23/00835/FUL – Taylor Vintners Merlin Place, 460 Milton Road, Cambridge

Committee Date: 18 October 2023

Report to: Joint Development Control Committee

Lead Officer: Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

Ward: East Chesterton

Proposal: Demolition of 2,730 sqm (GIA) office building (use class E(g)(i)) and erection of 13,096 sqm (GIA) of research and development accommodation (use class E(g)(ii)), including ancillary accommodation broken down as follows:

i. Office accommodation (4,648 sqm)
ii. Laboratory space (4,388 sqm)
iii. Café (161 sqm)
iv. Ground floor car park incorporating 45 no. car parking spaces (1,047 sqm)
v. Plant space (924 sqm)
vi. Cycle parking spaces (276 for staff and 37 for visitors, total 313)
vii. Access and circulation areas, engineering works and footpaths/cycleways
viii. Drainage and servicing infrastructure, and
ix. Hard and soft landscaping.

Applicant: Kadans Science Partner 9 Limited

Presenting officer: Mike Huntington, Principal Planner, Strategic Sites Team

Reason presented to committee: This is an application for full planning permission in North-East Cambridge, relating to a non-residential building where the floor space to be created is more than 1000 square metres and there are third party representations on planning grounds contrary to the officer recommendation

Member site visit date: N/A

Key issues:

1. Context of the Site, Design and External Spaces

2. Trees and Landscaping

3. Transport, Highway Safety and Parking

Report contents:

1. Executive summary
2. Site description and context
3. The proposal
4. Relevant site history
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6. Consultations
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8. Recommendation

Appendices

1. Conditions and informatives
2. Full comments from consultees and quality panel report

Recommendation: APPROVE application 23/00835/FUL subject to

(i) Conditions and informatives as detailed in this report, with delegated authority to officers to carry through minor amendments to those conditions and informatives (and include others considered as appropriate and necessary) prior to the issuing of the planning permission, and:

(ii) The prior completion of a Section 106 Agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 with delegated authority to officers to negotiate, secure and complete such an Agreement and any others

considered appropriate and necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The application seeks planning permission for an office and laboratory building over seven floors of accommodation.

1.2 The site is located within an area of land identified as part of the emerging Northeast Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP). The NECAAP does not yet have sufficient weight to be considered a significant material consideration in the determination of this application. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 therefore form the basis of the determination of this application.

1.3 The proposal is for over 10,000 square metres of additional employment floorspace in an area identified for employment growth in Cambridge. The principle of development is therefore supported.

1.4 The proposed development will provide BREEAM Excellent certified buildings with a low embodied carbon design and with an all-electric approach to energy use that will achieve significant carbon reductions once operational.

1.5 The design and appearance of the building is considered appropriate in the site's context and respects its urban setting. Furthermore, the scale and massing of the building will not cause visual harm to the wider landscape or setting of Cambridge.

1.6 The proposed development will reduce on site car parking and will promote sustainable forms of travel to and from the site. This includes mitigation through internal infrastructure improvements and a financial contribution towards strategic transport infrastructure in northeast Cambridge.

1.7 The benefits of the proposals include the promotion of highly sustainable modes of travel through minimal car parking on site; a building with high sustainability credentials and providing a mix of uses on site including employment opportunities and a shared café open to the public with the potential of attracting footfall from emerging development around this part of Cowley Road.

1.8 The proposal would deliver over 10,000 square metres of additional office and lab space. The existing building to be demolished has a floorspace of 2,730 square metres. The proposals will create construction jobs and employment within the development. Positive weight is afforded to these benefits. The specific benefit to the area's economy from this development, and the extent to which the economic needs of the area can be met effectively elsewhere, needs to be balanced with the adverse impacts identified that result from the scale and quantum of development proposed.

1.9 While there will be a level of harm to existing trees and hedges by the removal of some of those trees and hedges, this will be mitigated by new and additional planting, together with wider green infrastructure enhancements secured through the s106 Agreement.

1.10 Heads of Terms have been agreed for the provision of a strategic transport contribution as sought by the County Council which is considered to be a positive impact to the comprehensive development of the wider Northeast Cambridge Area, as well as a financial contribution towards the delivery of green infrastructure in the area.

