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## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL**

### **REPORT OF PANEL MEETING**

**Scheme:** Cambridge North West Hotel

**Date:** Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018

**Venue:** Shire Hall Room 128, Cambridgeshire County Council, CB3 0AP

**Time:** 9:30 – 12:30

### **Quality Panel Members**

Robin Nicholson (chair)

Steve Platt

Lynne Sullivan

Kirk Archibald

Simon Carne

Lindsey Wilkinson

### **Panel secretariat and support**

Colum Fitzsimons: Cambridgeshire District Council

### **Local Authority Attendees**

John Evans: Cambridge City Council

Jonathan Brooks: Cambridge City Council

### **Applicant and Representatives**

Jonas Lencer: dRMM

Tonya Tkachenko: dRMM

Robert Myers: Robert Myers Associates

Charles Cresser: SACO Property Group

## 1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer: dRMM / Robert Myers Associates

Applicant: SACO Property Group

Planning status: Pre-application

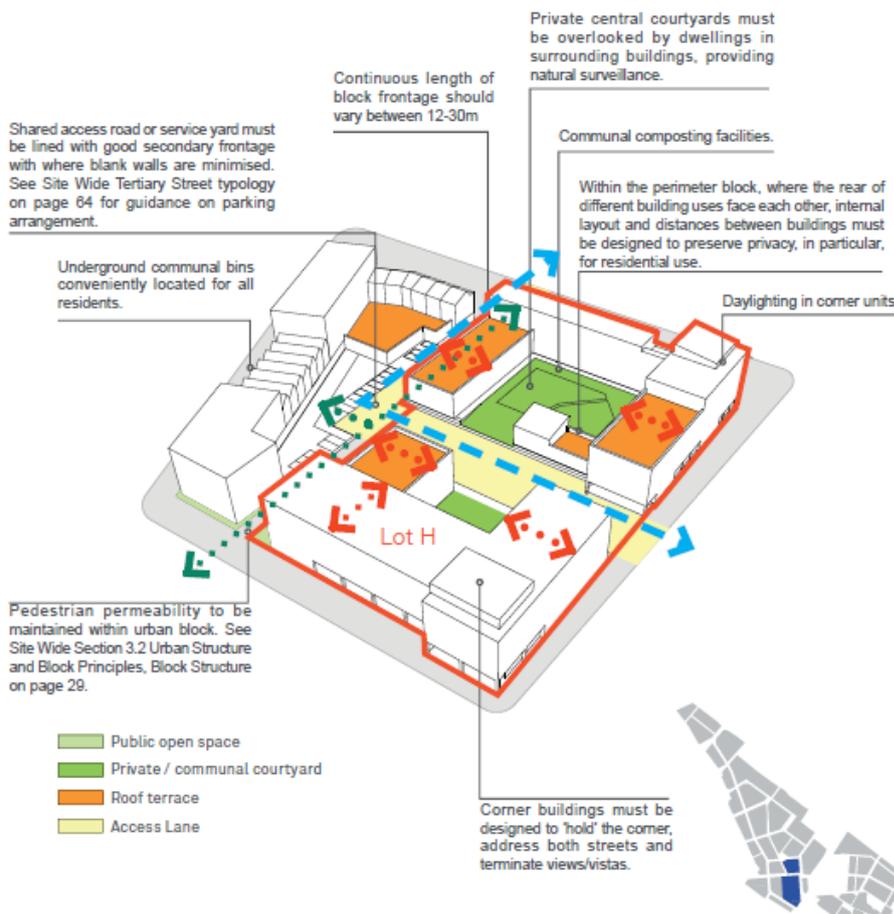
## 2. Overview

### The Proposal

The pre application proposal seeks permission for the erection of a new building to accommodate a hotel (150 rooms, Hyatt) and apart-hotel (180 rooms, Locke) complex as part of the Eddington Development.

The proposal is situated within a rectangular shaped plot on the western side of Eddington Avenue. The building will have five levels of accommodation. Currently, 30 at grade car parking spaces will be provided.

The pre application site Lot H falls within the 'Local Centre' Character Area in the North West Cambridge Design Code. The Design Code envisaged this site would come forward as two separate blocks, whereas it is being developed for a single building:





## Planning History

North West Cambridge is designated an Area of Major change within the recently adopted Local Plans for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire, both of which acknowledge that the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan (NWCAAP) is the underlying policy document.

The outline permission grants consent for a 'hotel (130 rooms)'. For this reason the proposed development cannot be considered a 'reserved matter' and will be assessed on its own merits as a separate full planning application. Compliance with the outline parameter plans and Design Code will however form part of the assessment.

## **3. Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views**

### Introduction

The Panel thanked the design team for a thorough and comprehensive presentation.

The Panel's advice reflects the issues associated with each of the four 'C's' in the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter and are set out below. The comments below include both those raised in the open session of the meeting and those from the closed session discussions.

In the closed session the Panel wondered whether the problems of access and north-facing rooms in the Apart-hotel might be resolved by flipping the Hotel and Apart-hotel.

