

**Cambridge City Council
Design & Conservation Panel**

Notes of the meeting Wednesday 11th April 2018

Attendees:

Di Haigh	RIBA (Chair)
David Grech	Retired architect, formerly English Heritage
Zoe Skelding	RIBA
Tony Nix	RICS
Ian Steen	Retired architect, co-opted member
Robert Myers	Landscape Institute (item 2 only)
Jon Harris	Architectural historian, draughtsman, co-opted member
Stacey Weiser	Cambridge PPF

Officers:

Sarah Dyer	Cambridge City Council (item 1)
Jonathan Brookes	Cambridge City Council (item 1)
Charlotte Burton	Cambridge City Council (item 1)
Mairead O'Sullivan	Cambridge City Council (item 2)
Nigel Blazeby	Cambridge City Council (item 2)
Susan Smith	Cambridge City Council (item 2)

Observers:

Cllr Martin Smart	Cambridge City Council
Sven Topel	Brookgate (item 1)
Laura Fisher	Bidwells (item 1)
Vimal Fatania	Formation Architects (item 1)
Daniel Cooper	TFT Consultants (item 2)
Andrew Ferrznolo	TFT Consultants (item 2)

Apologies – Russell Davies

1. Presentation - Revised (pre-application) proposals for CB1 - Blocks B2 & F2 ('Devonshire Quarter')

This follows the last presentation in December 2017 (verdict AMBER – unanimous). Since that meeting the building use for F2 has now changed from a hostel to a Business Centre (operated by Brookgate) and still incorporating the Train Operator offices. The presentation also included the design team's response to comments made in respect of B2 such as the entrance to the multi-storey car park, the treatment of the top floor set back and the articulation of the eastern (railway) elevation.

Presentation by Michael Richter of Formation Architects with Robert Myers of RM Associates and Will Salter of Mott Macdonald.

The Panel's comments were as follows:

- **Block B2**

- **East (railway line) elevation.**

- The Panel felt the revised articulation had, in general, produced a more successful result, although some concern was expressed as to whether the projecting 'corduroy' brickwork would show signs of weathering in the long term.

- **Glazed atrium (aparthotel entrance – west elevation)**

The Panel was reminded that the 'glass box' has its own architectural logic and that this was the justification for not aligning it with the brickwork. The Panel would nevertheless appreciate further detail as to how this element would fit into the brick building. The proposed 200mm shadow gap was not regarded as a sufficient gesture to be effective. Options to project or recess the atrium could be explored as well as using lighting to emphasise the sculptural nature of this space. The designers are reminded that the construction details of the glazing system would need to be of the highest standard.

- **The SW corner studies.**

As a general principle, the Panel would not wish to see the aesthetic compromised the further you are from Station Square. Although eliminated from the current study options, the Panel were supportive of the introduction of blue tiles to the west (front) elevation as this could add some relief by making windows appear more generous. Some animation to the perforated metal panels would also be welcomed for this reason.

- **The view SE along Northern Access Road (the curved corner).**

For many, this would be the primary entrance to the site, with views particularly relevant to the residents of Devonshire Road. For this reason, the Panel would emphasise the need to treat this façade not as the end of the development but as an opportunity for celebration; perhaps with the addition of unique elements to the blank brick elevation. As there is no issue of privacy in relation to the windows, there is an opportunity to be less conformist on this corner and more playful in shape and detail.

- **The view north along Northern Access Road.**

The Panel would like to see a greater sense of harmony between the elevations above and the planting at ground level. It is hoped that the internal courtyard within B2 is delivered to the highest possible standard. As the landscaping within this scheme has been greatly reduced however, this has become less of a concern to the Panel.

- **The Northern Access Road layout**

Although the narrowness of the street as a minimum, not optimum solution is a concern, the Panel applaud the intention to maintain the shared surface. The introduction of a dedicated cycle route would be inappropriate. Ideally, more tree planting would be preferable, although this would contribute to the competition for space.

It is recommended that the cycle route closer to Devonshire Road is widened at both ends to create a more generous space where cyclists and pedestrians are likely to pause for traffic. The designers are also advised to look again at the proposed use of 25mm upstand kerbs, as this is sufficient to topple cyclists.

- **The car park.**

The Panel feel that the revised car park entrance is a significant improvement. The justification for the 'missing tree' at the corner of the car park exit is understood to be for reasons of visibility when looking right. The Panel would welcome a re-examination of traffic movements at this point.

- **Block F2**

- **Cycle park.**

The Panel were comfortable with the departure from the vertical planting of the previous scheme providing the roof garden planting is designed to a high standard and can be easily maintained so as to be a success. The entrance should be as wide as possible to avoid conflict.

○ **The Business Centre.**

In the Panel's view, there is an opportunity here to be more expressive - to create a building that could inspire and attract users. The Panel would suggest that the design team might look at the Bradfield Centre on the Science Park www.bradfieldcentre.com as an example of what has been achieved with this emerging typology in Cambridge.

Conclusion.

The effort made to respond to the Panel's comments from December; specifically in relation to east elevation of B2 and the vehicular movements in relation to the car park are appreciated.

The Panel would however stress the need to maintain strong aspirations for the design expression of these two important contributory blocks as for many, they will be viewed as the 'front door' to the CB1 development.

VERDICT – AMBER (6), GREEN (1)

2. Presentation – Lion Yard, Cambridge.

(Notes provided in a separate document)

3. Notes of the last meeting – Wednesday 14th March 2018.

Notes agreed.

4. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 9th May 2018

Reminder

CABE 'traffic light' definitions:

GREEN: a good scheme, or one that is acceptable subject to minor improvements

AMBER: in need of *significant* improvements to make it acceptable, but not a matter of starting from scratch

RED: the scheme is fundamentally flawed and a fresh start is needed.