1.11 In this finely balanced planning judgement, officers have considered that, in this case, the wider public and economic benefits arising from the scheme outweigh any harm arising from the proposed development.

1.12 Officers recommend that the Joint Development Control Committee agree with the recommendation and approve the application for the reasons set out in this report.

2.0 Site Description and Context

2.1 The site is located between Milton Road and Cowley Road, in a prominent location on the northern edge of the city, near to the Science Park, and along one of the main routes into the city from the north. It is surrounded by roads.

2.2 The site contains an existing 1980s office building, currently providing 2,730m² of accommodation, and is approximately 0.5 hectares in size. It is located entirely within the administrative boundary of Cambridge City Council

2.3 The site is relatively flat with the exception of its northern and western edges, which bank up a little toward the Milton and Cowley Road

intersection. As a consequence, the ground floor level of the existing building sits lower than the street level on the site's north-western edge. On the eastern edge, the building's entrance and paving is level with the road and its general surroundings.

2.4 The site has established trees and hedging on all the boundaries.

2.5 Vehicular access is from Cowley Road to the east, with the building entrance towards the north-east of the site, also off Cowley Road.

2.6 There are 93 existing car parking spaces on site, including 3 wheelchair accessible spaces. These are located in the forecourt area to the front and rear of the building.

2.7 The site is a short distance away from Cambridge North station, connected by Cowley Road and a separate off-carriageway cycle lane.

2.8 To the east of the site lies the future development area identified in the emerging Northeast Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP), currently largely occupied by the Cambridge Wastewater Treatment Plant.

2.9 Immediately opposite the site on Cowley Road is an existing office building known as Orwell House, containing a mix of commercial units. This is also earmarked as potential redevelopment land as part of the NECAAP.

2.10 To the south of the site, lies the existing Cambridge Business Park, and further to the south-west lies residential neighbourhoods, beyond the existing Cambridge Science Park.

3.0 The Proposal

3.1 The application seeks the demolition of the 2,730 square metres (sqm) gross internal area GIA) existing office building (use class E(g)(i)), and the erection of 13,096 sqm (GIA) of research and development accommodation (use class E(g)), including ancillary accommodation broken down as follows:

- Office accommodation (4,648 sqm)
- Laboratory space (4,388 sqm)
- Café (161 sqm)

- Ground floor car park incorporating 45 no. car parking spaces (1,047 sqm)
- Plant space (924 sqm)
- Cycle parking spaces (276 for staff and 37 for visitors, total 313)
- Access and circulation areas, engineering works and footpaths/cycleways
- Drainage and servicing infrastructure, and
- Hard and soft landscaping

3.2 The proposal aims to provide a multi-tenant office and laboratory building with flexible office and laboratory spaces over seven floors of accommodation, with the building height varying between 24.36 and 30.55 metres.

3.3 The ground floor facilities would include a reception area adjacent to a central atrium, a shared café open to the public and with external space and seminar space.

3.4 A ground level double-height entrance foyer faces Cowley Rd and the key area of pedestrian/public realm. Behind this, an under-croft car park is positioned away from the more active frontage of Cowley Rd. The site topography lends itself to the positioning of the car park here, as there will be a degree of natural screening as the ground banks up toward the west and to the north of the site.

3.5 On level 1, plant space is located to the west, and this will be buffered by existing and proposed trees along Milton Rd.

3.6 Levels 2-5 have been designed to service ‘typical’ lab and office floorplates. Lab space has been positioned along the Milton Road edge, due to their need to be sealed in order to maintain a suitable lab environment. The office space is positioned to the east and the north, where opportunities for mixed-mode ventilation exist.

3.7 A pocket park is proposed to be located on the southern corner of the site, with external cycle stores located to the north of the proposed building, adjacent to Milton Road and Cowley Road.

3.8 The proposal will result in the removal of 36 trees and a hedge, but will be replaced by 86 new trees.

3.9 The proposal would promote minimal car use, utilising good access to public transport and provision for secure cycle storage and associated changing facilities. A dedicated delivery, lab logistics and goods area would also be provided.

