



**Disability Consultative Panel  
Tuesday, 25 January 2022**

**2.00 – 4.00pm  
(via MS Teams)**

**Notes**

Attendees

Melanie Jones	Cambridge City Council (interim Chair)
Jeremy Miller	Spinal Injuries Association Representative
Betty Watts	Cambridgeshire Hearing Help
Rosalind Bird	MS Society/Retired Architect
Gary Reed	University of Cambridge Estates
Jane Renfrew	Resident
Katie Roberts	Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (minutes)

Apologies

Mark Taylor, John Taylor

Jeremy Miller was welcomed back following his long period of absence.

**Presentation 1: Darwin Green – BDW3**

Presenters

Jordan Green, Architect - HTA  
Nell Hewett, Architect - HTA  
Simon Toplis, Architect – HTA  
Emma Havard, Architect - HTA  
Harriet Wooler, Senior Planner – Bidwells  
Catrin Stephens, Assistant Planner – Bidwells  
Matt Jarvis – Rural Solutions

**Presentation 2: Darwin Green – BDW4**

Presenters

Emma Havard, Architect – HTA  
Simon Toplis, Architect – HTA  
Harriet Wooler, Senior Planner – Bidwells  
Catrin Stephens, Assistant Planner – Bidwells

Following detailed presentations about the proposals for Darwin Green BDW3 and BDW4, the following comments were made by the Panel:

### **Darwin Green BD3**

#### Panel comments

- A query was made about whether there are wheelchair accessible apartments within the private market, as well as within the affordable housing sector of Darwin Green - BDW3. The presenters replied that, having sought to comply with Policy (5% of affordable houses should be accessible homes) and followed the principles of the previous phases set out in the outline consent, none of the houses within the private market are M4(3) compliant. All of the apartments are M4(2), but some are not step-free (some have stepped access to the front door). Because of the substantial size of some of the homes they could potentially be adapted to incorporate a wheelchair lift and would satisfy corridor widths and manoeuvrability. It was noted that, in order to be as inclusive as possible, no small houses have been designed from the outset. It was also suggested that, because of the evident need for some private market houses to be M4(3) compliant, a discussion would need to take place with Barratt Homes to seek some provision.
- A query was raised regarding the potential difficulty for cars to turn round in some of the streets, which resemble cul de sacs. This site was described as a 'self-contained parcel', but it was noted that there are turning points within each of the streets and assurances were given that, having been reviewed by transport consultants, the roads are sufficiently wide to accommodate all vehicles, including ambulances, fire engines, refuse vehicles and delivery vans.
- In response to a query regarding the provision of visitor parking (for example, for carers), it was explained that the strategy had involved designing streetscapes that would enable visitors to park near properties. There are 51 bays clearly distributed across the parcel, which can be adjusted in terms of their location to meet requirements. With regard to home owners storing cars in garages it was confirmed that the garages are sized according to the design code and afford sufficient circulation space and access to and from the vehicle.
- One of the Panel members queried whether the kerbs are mobility scooter and wheelchair friendly. It was demonstrated that moves have been made to connect green spaces within the plot with the aim of promoting flush access, although there are some areas where there is a dropped crossing and it is necessary to re-mount the pavement.
- In terms of the internal layout of the buildings, sliding (pocket) doors on bathrooms were recommended by the Panel as these can be more easily manoeuvred from a wheelchair and are space saving. The dimensions of the bathroom are outlined in the building regulations as well and, although a bath is indicated on the drawings, the option exists for a shower or wetroom should adaption be needed.
- It was confirmed that there are shops within the local vicinity and a local centre within Darwin Green.

- In response to a query regarding any potential conflict between pedestrians and cyclists it was reported that there is fast cycle lane in place, demarcated with red tarmac, which conforms to the Local Authority standard (the LA has a commitment to connecting wide cycle networks). Some of the southern parcel areas are specifically for pedestrians and will not be used by cyclists. In terms of coming and going from houses, there is sufficient space in front of them to access the key landscape without needing to use the cycle route. There are areas defined as 'events', represented by a subtle but clear change in streetscape, where pedestrians and cyclists come together. In these areas pedestrians and cyclists need to be aware of the greater risk of conflict.
- The Panel's comments concluded with a final query regarding the lack of step-free access to the M4(2) apartments which was seen as disappointing. These comments are to be passed to the client.

## **Darwin Green BDW4**

### Panel comments

- In response to a query from one of the Panel members, it was confirmed that the homes in the private sector would not be wheelchair accessible. (The rationale being a larger compliant ground floor WC could not be provided without compromising the other spaces.) The affordable houses are all fully M4(2) compliant however.
- Clarification was sought regarding EV charging provision. The final percentage of how many homes will have charging points on their on-plot parking is yet to be confirmed. In terms of the apartments, it may be necessary to have an undesignated system for parking spaces.
- Commenting on the distance between a parked vehicle and an owner's home it was mentioned that apartments will be serviced by parking courtyards and other owners will be able to park in the rear of their own property. The longest distance will be from the homes that front on to the green edge.
- Commenting favourably on the priority given to walking and cycling, the Panel asked how it would be possible to navigate the parcel areas safely in a wheelchair or on a mobility scooter. It was explained that there would be an orbital cycle route and a different pedestrian route, separated by buffer planting.
- In response to a query as to whether the flats over garages would be cold, it was explained that it had been necessary to meet new building regulations on thermal bridging and the ceiling of the garages has been dropped slightly in order to allow for additional insulation.
- It was explained that there would be no lifts in the buildings, because of the associated high service charge, which would have to be added to the rent. According to the current building regulations, only buildings over 4 storeys high are required to have a lift. It was confirmed that the staircases will be fire proofed.

## Conclusion

There is much to applaud regarding these two schemes. The traffic calming and segregation where possible of pedestrians and cyclist movement is welcomed and homes within easy access to green spaces is arguably more relevant now than ever. The Panel would like to stress the need to look beyond policy and percentages, however, and look more closely at where there is market need for accessible homes.

The rationale behind the absence of lift provision within the apartment blocks on BDW4 is understood, although short sighted. As the majority of disabilities are acquired and not from birth, a tenant in a flat who becomes disabled (whether ambulant or wheelchair user) should have the option of being able to continue to live in their home without being denied their independence.

## Any Other Business

- The future of the Disability Panel  
With the Panel Chair, Mark Taylor, currently on long-term sickness absence and the Panel membership having dwindled significantly over the past 18 months, it has been decided that key decisions will need to be made regarding how Access feedback is provided on Planning schemes in future. It is not envisaged that any Panel meetings will be scheduled over the next 3 months at least.