



Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Darwin Green 1 – BDW4 Reserved Matters

Friday 22nd April 2022

Virtual Meeting

Panel: Lynne Sullivan, John Dales, Luke Engleback, Kirk Archibald,
Elanor Warwick, David Birkbeck

Local Authority: Charlotte Burton (GCSP), Sarah Chubb (GCSP)

The Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth sets out the core principles for the level of quality to be expected in new development across Cambridgeshire. The [Cambridgeshire Quality Panel](#) provides independent, expert advice to developers and local planning authorities against the four core principles of the Charter: connectivity, character, climate, and community.

Development Overview

Reserved matters application 21/05433/REM for the fourth housing phase (known as BDW4) including 351 dwellings, with associated internal roads, car parking, landscaping, amenity and public open space. The Reserved Matters include access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale and related partial discharge of conditions pursuant to outline approval 07/0003/OUT.

Presenting Team

The scheme is promoted by Barratt Homes supported by HTA Architects. The presenting team is:

Chris Fry (BDW), Simon Toplis (HTA), Emma Haward (HTA), Dulcie Foster Finn (HTA), Matt Jarvis (Rural Solutions), Will Fayers (Paul Basham Associates)

Local authority's request

The scheme was presented to the Panel at pre-application stage in November 2021. A reserved matters application was submitted in December 2021. Consultation on the application ended in January 2022 which identified issues with the proposals.

Officers have been focussing on layout and structuring issues to-date and are generally supportive of the changes that have been made through discussions on post-submission amendments, in terms of the site layout, hierarchy of routes, integration of green spaces, and priority to pedestrians and cyclists. However, further work is required:

- The southwestern corner (to the north of North Lane) which is a 'leaky' space with poorly defined public and private spaces, presents a public fronting rear elevation, creates a private end to an important public secondary road, and has a poorly legible pedestrian/cycle connection to the open space adjacent to the supermarket site;
- The character of the mews streets behind the park frontage;
- Boundary strategies around ground floor living spaces; and
- BRE assessment on ground floor apartments (living space and amenity space).

Further discussions are also required with the applicant to explore concerns raised in officer comments about townscape/architecture, including the streetscape along the central park frontage and the hierarchy/diversity between key buildings.

Officers welcome the Panel's comments on the key issues above.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel summary

Connectivity – “places that are well-connected enable easy access for all to jobs and services using sustainable modes”

The car parking ratio is currently understood to be around 1.2 which is generally acceptable. However, there is also a need to anticipate future patterns of vehicle ownership and how will the development seek to enable and accommodate such preferences over time.

The design speed is likely to be lower than 20mph which the Panel support. This has partly been achieved due the tight geometry of the layout which minimises the space dedicated to vehicles which is good in principle however consideration needs to be given to the unintended consequences of this in terms of conflict with other road users or overrunning onto soft landscape areas.

There are no problems in principle with the mews streets, however the Panel questioned whether it is necessary for a 6m carriageway and suggested 5m where possible. This reduction in carriageway would allow any additional space recovered to be put to better use.

The shared surfaces are acceptable, but consideration should be given to using contrasting materials to differentiate the carriageway and areas where vehicles are not expected to encroach.

Entrance into the mews needs addressing to ensure that there is a clear visual pedestrian priority at the junction by creating continuous footways, including indicating footways over raised tables.

Need to ensure that there is sufficient provision made for the delivery vehicle movements.

Whilst the 3.3m wide garages are good, the panel questioned the extent of the actual physical provisions for cycles in the stores at the back of the garage.

The Panel noted there is no incidental on-street parking in the mews street for very short visits or stops. Without this there is a risk that people will start fly parking in any available space which will then cause disruption and conflict.

Character – “Places with distinctive neighbourhoods and where people create ‘pride of place’

The Panel considered there is a need to find more space for landscape and this is closely linked with Climate. The predominance of hard heat absorbing surfaces will make the spaces very warm and this needs to be mitigated by increasing the quantum of greening on horizontal and vertical surfaces.

Some of the renderings of the tertiary streets and the mews showed very small spaces for planting. More thought needs to be given to addressing this to ensure meaningful planting can be achieved.

Consideration should be given to the protection of edges from vehicle movements to prevent damage of the planting and compaction of soil.

More space should be included for productive planting in public and private spaces.

More greening will help manage surface water runoff. There was no great sense of how the SUDS relates to biodiversity. This is the main issue holding the scheme back and preventing it becoming an exemplar development. If the biodiversity, landscaping and water strategies can all work together that would greatly enhance the scheme.