3.10 The application is accompanied by the following supporting reports and key plans.

- Application plans and drawings
- Design and Access Statement, including RECAP Waste Management Design Guide Toolkit
- Design Compliance Statement
- Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Sustainability Strategy, including Water Consumption
- Energy Strategy
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Air Quality Assessment
- Health Impact Assessment
- External Lighting Report
- Ground Investigation Report
- Transport Assessment
- Framework Travel Plan
- Utilities Report
- Drainage Strategy Report
- Tree Survey
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Tree Management Plan
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Biodiversity Impact Assessment
- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey
- Other species specific surveys identified as necessary by the Phase 1 Habitat Survey
- Public Art Strategy
- Security Needs

3.11 The application has been subject to two presentations to the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel. The Panel's comments can be found in section 6, with an assessment of their comments within the body of the report.

3.12 The evolution of the scheme is described in section 5 of the Design and Access Statement.

4.0 Relevant Site History

4.1 There is no relevant planning history for the site.

5.0 Policy

National

National Planning Policy Framework 2021
National Planning Practice Guidance
National Design Guide 2021
Environment Act 2021
Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.
Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
Equalities Act 2010
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) Cycle Infrastructure Design
ODPM Circular 06/2005 – Protected Species
Circular 11/95 (Conditions, Annex A)

Cambridge Local Plan 2018

Policy 1: The presumption in favour of sustainable development
Policy 2: Spatial strategy for the location of employment development
Policy 5: Sustainable transport and infrastructure
Policy 8: Setting of the City
Policy 14: Areas of Major Change and Opportunity Areas
Policy 15: Cambridge Northern Fringe East and new railway Station Area
Policy 28: Sustainable design and construction, and water use
Policy 31: Integrated water management and the water cycle
Policy 32: Flood risk
Policy 33: Contaminated land
Policy 34: Light pollution control
Policy 35: Human health and quality of life
Policy 36: Air quality, odour and dust
Policy 55: Responding to context
Policy 56: Creating successful places
Policy 57: Designing new buildings

Policy 59: Designing landscape and the public realm
Policy 60: Tall buildings and the skyline in Cambridge
Policy 70: Protection of priority species and habitats
Policy 71: Trees
Policy 80: Supporting sustainable access to development
Policy 81: Mitigating the transport impact of development
Policy 82: Parking management
Policy 85: Infrastructure delivery, planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy

Supplementary Planning Documents

Biodiversity SPD – Adopted February 2022
Landscape in New Developments SPD – Adopted March 2010
Open Space SPD – Adopted January 2009
Public Art SPD – Adopted January 2009
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD – Adopted January 2020
Trees and Development Sites SPD – Adopted January 2009

Other material planning considerations

Cambridge Air Quality Action Plan
Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy
RECAP Waste Management Design Guide

5.1 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are jointly preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Northeast Cambridge (NEC). The wider Northeast Cambridge site is located in one of the last remaining significant brownfield sites in Greater Cambridge.

5.2 It has long been an ambition of the local councils to take advantage of the opportunity this site affords to regenerate this part of the city and to support the continued economic success of the local economy.

5.3 The area proposed to be covered by the AAP is shown in Appendix 1.

AAP Background

5.4 Policy 15 (Cambridge Northern Fringe East and new railway Station Area of Major Change) of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 has allocated the area for high quality mixed use development, primarily for employment uses such as B1, B2 and B8, as well as a range of supporting commercial, retail, leisure and residential uses (subject to acceptable environmental conditions).

5.5 The local plans do not specify the amount of development, site capacities, or timescales for development, deferring such matters to the preparation of the joint AAP. This is because the planning of the area is dependent on the relocation of the Cambridge Water Wastewater Treatment Plant (CWWTP) which has been determined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) which requires Anglian Water to submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).

5.6 A DCO application has now been submitted to and accepted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The preliminary meeting has been confirmed as taking place on 17th October 2023

5.7 Since the local plans were adopted, the City Council as landowner, in partnership with Anglian Water as owners of the CWWTP, has sought to secure funding, through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), to relocate the CWWTP.

