

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Design Enabling Panel

PANEL MEETING REPORT

Scheme:	Construction of a commercial development (office, R&D) comprising up to 550,000 sq ft of floorspace, a multi-storey car park, landscaping, access from Fulbourn Road and associated infrastructure.
Site address:	Land south of Fulbourn Road, Fulbourn, Cambridge, CB1 9NL
Status:	Pre-planning Enquiry, ref: TBC
Date:	Thursday 26 November 2020
Venue:	The DEP meeting was conducted online via Microsoft TEAMS due to Covid-19
Time:	10:00 – 12:30
Site visit:	A site visit was conducted by DEP Officers on 24 November 2020 who filmed the site visit. The site visit videos were viewed by Panel Members prior to the first DEP meeting.

Panel Members

Simon Carne (Chair) – Director, Simon Carne Architect

Ashley Dunseath – Head of Masterplanning, WSP

Chris Senior – Director, PiP Architecture

Yen Yap – Director, Dimension Y Architecture

Local Authority attendees

Dr. Bonnie Kwok – Principal Urban Designer/DEP manager

Tom Davies – Urban Design Officer/DEP Support Officer

Fiona Bradley – Team Leader (Case Officer)

Applicant and Representatives

Ed Hayden – Director, Scott Brownrigg (Architect)

Sean Vessey – Director and Landscape architect, Liz Lake Associates (Landscape)

Floyd Carrol – Project Director, Abstract (Applicant)

Anthony Child – Principle Planner, Bidwells (Planning agent)

Guy Kaddish – Partner, Bidwells (Planning agent)

Relevant planning policies

'National Planning Policy Framework' (2019) (NPPF)

Paragraph 124 - The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

Paragraph 127 - Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁶; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Paragraph 128 - Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

Paragraph 129 - Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. These include workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks such as Building for Life. These are of most benefit if used as early as possible in the evolution of schemes, and are particularly important for significant projects such as large scale housing and mixed use developments. In assessing

applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.

Paragraph 130 - Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development. Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).

Paragraph 131 - In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

'South Cambridgeshire Local Plan' (2018)

Policy HQ/1 Design Principles

1. All new development must be of high-quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:
 - a) Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape;
 - b) Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting;
 - c) Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;
 - d) Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;
 - e) Deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces;
 - f) Achieve a permeable development with ease of movement and access for all users and abilities, with user friendly and conveniently accessible streets and other routes both within the development and linking with its surroundings and existing and proposed facilities and services, focusing on delivering attractive and safe opportunities for walking, cycling, public transport and, where appropriate, horse riding;

- g) Provide safe and convenient access for all users and abilities to public buildings and spaces, including those with limited mobility or those with other impairment such as of sight or hearing;
 - h) Ensure that car parking is integrated into the development in a convenient, accessible manner and does not dominate the development and its surroundings or cause safety issues;
 - i) Provide safe, secure, convenient and accessible provision for cycle parking and storage, facilities for waste management, recycling and collection in a manner that is appropriately integrated within the overall development;
 - j) Provide a harmonious integrated mix of uses both within the site and with its surroundings that contributes to the creation of inclusive communities providing the facilities and services to meet the needs of the community;
 - k) Ensure developments deliver flexibility that allows for future changes in needs and lifestyles, and adaptation to climate change;
 - l) Mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on development through location, form, orientation, materials and design of buildings and spaces;
 - m) Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation;
 - n) Protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses from development that is overlooking, overbearing or results in a loss of daylight or development which would create unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust;
 - o) Design-out crime and create an environment that is created for people that is and feels safe, and has a strong community focus.
2. Larger and more complex developments will be required to submit Masterplans and Design Codes to agree an overall vision and strategy for a development as a whole that demonstrates a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

Policy E/3: Fulbourn Road East (Fulbourn) 6.9 hectares

1. Land adjoining Peterhouse Technology Park is allocated for employment use.
2. Development proposals will need to demonstrate how the site can be designed and landscaped to effectively mitigate impact on the wider Cambridge Green Belt. This will include excavation to achieve appropriate profile and setting against the Cambridge Green Belt and agricultural land, and the creation of landscaped buffers on the southern and eastern boundaries.

'District Design Guide' (2010)

This document sets out the requirements for new developments to respect and enhance local characters, minimum residential amenity standards for new developments in the district, e.g. minimum private and communal amenity space, minimum back-to-back distances, minimum garage sizes, etc.

'Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth' (2010)

This document sets out core principles of the level of quality to be expected in new developments in the district: the 4Cs, i.e. Community, Connectivity, Character and Climate. Collectively, they form the basic principles for achieving higher quality development that meets the needs our communities. New housing development should provide a great choice of housing along with the active participation of local communities. New developments should be located where people can benefit from high connectivity to jobs and services. Climate change should be tackled through imaginative landscaping and innovative approaches to transport, energy and waste. Places of character should be created, with distinctive neighbourhoods and a first-class public realm.

Panel views

It should be noted that the comments below include items from the Panel's online in-camera discussion and amplify the brief opinion delivered at the end of the online session.

