



Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Eddington Lots M4 & M5

Thursday 18th August 2022

Virtual Meeting

Panel: David Prichard (chair), Oliver Smith, Lynne Sullivan, Steve Platt, Fiona Heron and David Taylor.

Local Authority: Guy Wilson (GCSP), Annemarie de Boom (GCSP), Helen Sayers (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

This residential development comprises of 160 dwellings arranged into a series of detached, semi-detached, and terraces houses along the site edge, courtyard blocks towards the centre, and pavilion blocks fronting Storey's Field.

Presenting team

The scheme is promoted by Durkan Ltd and supported by PRP Architects. The presenting team was:

Kim Rickards (Durkan Ltd) Brian Brady (Durkan Ltd), Richard Edge (PRP Architect), Ben Williamson (PRP Architect), Helene Saulue (PRP Landscape Architect), Celia Cooper (PRP) Guy Kaddish (Bidwells), Jake Lambert (Bidwells) and Gareth Thomas (Briary Energy)

Local authority's request

The local planning authority have asked the Panel to focus on the street typology and general approach to parking.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel summary

Eddington M4&M5 will be an exciting development that benefits from a strong masterplan, sustainable location, climate ambition and the ability to be a very sociable place to live, however, the scheme would benefit from greening up and introducing larger species of trees because of concerns about the amount of hard surface proposed.

These views are expanded upon below, and include comments made in closed session.

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

The green and tertiary street designs were supported by the Panel, but the secondary street lacks greenery and has too much tarmac. The connection with Chestnut Avenue, which is a very important node, needs to be reviewed, especially with regard to vehicles and how they relate to the landscape such that the avenue is not ruined.

The applicant should think about the possibility of narrowing the secondary street to favour more green infrastructure.

The quality of the NW walking and cycling link needs to be carried through to the public street. The user experience of this path should be clearer as the existing building has been left out of the elevations.

The proportion of hard infrastructure needs to be re-thought. There is a lot of circulation space within the courtyards, the green and tertiary streets. A six-metre-wide street on the green street is understood because cars need turning space for parking, but on the tertiary streets, where parking is along the side of the street, it could be narrower to be more tolerant and provide greener spaces elsewhere. The Panel would support street width reduction even if the design code, which is 10 years old now, indicates otherwise. The applicant explained that they would also like to achieve more greening, but the route must accommodate larger refuse vehicles which are needed for the underground refuse system and so they would need to discuss this further with the council planning department to look at reducing the amount of hard standing (possible by increasing the verges and the green planted spaces).

Consider seamless cycling journeys and how easy it is to leave the house and get to the cycle store, and whether people would use the cycling store as envisaged. The Panel asked if there is any connection to the terraced houses back gardens from the tertiary street. The applicant explained that the houses along the northern edge have been designed with access either along alleyways to the side or through the garage spaces to ensure that there is access to the back gardens.

The car parking strategy is welcomed by the Panel, car parking provision is 1.5 spaces per unit on average, but given the location of the site, the Panel would support it being reduced to a minimum. The Panel queried if the visitor car parking, located off plot, was appropriate in number and location and to encourage a reduction in car ownership might some spaces be reallocated for car clubs? To assist managing such behaviour change in future might the off-plot parking spaces be leased rather than sold? The applicant noted the challenges and have anticipated car ownership change on upcoming decades.

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

The scheme benefits from a fantastic location, easy accessibility into Cambridge and with key infrastructure already in place such as the community centre, primary school, cafe, and shopping centre. The Panel welcomed the scheme focused on promoting social interaction and consideration of the long-term use of key space.

However, the Panel is concerned that early phases of Eddington are austere and hard. Therefore, providing large trees will help to soften these spaces from the outset.

Eddington will attract a mix of people, including families with small children that will become teenagers. The Panel considered that design of the copse won't be attractive to teenagers who will probably gather somewhere else.

The applicant compared college courtyards with the courtyards presented in the scheme, the Panel noted that college courtyards are less busy and have less paving. Therefore, the Panel suggested reducing paving within the courtyards and to plan for large deciduous trees that will provide shade in the summer (and lose leaves in the winter), instead of the 14 to 19 trees currently proposed. Less clutter means less potential for conflict. Larger trees will help soften the harshness of the buildings and are more likely to be used by the community to sit under for shade for example.

Suggestions about post occupancy evaluations in Eddington were made, in particular, to help understand how cycle stores work in practice.

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

The Panel were encouraged by the tree strategy presented as previous Eddington phases have provided small trees that have contributed to the harsh landscape currently seen. In addition to providing larger trees within the courtyards as highlighted in the community section, there is also an opportunity to provide larger tree species such cedar of Lebanon or horse chestnut, within several car parks which will provide big canopies. The concept of nodes, hubs and copse is positive but the scale of new landscape and how it complements the buildings should be explored further.

The woodland space of the copse needs to be carefully thought out when adding play areas and other landscape elements, making sure that the woodland character is retained. How the copse relates to the character of the green street houses, with two different house type groups, should be explored further.