5.8 Once the CWWTP site is vacated, together with land around the new Cambridge North station, the Cambridge Business Park, St John's Innovation Park, the Cambridge Science Park and other land, will provide the opportunity for the creation of a new urban quarter to the city which can make a significant contribution to the future housing and employment needs of Greater Cambridge.

5.9 In recognition of this opportunity, the councils are preparing a joint AAP to guide the type, mix and location of development, ensuring this is coordinated, manages transport requirements, and delivers on a shared future vision of the place.

5.10 The councils recognise that the component parts of the NEC area will be developed out separately and at different times, potentially several years apart. While the councils wish to see early delivery on NEC, the councils also consider that it is important that the ambition in the adopted Local Plan for comprehensive mixed use development is achieved.

AAP Stage Reached

5.11 The AAP has already been the subject of three rounds of public consultation and has been refined at each stage having regard to matters raised by respondents. In addition, a full suite of evidence and topic papers has been prepared:

Issues and Options – 8th December 2014 – 2nd February 2015
Issues and Options – 11th February – 25th March 2019
Draft Area Action Plan– 27th July – 5th October 2020

5.12 A Proposed Submission AAP was prepared and reported to the councils (South Cambridgeshire District Council Cabinet 10th January 2022, Cambridge City Council Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee 11th January 2022), where the Proposed Submission AAP was considered and agreed for future public consultation. This next stage is contingent upon the separate DCO being concluded.

5.13 Both councils therefore fully endorse the AAP vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy, and policies. However, the proposals within the Proposed Submission AAP are predicated upon the WWTP being relocated – and therefore contingent on the DCO for the relocation of WWTP being approved by the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

5.14 Until the DCO process is concluded, and the relocation project authorised to commence, the AAP process is paused.

AAP Status

5.15 The Proposed Submission AAP has not been the subject of publication and consultation, it therefore currently attracts “limited” (i.e. little) weight as a material consideration in planning decision making and advice.

AAP Evidence Base

5.16 A full suite of evidence base studies has nevertheless been prepared for the AAP. These have been reported to the relevant committees of the councils alongside the Proposed Submission AAP and are published on the councils’ shared planning webpages.

North East Cambridge AAP Document Library (greatercambridgeplanning.org).

5.17 These studies are considered to provide evidence of the existing context of NEC and its surrounds. The evidence base provides background information and the Councils’ direction of travel and as such the documents may be a relevant consideration which attracts weight if and to the extent that it is material to the application of adopted development plan policies.

Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (EIA)

5.18 The application proposals fall within Schedule 2, Class 10 (b) 'Urban Development Projects' of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('The Regulations').

5.19 Schedule 2 of the Regulations describes certain types of development where EIA may be required if the development has the potential likelihood to give rise to 'significant' environmental effects, and the thresholds in Schedule 2 are met. The proposed development does not meet any of the schedule thresholds or criteria set out in Schedule 2.

5.20 Accordingly, it is not necessary to screen the development proposals, as they are below the exclusion thresholds set out in Schedule 2, and the site is not within a sensitive area.

5.21 Notwithstanding this position, since the application was originally submitted, officers note that circumstances have changed, and new evidence has emerged relating to ground water abstraction and potential impact on water resources. Officers maintain the view that, given the scale of the development proposed, the development proposals would not constitute EIA development, and an Environmental Statement (ES) is not required to be submitted.

6.0 Consultations

Consultation Responses

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel Meeting of 11 April 2022

6.1 A review of the initial proposals was undertaken by the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel on 11th April 2022.

6.2 A copy of the Panel's report can be found at **Appendix 2**; however the comments are summarised below:

Connectivity

6.3 The Panel regretted the inability for any party to resolve the serious issues arising from the 5-way junction with Milton Road. The Panel was unable to comment in any detail on the sustainable transport plan, as no modal

share data was presented. The Panel also questioned the need for a car park at all as the site is very well connected with the Cambridgeshire Guided Bus and the nearby North Cambridge railway station.

