



# Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Land North of Cherry Hinton: RM2/3

Wednesday 24th August 2022

Panel: Robin Nicholson (chair), June Barnes, Oliver Smith, David Taylor, Luke Engleback, and Kirk Archibald.

Local Authority: Sarah Chubb (CGSP), James Truett (CGSP) and Bana Elzein (CGSP)

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 site, to the north of Cherry Hinton and East of Cambridge Airport, was originally promoted by Marshalls of Cambridge and Endurance Estates.

Outline Planning Permission was granted in December 2020 for up to 1200 residential dwellings (including a retirement living facility), a local centre, primary and secondary schools, community facilities, open spaces, allotments, landscaping, and associated infrastructure (planning application references 18/0481/OUT and S/1231/18/OL).

Bellway Latimer LLP (a joint venture between Bellway Homes and Clarion Housing) are implementing the development, having acquired the site following the grant of outline planning permission, and are seeking approval of a reserved matters scheme which is the subject of the design review.

A Site Wide Design Code (SWDC) was conditioned as part of the outline planning approval to provide a framework for the entire site and set out clear design quality expectations.

The Quality Panel reviewed the outline planning applications on 8th January 2018 and 4th June 2018 and the emerging design code and infrastructure application on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

## **Presenting team**

Bellway Latimer LLP are supported by their consultants Pollard Thomas Edwards, Strutt and Parker and McGregor Coxall, and the presenting team was:

Alexis Butterfield (PTE), David Fletcher (Strutt and Parker), Ulrich Van Eck (Bellway), and Matt Lee (McGregor Coxall).

## **Local authority's request**

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) provided a verbal briefing ahead of the main session and highlighted the impact of urban heat management and shade, the

interface between the public realm and people, parking solutions and the character of the ridgeway.

### **Cambridgeshire Quality Panel summary**

Land North of Cherry Hinton will be an exciting development in the east of Cambridge and will set the context for later development of the neighbouring airport site. The Panel welcomed the opportunity to visit the site and comment on this scheme from its inception through to the current reserved matters applications. The Panel welcomed most of the ambitions of the scheme and look forward to it setting a high standard for East Cambridge. Their views are expanded upon below, and include any comments made in closed session too.

Ahead of the main discussion, clarification was sought on the level of parking provision across the scheme. It was stated that there will be 1 space per 1-bed and 2-bed apartments and 2 spaces for other properties, averaging around 1.5 spaces per dwelling across the scheme.

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

The applicant had advised the Panel that the development as a whole will be built out over a ten-year period. In response, it was suggested that thought should be given to how the world may change over that period, especially in relation to travel. The Covid pandemic has highlighted how working from home and hybrid working has changed travel patterns and lifestyle factors may encourage further change on car ownership levels, type, and usage. Car-pooling and car clubs may be in more demand, and electric vehicle (EV) points need to be integrated into the scheme, both for home owners and visitors.

The applicant responded that the design code is intended to be adaptive and can and should be refreshed in future years. EV points will be provided for all homes and to 50% percent of apartments – with the potential to increase to 100% if necessary. The Highway Authority do not currently permit on-street EV points, so hubs are proposed to allow residents and visitors to charge their vehicles. It was not clear if these hubs will be fast charging points or whether the infrastructure will allow for Vehicle-to-Grid usage, which the Panel supports.

Perhaps the scheme could trial a scheme for on-street EV charging for a section of adopted road?

A profile of travel patterns in and around the site was suggested as a way of understanding how the various users (such as residents, visitors, and delivery drivers for example) move around over time and across the seasons. This could be a 'day in the life' analysis.

It was queried how legible the scheme is. Will it be obvious to visitors or delivery van drivers how to reach specific addresses, especially where properties have different accesses for foot/cycle users and parking access, such as The Ridgeway. Towns such as Basildon and Harlow may offer good examples to learn from.

Will the signage strategy work effectively?

It was suggested that the plum red colour of the cycleways could be toned down, acknowledging that the Highways Authority have requirements that have to be met, although could parts of the cycle routes be on unadopted roads? The council's teams working on the Greenways project may be able to offer solutions and ideas as they have extensive experience of integrating cycle routes into different settings.

Consider how cycle routes will work and the different type of users, such as commuters and leisure cyclists. Straight routes can encourage speed, whilst sinuous routes can be more pleasant but frustrating to those wishing to make good progress. It would be useful to map the quickest cycle routes to common destinations.

It was recognised that the main cycle route on the primary route had been much debated with the Highway Authority. The Panel suggested a pilot scheme to achieve the applicant's desired approach of a two-way cycle route on one side of the road only.

The Panel supported the approach to public transport with two bus routes currently planned to serve the development, with stops at or near the secondary school and local centre. It will be important to think about how these stops will be used and the opportunity for these to become social places.

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

The interaction between the public realm and how people use these spaces is important. With increasingly hotter summers, the need for trees to provide shade as places to pause, stop and sit become more important. In order to support the tree species that can best provide for this, linear pits might work better providing they have adequate water supply.

There could be an opportunity to promote social interaction by providing benches or seats in front gardens, as commonly seen in Scandinavia. This can especially help with social isolation for vulnerable people living on their own and encourage interaction more generally. Science City Newcastle has some examples of layered landscape.

Think about the micro-typology and defensible space, especially for smaller dwellings where such provision can be extremely important and needed.

Minimising hard spaces will help to reduce heat stored in them radiating back, after hot weather.

The use of water can help mitigate summer heat, and whilst the SuDs proposals are good, there could be more use of water where it falls and on street to provide interest, delight, and cooling functions. The Panel suggested that wattle fencing and stoplogs could be used in the holding ponds to vary levels, create interest and habitats, as well as integrating on-street rills, channels or even a public fountain which would enrich the scheme.