### Community

The proposed design is true to the Eddington masterplan by contributing towards creating a walkable and inclusive environment.

Happy with the courtyard and roof pavilion concepts and the commitment to providing public access through these spaces to non-guests.

### Connectivity

There needs to be greater thought about how residents of the Aparthotel will access the city centre particularly for evening activities given the current lack of activity on offer at Eddington. The needs of guests should be considered in the travel plan.

There was concern that the under-croft which provided access from Eddington Avenue into the courtyard was too low (circa 2.4m). Despite ingenious efforts in the design to create the illusion of space and light the panel felt that it could create an oppressive space and possibly restrict the activity in the area that it is seeking to create.

The Panel acknowledged the proposed basement to provide guest parking. However, there is potential for conflict between visitor parking and hotel servicing due to the constrained space at Ryle Yard and restricted movement into and out of the basement car park.

Whilst the number of car parking spaces has increased significantly it will be for the operators to manage demand and usage of what is still limited parking provision. It is understood from the applicant that allocation of parking spaces will be dealt with as part of the reservation process.

The car park arrangements do not appear very welcoming and possibly confusing for first time guest in terms of approaching the hotel and navigating from the car park to the respective hotel or aparthotel reception areas.

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It was considered that the number of bicycle spaces is too few especially for the aparthotel where it is anticipated that guest will be staying for medium/long term visits and would be more likely to make local journeys by bicycle.

## Character

The concept for creating a public space out of what ordinarily would be private space is well considered and fully supported by the Panel. The incorporation of subtle changes in levels within the central courtyard shows imagination and results in a relatively diverse topography within a small area.

The planting selection will be critical to the success of the internal space. More particularly the use of planting along Turing Way owing to its north facing location and limited space when compared to Eddington Avenue.

The northwest corner brings together two relentless elevations (view 9.2.3). Consideration to relieve this frontage through articulation is recommended, and/or development of the north east corner as an accent. This may also provide an opportunity to provide natural light into the northern corridor to improve the amenity of the north facing bedrooms. Furthermore, consideration could also be given to reversing the aparthotel/hotel layout so that the shorter occupancy hotel rooms occupy the numerous single aspect north facing elevation, with the longer stay aparthotel rooms having a more favourable aspect onto the public square.

The material palette is good and works well to create the distinctiveness between the parts of the building occupied by the two hotel brands. However, the whole Eddington Avenue elevation was considered relentless and there needs to be greater articulation in order to break this up.

The inclusion of the furniture front entrances are a good addition and will require bespoke detailing to create something unique and special. Similarly the inclusion of public seating within niches along the Eddington Avenue façade adds to the inclusive design approach and are welcomed.

## Climate

The internal layout has resulted in long internal corridors with guest rooms fronting onto both sides which severely limits opportunities for natural light and ventilation.

The panel expressed concern that a large number of rooms would be susceptible to overheating. It is intended that the Hyatt would occupy the rooms with southern and western aspects and therefore whilst benefitting from better natural light could be prone to overheating. It was explained that air conditioning was a standard element of the Hyatt specification which addressed any overheating issue but the Panel considered it potentially conflicted with the “climate” objectives of the Quality Charter.

Similarly, the Panel considered that the rooms along the north and eastern elevations, principally to be occupied by the long term guests of the aparthotel, would suffer from poor natural light. It was suggested that the longer term guests would benefit from the better light afforded to the south and west.

There could be an opportunity to create a green roof to complement the PV array on the roof. This would make the space more attractive to users of the roof garden in addition to managing rainwater runoff and biodiversity benefits.



## 4. Conclusion

The concluding comments include issues raised by the Panel that need further consideration by the applicant and the local planning authority. In trying to prioritise these issues the Panel considers a number of issues to be 'fundamental' to the success of the design together with some further suggested amendments and improvements.

### Fundamental Issues to be Addressed

- North-facing rooms are not really acceptable especially for the longer stay guests although less problematic for shorter stay hotel guests.
- Rendered view 9.2.3 (see image below) was oppressive and might benefit from the plant room as an elevational event to break up the roof line.
- The 100m elevation to Edington Ave is rather unrelenting and could benefit from greater articulation of the junction between the two parts. However the Panel liked the understated 'timber furniture' entrance pavilions.
- Despite the architects' best efforts the undercroft/gateway to the courtyard garden is oppressively low.
- Inadequate cycle provision.

### Suggested amendments

- Ease the access to the car park ramp and resolve potential conflict with deliveries.
- Break up the very long corridors with views out which would help the elevations too.
- Ensure no overheating to west facing rooms and in the corridors.
- Detail with care the new (shaded) planting proposed for Turing Way.
- Make the plantroom work for the elevations.

### Suggested Improvements

- Consider the impact of the journey towards net zero carbon.
- Reduce the need for cooling to a minimum.
- The aparthotel would bring more life to the Market Square if hotel and aparthotel were flipped.
- Use green roofs to attenuate the water and reduce on site storage.

5. Drawings