Climate

6.4 The climate ambition was supported by the Panel, and they were pleased to see the emphasis on passive design and initial embodied carbon calculations. They suggested whole life carbon performance is measured on an ongoing basis, aiming higher than national standards. The Panel was very concerned about the fully glazed top floor prow which is likely to have serious overheating issues and similarly for the fully glazed atrium on the east side. The Panel urged the applicant to model this to design out potential overheating.

Character

6.5 The elevations are wrapped rounded the corners to avoid trees but the building misses having a front and a back. The Milton Road façade would benefit from having a calm urban expression as the back of the building. The landscape is not integrated as an integral part of this scheme; it is a very basic proposal and despite its boundary constraints, the landscape is only seen on the 'leftover' spaces instead of being fully integrated. The starting point should be what the landscape can do for the scheme, and not be an afterthought. How the building elevations work in the context of the mature trees as well as the proposed tree planting should be considered. Retained trees should be kept in good condition and a management plan for them should be put in place.

Community

6.6 The Panel were concerned about what mixed use facilities there would be in northeast Cambridge in the absence of a current plan for the entire site to create a vibrant community. If the place is too sterile, it would be difficult to attract and retain staff. Social interactions around informal meetings are crucial and suggestions about how the internal layout is configured were made. This could help inform the design of the façade.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel Meeting of 27th June 2022

6.7 A subsequent review of the revisions to the proposals was undertaken by the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel on 27th June 2022.

6.8 A copy of the Panel's report can be found at Appendix 3; however the comments are summarised below:

Character

6.9 The Panel was very concerned with the massing of the building and highlighted the lack of space around the building, the buildable area of the plot has been maximised and therefore the quality of the space around its perimeter is too restricted and lacks civic generosity.

6.10 As a result of the large footprint of the building, which is too big for the plot in the opinion of the Panel, the public realm has been relegated in its importance and good external social spaces are lacking. However, the pocket garden on the southern corner will not work as intended. The Panel suggests this area be dedicated to supporting biodiversity

Connectivity

6.11 Plans do not show any off-site works for access and therefore questions of what Cowley Road would look like, where crossing points will be located and what is the provision for cycling and walking, were raised. Without any improvements, how the site will achieve a 43% cycle mode share?

6.12 Improvements to the Cowley Road junction were suggested. It is important to understand where people and staff are coming from and how the scheme can help with the last 100m of the cycling and walking journey and how these will work in the future. Consider what walking and cycling journeys from the station will be like from day one, before the rest of Cambridge North is developed, and other connections are made.

Climate

6.13 The Panel commended the applicant on the amount of work and measurement done on all sustainable aspects of the scheme, especially on the embodied carbon for the materials. They were surprised by terracotta being a lower embodied carbon material compared to some other more traditional façade materials, so welcomed its inclusion.

6.14 The Panel was pleased that the elevations recognise their orientation and change as the building goes round. The Panel were pleased to see the science behind treating the different orientation of the building but were unsure whether the southern glazed prow, has sufficient overhang to provide adequate shading.

Community

6.15 For the café to work on the northeast corner, there should be a pedestrian and cycle crossing, and it should be visible and clear how this is accessed. There is a danger the entrance will be lost behind trees when viewed from further away. If the intention is to attract the general public into the café, for example people with buggies, the route must be safe, accessible, and pleasant.

Consultee comment

Milton Parish Council

6.16 Object

6.17 Comments in full –

- Overdevelopment of a teardrop site in relation to height being 7 floors and impact of the size of the proposed building to cover 13,096 sqm.
- Insufficient allocated parking for proposed staff members and concerns of displacement parking in Milton.
- The proposal does not comply with the Northeast Action Plan in relation to housing lead development.
- Prefer to maintain more trees and supply more green space

City Council Ecology

6.18 No objection

City Council Environmental Health

6.20 No objection subject to planning conditions –

- material management plan
- unexpected contamination
- construction hours
- construction/demolition noise/vibration & piling
- dust

City Council Trees

6.19 Object. The development necessitates the loss of 34 of the site's trees, including the majority that green Cowley Road and a significant number than contribute to the verdant character of Milton Road.

6.20 In addition to this impact, the pruning of retained trees will be required to accommodate construction and then to maintain a reasonable clearance to the building.

