



CAMBRIDGESHIRE QUALITY PANEL

REPORT OF PANEL MEETING

Scheme: Land North of Cherry Hinton (up to 1,200 dwellings)

Date: Monday 4th June 2018

Venue: Cambridgeshire County Council

Time: 13:45 – 16:00 hrs.

Quality Panel Members

- Robin Nicholson (Chair)
- Steve Platt
- Luke Engleback
- Phil Jones
- Ashely Bateson
- David Pritchard

Panel secretariat and support

- Stuart Clarke – Cambridgeshire County Council

Local Authority Attendees

- Jonathon Brooks - Principal Urban Designer, Cambridge City Council
- Philippa Kelly – Principal Planner, Cambridge City Council

Applicant and Representatives

- Richard Oakley – Marshall Group Properties
- Richard Burton – Terence O'Rourke
- Elliot Page – Peter Brett Associates
- Sarah Pullen – Terence O'Rourke



1. Scheme description and presentation

Architect/Designer: Terence O'Rourke

Applicant: Marshall Group Properties and Endurance Estates

Planning status: Outline Planning Application

2. Overview

Marshall Group Properties and Endurance Estates (hereafter referred to as the applicant) have submitted an outline planning application for a new neighbourhood at Land North of Cherry Hinton. The proposals comprise:-

- Up to 1,200 new homes;
- A primary school;
- A secondary school;
- A local centre and associated community facilities; and
- Open space.

The site lies across the boundary of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire and comes forward as an allocated site under the Cambridge East Area Action Plan and emerging local plans for the respective council administrations.

Pre-application discussion with the local authorities (including the county council) have taken place as well as public consultation events and workshops.

A supplementary planning document has been approved for the development site, which will be adopted with the local plan in due course.

The draft proposals for the site were considered previously by the Panel on 8th January 2018 who were broadly encouraged by the emerging plans for the new neighbourhood.

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.

The applicant opened the session by presented the actions they had taken since January to refine the scheme, including their response to the Panel's comments and which have been reflected in the submitted outline planning application. In particular, it was highlighted that there is an agreed approach with the local authorities on the design and nature of the spine road, which is to be a through road with a 20mph design speed. Changes have also been made to the northern attenuation pond which is now no longer required, however, the applicant considered that there were still benefits in retaining and enhancing the pedestrian and cycle linkages through this land to provide access to and from Teversham.



Character

The Panel asked about how surface water will be used in the development not just in terms of attenuation but also as a feature and way of adding character. The applicant advised that the local water table is high, which is a constraint in terms of gravity-feed features, but that they had looked at sustainable urban drainage features such as swales and urban rills, but there were further practical challenges to overcome in terms of adoption of rills by the local highway authority.

The Panel cited examples of exemplar water features, in New Zealand (Waitangi Park) and France (Nantes and Paris) where interesting features, such as stepping stones and more creative ways of providing blue infrastructure, can greatly enhance the setting of development and encourage interaction and integration rather than segregation.

The Panel further suggested that the applicant could consider features such as wet grassland, reed fenland and even wet woodland and that whilst it is recognised that encouraging bird habitat to the site could be a hazard to aircraft at the neighbouring airport, species native to these types of settings are smaller species that pose minimal risk.

The site contains a sub-surface gas pipe, which constrains development in terms of what can be built over it. The Panel asked about the cost and financial impact on the development and whether the design could be integrated to avoid this cost. The applicant responded that they had given much thought to this, but relocation was considered the best solution and that the cost of relocating the pipe at around £2M would not impact on the ability to deliver the affordable housing offer.

The applicant acknowledged that the linear park currently has an edge with the airport, something which is to be celebrated rather than mitigated, however, in the future it could be a more central park if future development, as part of the wider Cambridge East proposals, come forward. This needs to be treated carefully to be able to adapt to future changes.

The Panel supported the general approach to massing and scale of the development and treatment of the edges to the airport.

Community

The Panel asked for confirmation on affordable housing provision. The applicant responded that they are proceeding with their financial modelling on the basis of 40% affordable provision with 75% social rented and 25% intermediate tenure. This complies with local planning policy. Housing will be delivered tenure blind with affordable provision pepper potted throughout the site. The Panel supported this.

The Panel also welcomed the proposal for a trim trail and opportunity for active play but enquired about the management of this and other public provision. The applicant stated that because there are two landowners with different development strategies, they are currently considering an either/or approach for the city council to adopt public infrastructure or a resident-led alternative solution.

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The applicant explained their thinking behind the local centre/hub, the locations of the schools and opportunities for community use. The local hub is not intended to be a new centre as Cherry Hinton will remain the local centre for local retail and community facilities, however, there was a request from the community for a community-café and they were considering various models on how to secure this which makes it viable in the longer term. The Panel welcomed this approach and agreed that the primary school is located in the right place. They also supported the fronting of both schools onto active streets but still had some reservations about linkages from the secondary school to the local hub/centre.

The Panel asked if the schools were correctly sized, especially if adjacent land comes forward in the future as part of the wider Cambridge East proposals. Although this was not responded to at the meeting, it is noted post meeting that the applicant and county council are discussing flexibility to future-proof the school sites, as far as is reasonably practicable.

As a general comment rather than specific matter for this development, the Panel raised a concern with the piecemeal development on the airport site and whether sufficient public infrastructure can be secured and delivered if parcels of land come forward at different points in time. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are plans – such as the Area Action Plan – to coordinate infrastructure provision, piecemeal development can erode this should smaller parcels of land be less viable to deliver than the whole developable area and therefore put public infrastructure at risk.