Summary

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair Simon Carne thanked the applicant and his design team for putting together a high-quality presentation for the Panel to review.

The proposal seen at this stage is promising notwithstanding the concerns outlined below. A rationale for the preferred layout needs to be developed.

The Panel would welcome the opportunity to review the proposal again as the design further develops. This should include schematic options that demonstrate the path and a justification for the preferred scheme.

Discussion

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this significant extension to the Peterhouse Technology Park which is currently occupied by ARM. The site is designated in *the 'South Cambridgeshire Local Plan' (2018)* for the proposed employment use - Policy E/3: Fulbourn Road East (Fulbourn). The policy requires development proposals to demonstrate how the site can be designed and landscaped to effectively mitigate impact on the wider Cambridge Green Belt. This will include excavation to achieve appropriate profile and setting against the Cambridge Green Belt and agricultural land, and the creation of landscaped buffers on the southern and eastern boundaries.

The site

The site is open agricultural land on the South side of Fulbourn Road and adjoins the existing Peterhouse Technology Park. The presentation covered the evolution of the scheme, including

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the assessment of options for access and the rationale for the decision to enter the site from the Fulbourn roundabout by constructing a fourth arm. There is an easement over the gas main on the northern boundary of the site and the field is bounded along the roadside by a hedge. The gas main sets up a permissible building line on the frontage of Fulbourn Road which has been respected in the adjoining existing technology park site.

The site slopes quite significantly. The design proposal presented shows existing and proposed sections across the site. Cut and fill modelling has been done to demonstrate the extent of excavated material to be distributed around the site. Topsoil will be removed and the proposed redistribution of significant quantities of chalk across the site has been modelled. The proposal envisages significant cut and fill in the first phase in anticipation of a final layout and location of different uses across the site.

Site planning

Inside the proposed site an internal street connects directly to the Peterhouse technology park serving proposed buildings 1, 2 and 3 and the largest multi storey car park. Building 3 and the multi storey car park comprises the first phase which will be subject of a detailed application. Buildings 1 and 2 will probably follow in a second phase and the proposed east west internal street connects to the east of the site serving buildings 4 and 5 and two decks of parking adjoining open agricultural land beyond a field boundary hedge will complete the development in a third phase. Further explanation and description of this proposal will be developed for the outline application.

Access

The proposal envisages an open publicly accessible site. Cycle parking and access is separated from general vehicle movement. Open and protected external areas of the public realm within the development will be accessible for the general public. Re-routing the bus into the site has also been discussed as a possibility. The design standard for the internal street and the existing security gate to the Peterhouse Technology Park will be issues to resolve.

General design principles

Initial designs of the public realm were presented, these will be worked up further for the application. Options for the buildings are also in early development. The Panel is pleased to hear that BREEAM excellent is being promoted and that engineers Atelier 10 are informing the environmental design using the London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) for guidance.

Detailed comments

The areas of the scheme that the Panel focused on include: 1) Planning and sequencing, 2) Location of uses, 3) Future flexibility and 4) Public access and quality of public realm.

1) Planning and sequencing

The Panel noted that the proposed hybrid application Phase 1 assumes a single building with a disproportionate amount of car parking. This issue has been discussed within the closed session. This is not normally a subject for the DEP, but it seems that a number of decisions taken at the start of the phased programme are driving the outcome.

The decision to locate the large multi-storey car park on the highest steepest part of the site has led to the extensive cut and fill in the first stage. The location on the extreme western edge of the site means that the connection to the adjoining technology park (to the west of the site) can be delivered early though at a high cost. The isolated single building on the southern edge of the site might not present the best image for the emerging site.

2) Location of uses

The Panel wondered whether the two-level car parking structures on the east boundary were making the best use of the edge of the site. Of all the edge conditions, this would probably benefit from the best aspect looking to the north, east and south mainly over open countryside. Buildings behind the hedge boundary could provide better views out and might also present a better edge condition as the proposed buildings 4 and 5 would be visible above the proposed parking anyway. This might be a cleaner solution. Visual Impact studies have not been done yet and so the opportunity to test options should be taken now. The Visual Impact studies would help demonstrate how the site can be designed and landscaped to effectively mitigate impact on the wider Cambridge Green Belt.

3) Future flexibility

There are extensive car parking areas proposed and the Panel wondered whether, given the sustainable location, the quantum and design should be reconsidered. Options for converting the car park structures was discussed but the flexibility might be hampered by the proposed sloping floors of the car parking structures.

4) Public access and quality of public realm

The design at this stage gives a starting point for the discussion of the extent and quality of the public realm. This issue will connect to the questions above of sequencing and location of different uses. The heart of the campus, the space between Buildings 1, 2 and 3 as has been illustrated, is based on the current arrangement. Providing the quality of place sought requires further development. Changes in level, accessibility, ease of movement and conflicts between different users all need to be addressed.

Note: Please note that these comments are informal opinion of the Council's Design Enabling Panel and relate to the design aspects of the proposals. The comments are produced for discussion purposes only with the applicant. The views expressed will not

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bind the decision of Council members should a planning application be submitted, nor prejudice the formal decision-making process of the Council.