6.21 Remedial works required to create a suitable construction clearance for a building of this scale are expected to have an additional detrimental impact.

6.22 The height and mass of the building will also alter how retained trees receive sunlight, further increasing the possibility of a decline in health.

6.23 Given the scale of the proposed building and associated facilities there is limited scope for replacement planting, especially with trees of stature at maturity.

6.24 The visual relationship between retained trees and the site's building will alter dramatically given the significant increase in height and footprint with the new building, dwarfing existing trees.

GCP Landscape

6.25 Does not support. The proposed building does not respond positively to its local context by way of its overbearing presence on existing landscape and nearby streets. Does not create well integrated, contextual public realm and buildings which enhance the townscape. Poor integration of the building on the site and the externalisation of cycle storage.

6.26 High quality external public and private space have not been achieved within the proposals, and natural features are not successfully integrated into the overall design.

6.27 The proposals do not achieve the appropriate balance of height, scale or mass for this site.

GCP Sustainability

No objections subject to planning conditions requiring

- BREEAM 'Excellent' Design Stage Certification
- BREEAM 'Excellent' Post Construction Certification, and
- Renewables 10% Details Compliance

GCP Urban Design

6.28 Does not support. The scale and massing of the proposed building is considered excessive for the site, leaving limited space for landscaping and the creation of a high-quality public ream, resulting in the over-development of the plot.

6.29 The architectural composition is unresolved, resulting in an unremarkable building with an unbalanced appearance.

6.30 It is considered that the proposed development would constitute an incongruous form of overdevelopment and fail to provide a landmark building for this highly prominent location.

6.31 Accordingly, it would conflict with Policies 55, 56, 56 and 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and Section 12 of the NPPF, which seek to ensure that new development responds positively to its context and draws inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings to help create distinctive and high-quality places.

6.32 It would also fail to meet the high-quality design expectations for this prominent site as required by the NECAAP.

Cambridge Airport

6.33 No objection subject to a suggested Bird Hazard Management Plan

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

6.33 No objection, suggests that the applicant seeks secure by design accreditation

Cambridgeshire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority

6.34 No objection, subject to planning conditions requiring a detailed surface water drainage scheme, and a scheme to manage surface water while construction takes place

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Development Management

6.35 No objections subject to planning conditions requiring 2m x 2m visibility splays, paved areas to be constructed so that no private water from the site drains across or onto the adopted public highway, a Traffic Management Plan (separate from any submitted Construction management plan), and a condition requiring kerbs to be reinstated.

Cambridgeshire County Council Transport Assessment Team

6.36 No objection subject to mitigation package, including the following obligations and conditions are required to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

6.37 A contribution towards strategic transport infrastructure.

6.38 To implement a new pedestrian / cycle crossing over Cowley Road and to widen the footway – to be secured by planning condition.

6.39 A contribution for additional parking restrictions in the surrounding area - to be secured by s106 agreement.

6.40 A contribution for Travel Plan management and monitoring - to be secured by s106 agreement

6.41 Car Park Management Plan - to be secured by planning condition.

6.42 Travel Plan - to be secured by planning condition.

Anglian Water

6.36 No objection, subject to a suggested surface water drainage planning condition

Cadent Gas

6.37 No objection

Environment Agency

6.38 No comments received

Fire Service

6.39 No objection, subject to planning condition requiring details of fire hydrants

7.0 Third party representations have been

7.1 Third party representations submitted by the developer of the adjacent Hartree land (LandsecU+I and TOWN). They have not objected to the proposed scheme but have commented on the wider infrastructure required to support the vision set out in the emerging NECAAP and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (December 2021) that has been prepared.

7.2 The IDP identifies what strategic infrastructure interventions will be required to support the level of growth anticipated, and the estimated cost and timescale of delivery, in order to ensure that each developer pays a fair and equitable proportion of those costs.

7.3 The representation wishes it to be recognised that it would be neither reasonable nor equitable to expect remaining sites/developments in the NECAAP area (such as Hartree) to meet the IDP funding deficits arising

from these earlier developments in addition to their own planning contributions at the time their applications come forward.

