, so consider a permit arrangement instead.
- Consider alternative ground level bike stores close to the lift and lobby.

APPENDIX 1 - Drawings