It is critical that effort is given to reducing the embodied carbon in the hard landscaping either through planting or using materials e.g. limestone to actively absorb carbon dioxide.

The Panel admired the character of several of the apartment typologies in the way they are designed to look onto the park. There are however one or two apartment blocks that lack protection and privacy at ground floor level especially where there are pedestrian routes passing living room windows. It was suggested that there should be some green boundary treatment in these locations to provide a bit more privacy.

The development achieves a high density whilst still delivering 115 houses.

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The under-croft parking is showing the same brick as the facing material. This is welcomed and the developer should be encouraged to retain this level of detail and not revert to blockwork within the under croft because this materiality will be a visual feature from the public realm.

The house typologies with the under-croft parking provide a lot of flexibility for car and cycle parking within the plot. However, it is unclear whether there is a physical separation between the driveway and garden area.

The rear of the apartments at the end of the mews street block prevents people walking through into the district centre. It is important that the pedestrian route is designed as a public space to facilitate the permeability through the green space, if necessary, modifying the apartment footprint.

The emerging architectural treatments especially the frontage to the major public space with brickwork, with variation in colour, and articulation in the façade is very promising.

Community - “places where people live out of choice and not necessity, creating healthy communities with a good quality of life”

The development aspires to be an exemplar for high density living and this is considered a positive. The redistribution of density across the whole site has improved the park frontage and enabled the mews houses and spaces to have more articulation.

The walk-up blocks have been revised and improved with the inclusion of additional private space and bike storage space.

The relationship between the double fronted blocks on the park frontage and the FOGs in the mews street needs to be very carefully addressed if they are to be successful semi-public spaces.

The panel questioned the arrangements put in place for the management of the biodiversity over the long term and the communal green spaces, and how the places are going to be used to generate a sense of community. Again, food-producing landscapes would be a great way to help build the community.

Climate – “Places that anticipate climate change in ways that enhance the desirability of development and minimise environmental impact”

The panel encouraged the applicant to calculate embodied energy for the whole site, not just the buildings, and noted MMC can be deployed to reduce embodied energy in construction. They re-emphasised the importance of greening and consolidation of planting and street trees to deliver ambient cooling, and suggested a plan showing greened areas including roofs would be helpful.

The energy strategy requires more thinking through. It is appreciated that the development is caught in the transition across the building regulation requirements, but it is still disappointing that gas infrastructure is to be put in without clear detail on how this will be future proofed.

Thought needs to be given to how and where heat pumps are going to be sited particularly in terms of condenser units outside. In small, enclosed gardens the units can be noisy and bring down the temperature in those spaces. This can be mitigated by reducing the loads on these heat pumps and combining them with other technologies. Low flow temperature radiators, HW storage and underfloor heating are likely to be needed to optimise costs and comfort and need to be considered at design stage.

Battery storage will reduce the requirement for grid reinforcement and will be beneficial.

The development should aim for installing Mode 3 EV charging points.

Specific recommendations

- The Panel was very pleased with the way the scheme is evolving and there now needs to be a focus on details to deliver the scheme’s full potential.
- It is a great site in terms of connectivity and it is good to see the desire lines being incorporated through the site to link to local amenities.
- It is good that parking has been reduced but a creation of a car club across the site would help to avoid the misuse of the parking and increase resident amenity.
- The mews streets are very tight so it is important that they create community and pedestrian friendly environments. The planting is key and greater diversity in the shared surfaces would be welcomed.

- Pedestrian priority at junctions and raised tables needs to be manifest.
- A strong landscape and biodiversity strategy is needed to match the level of detail being developed and maximise the potential for an exemplar of healthy living.
- Community development will be key and this can be supported by the ambition for a lively, greened environment not dominated by the car.
- Climate resilience can be enhanced by the integration of landscape. Thought needs to be given to future-proofing for heat pump installations.
- There is a diversity of space and typologies and this will be an exemplar of a mixed community. It is important however that vehicle movements and parking is managed within the mews spaces.
- The issue of privacy at ground floor level is an issue that needs to be resolved.

The opportunity for ongoing engagement with the developer and design team would be welcomed as the scheme develops.

Contact details

For any queries in relation to this report, please contact the panel secretariat via growthdevelopment@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

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Background information list and plan

- Drawing A – road layout
- Main presentation
- Local authority background note

Documents may be available on request, subject to restrictions/confidentiality.

Masterplan – Emerging Layout



Architectural Character – Park Frontage