The pavilion buildings with undercroft car park within the secondary street would benefit from the addition of taller trees to create a streetscape to soften the pavilion buildings and provide continuity within the context of the copse.

The idea of the hub is welcomed but it was questioned if it is big enough for its anticipated use.

This site presents the opportunity to break the bleak impression of Eddington by doing something that is smaller, greener, and more intimate. The Panel suggested narrowing the tertiary street and increasing the green area within the streetscape.

The Panel also suggested reducing the amount of hard surfacing in the western courtyard by emphasizing the 'ring' path around the back of all the patios and eliminating the straight paths through the middle, thus enabling larger scale planting in the centre to make an identifiable place and help with over-all biodiversity net gain. The courtyards could have a carefully careless or untidier look which does promote biodiversity.

The different colour bricks proposed were welcomed by the Panel. However, the view of the pavilion buildings facing Storey's Field seems to be using the brick monolithically and it was suggested to use the coloured brick in a more playful way, by bringing red to invade the buff brick and introducing some brown at the entrance. If monolithic blocks must be used, the Panel suggest exploring other compositions.

The gridded elevational aesthetic is elegant, more urban than suburban. The layout doesn't appear to offer front garden space for residents' personalisation which is a common feature of English suburbia. The absence of front hedges/walls/fences adds to the austere feel in the illustrations. The Panel wondered what the reasoning was behind this and might further detail design and precedents help clarify the intent.

The Panel questioned if consideration has been given to the provision of maisonettes over ground floor apartments instead of three storey apartments; that could provide individual front doors at street level and thus eliminate the cost and management of

common parts. The applicant responded they considered this typology too urban and wanted to focus the activity on each of these blocks becoming a cluster or micro community sharing a staircase.

The secondary road and the relationship of the scheme to Storey's Field to the south was queried by the Panel, and how it intends to respond to this prominent edge and valuable frontage with expansive views. The Panel supported the idea of pavilions, but the SW corner is a large block, not a pavilion. Instead of the line of new trees, might the green lanes extend towards the road and with existing trees on the field 'pinch' the view along that road? A dialogue with Storey's Fields landscape designers would be helpful to share aspirations for the relationship.

In relation to massing, the clustering of the forms was welcomed, as was the change of scale to the pavilions and courtyards. As previously mentioned, courtyards would benefit from more greening. The Panel had concerns with the block on the SW corner because the approach from the west displays the girth of this L shape block; it is out of scale with the other components of the composition.

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

The Panel noted that Cambridge can be cold and windy in the winter months and making streets that offer a degree of intimacy and shelter will be important for this development.

The Panel reiterated their concerns about the amount of hard surface because it is an enormous contributor to ambient heat and suggested that along the tertiary street at the back end, there is potential for narrowing the street and rain gardens would strengthen planting opportunities and help the microclimate.

In relation to shading, there were some concerns that the tertiary street homes would overheat, due to their SW orientation, amount of glazing and Juliet balcony doors. Examples, such as Goldsmith Street in Norwich were given, where smaller shaped windows help with shading and reduce the overheating potential.

The Panel welcomed the block forms with more colour which is a good evolution of the Eddington aesthetic. However, the amount of articulation with the fabric-first approach needs carefully thought as it may struggle to achieve new regulations. The district heating system is supplemented with photovoltaic roof panels but these could protrude above the parapets and invoke safe access considerations. It is important to calculate how much PV panels are needed and how these work with the elevation strategy.

Recess balconies on flats along the Storey's Field edge were welcomed, however, there were concerns that top floors might overheat and need shading as part of the belvedere design. Additionally, single aspect flats need be carefully considered, as do top floors which are prone to overheat.

It was recommended to work through how and what can be achieved in terms of climate adaptation and mitigation at the detailed level.

Specific recommendations

- Consider seamless cycling journeys, how easy is to access key links and use cycling stores as anticipated.
- Analyse the percentage of hard surface throughout the scheme so this can be reduced, and greener spaces be created.
- Think how the under-croft car parking can look more attractive and the quality of the arrival experience could be improved.
- Consider fewer but more mature trees that can provide shading and character. Develop the tree strategy further.
- Consider post occupancy evaluation to learn lessons from Eddington.
- How people might adapt homes in future and how the current design facilitates this needs to be explored.
- Make sure that the detailed design of fabric-first approach and how this connects into the district heating system.
- Potential conflict with parapets and the amount of PV panels needs.
- Bring some untidiness into the landscape to enhance biodiversity net gain.
- The massing to the southern edge, in particularly the SW corner, seems the most out of character. Collaboration with other landscape teams is essential.

- Use colour of brick in a more playful way and create a rationale for the changes.
- Make sure the woodland character of the copse is retained.
- How the hub will be used needs to develop further.
- Detailed plan of where people sit and pause would help to understand where the sunny and sheltered spots are.
- Maintenance and the community management company will be crucial for the success of the scheme.

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

Author: Judit Carballo

Issue date: 30th August 2022

Appendix A – Background information list and plan

- Main presentation
- Applicant's background note
- Local authority background note

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