The Panel asked if the needs of older people have been considered, building on the earlier presentation board discussed by the applicant on health and wellbeing. The 'edible' streets theme (street fruit, herb and vegetable plants for all) is something to consider too.

Connectivity

The Panel supported the provision of a bus service through the site but sought clarity on the nature of shared spaces and whether they will be pedestrian priority streets, with the car as a guest, or an informal street. The applicant explained that the peak hour flow along the spine road will be around 500 vehicles (2-way), which is busy but realistic for achieving the desired setting.

The Panel queried the access junction at Coldhams Lane in terms of its location and why it could not be integrated with the adjacent Western Homes development. The applicant responded that the adjacent development was currently being implemented and therefore was not an option due to the differing timescales of delivery. It therefore meant that the development access junction was pushed further down Coldhams Lane to meet the safety requirements of the Highway Authority.

The Panel also queried the tight bends on the spine road at the Coldhams Lane end of the development and whether this would allow for the safe passage of buses. The applicant responded that the road had been tracked for the type of buses proposed to use it, and the design was considered acceptable. Furthermore, the design should deter 'rat running' and offer different views of the streetscape as vehicles turned each corner. The Panel suggested the right angle bend could be eliminated by continuing the Primary Street straight until it hits the road from Coldhams Lane obliquely.

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The applicant confirmed that measures to give cyclist priority would be included in the development, both along the spine road and also through other cycle routes across the site and linear park to connect to the city, Teversham and Cherry Hinton. There would also be improvements made along Coldhams Lane and access to the Tins path.

The Panel mooted a type of crossing that allows for cyclists to cross the whole road whilst pedestrians use a staggered crossing. This would be a first for Cambridge and demonstrate the exemplar nature of the development if it could be achieved.

The Panel queried the widths of roads being 7m in places they thought. The applicant responded that the roads vary from 3.5m to 7m but that might include parking and cycle provision too.

The applicant explained that there will be improvements made to Airport Way to increase accessibility to Teversham, as a result of the Wing development, and that the development will provide a signal crossing too across Cherry Hinton Road. A northern pedestrian and cycle link will be provided towards Teversham and the Panel identified a further potential desire line adjacent to the secondary school playing fields boundary for consideration as well as a new link from Airport Way to Lapwings Close in Teversham. Also, it was suggested that lighting is important to ensure these routes feel safe for all users, especially during the darker months of the year. Cambridge has many examples of lighting for cycle and pedestrian routes that differ from standard lighting columns which reflect the sensitivities of an area (e.g. green belt) and the example of the various trial lighting columns and luminaries on Parker's Piece was cited.

The chosen route for the spine road was supported by the Panel, albeit their comments about a route with less severe bends remain and they raised issues of connectivity, if and when future development comes forward on adjacent land. The applicant responded that they considered there was sufficient flexibility to provide strong linkages in the future if needed.

Climate

The Panel emphasised the role of water and water retention for cooling of the micro-climate, although it was not clear at this stage what the numbers would need to be achieved are. The use of water features should be spread across the site to maximise the benefits, not just around existing water channels.

The Panel also highlighted the use of mineralisation of materials to absorb carbon dioxide as part of the response to climate change.

Trees are also very important for absorbing carbon dioxide, but also provide shading and cooling benefits. Overheating in modern housing, especially with climate change, mean this is something that has increasing importance in future proofing new housing. Trees such as willows and poplars were cited as examples thought appropriate.

The Panel asked the applicant about their commitment to environmental and energy standards. The applicant responded that the development would be policy compliant and provide 10% renewables and 10% better than required energy efficiency. The Panel considered that a 20% better than required energy efficiency approach might offer more

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flexibility in finding the best and most effective solutions with the delivery partners (housebuilders).



The applicant also said that they will take a fabric first approach together with PV and solar panels, but that they were also exploring Passive house standards to achieve low-energy buildings and reduce the ecological footprint of the development. The Panel supported this.

The applicant further stated that they will be required to produce an overheating report as part of any planning consent (if approved) and that in considering plot sizes they had taken account of space for recycling/bins, cycles and electric vehicle charging as the shift from combustion powered vehicles takes effect in years to come.

4. Conclusion

The Panel thanked the applicant for bringing this development back and responding to their previous matters raised. They recognised that this planning application is from two landowners but comes forward as one development.

The Panel made a number of recommendations as set out below in summary and explained in further detail in the commentary above:-

- Can smaller parcels of land deliver public infrastructure intended for the wider developable area? Is the development future-proofed?
- Welcome trim trail, play spaces, community access to school playing fields and community café but how will these be delivered and maintained in the longer term – are there mechanisms in place to secure this?
- Welcome proposed cycle provision, but can exemplar features be incorporated?
- Does the site make best use of blue infrastructure – the panel would encourage the applicant to explore some of the opportunities discussed to enhance the development further.
- The Panel acknowledge the development is policy compliant for energy efficiency and would support and encourage the applicant to further explore and deliver Passive house measures.
- Each parcel of land for house builders to deliver should include streets rather than be divided up along streets, to provide for a better designed development.
- Use trees for all their benefits and whilst providing bird habitat is an issue for the neighbouring airport and associated aircraft, smaller bird species can be encouraged that need not be a concern.
- Consider, in conjunction with the local planning authorities, a 20% over-all energy efficiency target rather than the current approach.
- Do facilitate recycling, bike and EV charging spaces on housing plots.

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- Continue to develop the health and wellbeing theme



5. Drawings

- Illustrative Master Plan (Source: Terence O'Rourke)