Vertical greening can add interesting features, as well as climate benefits. Wires can be secured to buildings and/or trellises erected in public places and rear gardens to support planting. Whilst it is recognised that soft fruits and other plants are restricted because of the neighbouring airport and attraction to birds, given the airport will cease function in the late 2020's, the scheme should look beyond that timescale and be adaptive.

Town Planning can often struggle with how dwellings are actually used by occupants. For example, stepping in from the street directly into an open plan living/kitchen room is queried as heat can be lost from the house as well as wind and rain blow in. A lobby as a minimum should be provided and perhaps even a small canopy outside too. Think

about all the different types of users, their needs, and how they will come in and out of the dwellings. Will units that overlook parking or decking have a good outlook?

Whilst initially this scheme provides an edge to Cherry Hinton, as the airport site is developed out, this will become a very different place and its character should evolve as part of a much larger and distinct neighbourhood to Cambridge.

There are a lot of one and two bed units. How will these residents impact on the emerging community and what is the plan for integration with the external community?

Whilst the Mews can provide a welcome shady environment during hot summer days, they can be dominated by garage doors and be windy, damp places in winter. Also, although bin storage is provided, often residents leave them on-street and so these streets can become bin alleys. A shared surface approach would be favoured, over segregated pedestrian and vehicle surfaces, which are not needed for the low traffic volumes expected.

The use of a multiplicity of bricks and/or cut bricks would be supported as in Great Kneighton, but please no mock-Tudor or 'fake' wood treatments that weather and look awful in time.

Coach style or flat-over-garage houses were raised as potentially being problematic. Having a kitchen or living space at ground level would be supported over all first-floor rooms as well as thinking about outdoor spaces (and places for bins and bikes) and multi-aspect views. Staircases can often be tight. Could any flat roofs incorporate a shallow fall to allow for roof lights as well as high level windows for light and ventilation. The applicant acknowledged that they are planning for this where possible.

The quality of the partially covered garage courts should be explored with views from the upper floors looking down into them.

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

Whilst the scheme is delivered on the next ten years, will there be temporary community facilities until permanent infrastructure is in place? Will the schools come forward as originally planned, and if the primary school is delayed, is there an over reliance on its community impact?

The applicant responded that there will be a temporary community facility provided until the planned facility is provided in the local centre.

The use of how-to maintenance packs and manuals for home ownership was suggested by the Panel as a useful means of communicating what and when needs to be undertaken, especially as homes become more complex in design, technology, and other features. YouTube could also be used to great effect for this too.

The 'intended' management plan needs to be developed.

The Panel suggested considering child density and potential impacts, especially for the smaller apartments. There could be conflicts between vulnerable users and family accommodation. Smaller blocks of apartments should be favoured over larger blocks and perhaps some of the maisonettes would be better as houses. The applicant indicated they agreed with the approach of smaller blocks, but the outline planning permission had largely established the mix they have to plan for. In response, the Panel indicated that the local authority is cognisant to this issue, and in attendance, so they need to get the mix right and design out potential conflicts.

The Panel asked how public parts and spaces will be maintained and paid for, whether there will be additional financial burdens on the apartments and is this equitable to the actual users of these spaces?

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

The Panel suggested the use of bio-char in the soil to help activate it and provide sufficient moisture and nutrients. The baseline soil is a sandy loam over chalk which will drain water away, so bio-char will provide benefit, and also pump down carbon helping with the carbon-offset strategy.

Can grey water be used to support green infrastructure and also within houses (for W.C. flushing for example). Inclusion of water butts in gardens has limited capacity, so could a rectangular modular storage system be installed?

The use of heat pumps was discussed and whether it was necessary to use them for the smaller apartments, where efficient insulation and minimal heating (e.g., infra-red units) should be sufficient? Water heating can be achieved by other thermal methods.

It was good to see the heat pumps on the drawings, but care will be needed with their placement. They can create cold spots in confined places, be unsightly and become noisy over time if not properly maintained.

With rising energy bills, efficient heating systems will be highly important to buyers and renters. Whilst insulation performance is important, overheating is a growing problem, especially for top floor apartments and south facing rooms with floor to ceiling windows. Eddington is a good example of how external shades are used to help prevent over-heating. Potential overheating should be modelled.

The Panel looks forward to the embodied carbon calculations both for the buildings and the spaces between them and the lessons to be learned from them.

### **Specific recommendations**

- Welcome approach to E.V., but could there be a pilot scheme for on-adopted street charging
- Can the colour of the cycle routes be better defined and more appropriate to their setting?
- Could there be a single sided cycle route scheme be piloted?
- Will the scheme be adaptive to changing world situations regarding climate change and travel patterns
- Could Bio-charr be used to activate the soil and the use of linear pits be better for the trees
- Explore vertical planting schemes
- Enhance use of water across the site for cooling, delight, and character
- Consider grey water storage and use
- Think about house/apartment designs and could they be improved for the end user
- Use trees for shade and summer cooling and think about the public realm and its use
- Is the scheme legible to all users, including delivery drivers?
- Minimise paving and the associated embedded carbon
- Think about use of heat pumps and their impacts of noise and cold spots. Are they really needed for the smaller apartments?



- Consider maintenance packs for units, so residents understand what, why and when need maintenance. Explore use of YouTube to communicate this.
- Airport restrictions will fall away when that site is developed, so plan for that, especially with planting.
- Energy use will be an important factor for marketing the scheme

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

### **Contact details**

For any queries in relation to this report, please contact the panel secretariat via [growthdevelopment@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:growthdevelopment@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Author: Stuart Clarke

Support: Judit Carballo

Issue date: 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022