8.0 Local Interest Groups and Organisations

8.1 Cambridge Past Present and Future has made a representation objecting to the application on the following grounds:

- Bulk and mass of the development
-Visual impact on Milton Road
-Size of the building's footprint in relation to plot size
-Overdevelopment
-Potential tree impacts

8.2 The above is a summary of the comments that have been received. Full details of the representations are available on the Council's website.

9.0 Planning Background

9.1 Policy 15 of the Cambridge Local Plan sets out the proposed development approach for Cambridge Northern Fringe East and Cambridge North railway station. The policy advises that the amount of development, site capacity, time scales and phasing of development will be established through the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP).

9.2 The application site is located within the Northeast Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP) area.

9.3 The policy sets out criteria for development proposals including that they do not compromise opportunities for the redevelopment of the wider area. Paragraph 3.31 of the supporting text states; "planning applications submitted before the adoption of the AAP will be considered on their own merits and subject to ensuring that they would not prejudice the outcome of the AAP process and the achievement of the comprehensive vision for the area as a whole that will be established by the AAP."

9.4 Paragraphs 47-50 of the NPPF set out the following points regarding the status of emerging plans with respect to decision making.

9.5 Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to the stage of preparation (the more advanced, the greater the weight), the extent to which there are unresolved objections to

relevant policies, and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF.

9.6 In the context of the objective of sustainable development, arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal of planning permission other than in limited circumstances where both the development proposed is so substantial, or its cumulative effect would be so significant, that to grant planning permission would undermine the plan-making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are central to the emerging plan and the emerging plan is at an advanced stage but is not yet formally part of the development plan for the area.

9.7 It is considered that the proposed development is not of a such significant scale which, if granted, would undermine the plan making process.

10.0 Assessment

10.1 From the consultation responses and representations received and from an inspection of the site and the surroundings, the key issues are:

- Principle of development
- Character and Appearance
- Landscape and Trees
- Transport and Access
- Construction and Environmental Impacts
- Biodiversity
- Carbon reduction and sustainable design
- Character and Appearance
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Utilities
- Third party representations

11.0 Principle of Development

11.1 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For **decision-taking** this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay subject to assessing whether any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

11.2 Policy 2 (Spatial strategy for the location of employment development) of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 states that the overall development strategy is to focus the majority of employment development on the following -

i) the urban area,
ii) Areas of Major Change,
iii) Opportunity Areas, and
iv) the city centre.

11.3 Policy 14 (Areas of Major Change) states that development within these areas should be of the highest quality design and incorporate the principles of sustainable design and construction, and should only be permitted when the necessary infrastructure and associated arrangements to support that development have been secured or where an assessment shows that a particular development can take place in advance of such provision without causing unacceptable impacts.

11.4 The site is located within a designated Area of Major Change, defined in Policy 15 (Cambridge Northern Fringe East and new railway Station Area of Major Change) and show in Figure 3.3 of the Local Plan.

11.5 Policy 15 states that “Cambridge Northern Fringe East and the new railway station will enable the creation of a revitalised, employment focussed area centred on a new transport interchange” and allocates the land for “high quality mixed-use development, primarily for employment uses such as B1, B2 and B8, as well as a range of supporting commercial, retail, leisure and residential uses…”.

11.6 Policy 15 also states that all proposals should:

a) take into account existing site conditions and environmental and safety constraints;
b) demonstrate that environmental and health impacts (including odour) from the Cambridge Water Recycling Centre can be acceptably mitigated for occupants;
c) ensure that appropriate access and linkages, including for pedestrians and cyclists, are planned for in a high quality and comprehensive manner;
d) where development is proposed, provide for appropriate ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures either on- or off-site; and
e) ensure that due consideration has been given to safeguarding the appropriate future development of the wider site.

11.7 Sections of Policy 14 and 15 that are relevant to this particular site will be addressed throughout the report.

11.8 The proposed development is for a research and development facility providing for flexible multi-tenant space. A shared café, which would also be open to the public, and seminar space will be provided on the ground floor.

11.9 It is considered that the proposed land uses accord with that as set out in Policy 15.

11.10 The proposals will result in the creation of a significant number of new jobs, with the current proposals likely to create direct employment of approximately 800 full time equivalent jobs, once operational. It is also anticipated that approximately 200 jobs are likely to be created through the construction stage, which the applicant states are likely to include opportunities for apprenticeships.

Summary

11.11 It is considered that the principle of the development is acceptable and in accordance with policies 14 and 15 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018.

12.0 Character and appearance

Introduction

12.1 Paragraphs 126, 130 and 131 of the NPPF advise that developments should aim to achieve well-designed, sustainable places that function well, are visually attractive, create a strong sense of plans and optimise the potential of the site.

12.2 Policies 8 (Setting of the City), 55 (Responding to context), 56 (Creating successful places), 57 (Designing new buildings), 59 (Designing landscape and the public realm) and 60 (Tall buildings and the skyline in Cambridge) seek to ensure that development responds appropriately to its context, is of a high quality, reflects or successfully contrasts with existing building forms and materials and includes appropriate landscaping and boundary treatment.

12.3 The applicant has submitted a Design and Access statement to explain the approach to the design of the building and the rest of the site. A

Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) has also been submitted to identify significant potential effects on the townscape fabric, townscape character and effects on visual amenity.

12.4 The TVIA describes the site as one situated within an extensively modified and changing townscape setting, and goes onto describe the townscape as one that is considered to be sufficient in scale to accommodate a development of the scale proposed.

12.5 Future wider changes in the local townscape are anticipated through the emerging context of the Northeast Cambridge Area Action Plan. The proposed development is considered to reflect the ambition for the transformation of this part of the city.

12.6 These changes include the already approved scheme for the redevelopment of part of St John's Innovation Park immediately to the north of the site.

Layout, Scale and Massing

12.7 The site is constrained by its shape, size and surrounding roads. The proposed footprint of the building is wider at the northern end and narrows to a point on its southern elevation. This is considered acceptable and addresses the site's constraints.

12.8 The proposed building will be mostly 6 storeys high with a 7th storey lantern feature to the south. There will be no basement. The height of the main part of the building will be 24.36m high, with the upper roof and lantern feature being 30.55m high. The flues extend this height by a further 3.5 metres.

12.9 The site presents an important edge to Milton Road, one that is identified in the NECAAP as being of a suitable scale at a maximum height of 31m. It is also identified as being suitable for a 'landmark building.'

12.10 To the west, across Milton Road, the existing buildings are lower, at approximately 15-20m height. To the east, sites are identified as being suitable for development up to 31m.

12.11 Concerns have been raised by the Urban Design officer, including in relation to the following layout, scale and massing issues –

- Failure to integrate the proposal with the immediate locality and the wider city
- Inappropriately scaled built frontages
- Failure to create active edges
- Failure to successfully integrate refuse areas, roof plant, substation areas
- Failure to delivery high quality public realm
- Failure to deliver a high quality addition to the Cambridge skyline

12.12 Notwithstanding the concerns raised by the Urban Design officer, it is clear that the scale of the building is in accordance with the aims and aspirations expressed in the emerging NEECAP. This building is one several buildings to come forward as part of the redevelopment of this part of Northeast Cambridge, and follows a similar scale to those built or approved and not yet built on the St John's Innovation Park immediately to the north of the site. The proposed lantern design feature provides an accent to the southern corner of the building and creates a distinctive element in the local townscape and so provides a landmark element.

12.13 The internal layout and the external appearance of the building has been informed by both the internal requirements of lab/ office space and of the setting of the site, with ground floor active uses facing onto the quieter Cowley Road, and less active uses such as car parking facing out onto the much busier Milton Road. This is an appropriate response to the site's characteristics.

12.14 While the proposals mean that a large proportion of the available site is taken over by built form, with less land taken over for public realm, it is not considered that the site is an appropriate or suitable location for a significant area of public realm, located adjacent to Milton Road, one of the main thoroughfares into Cambridge.

12.15 In addressing the issues raised by the Quality Panel, in relation to character and public realm, the building is on a tight site at the entrance to the NEC area. Given the character and intense use of Milton Road to the west, it was not considered appropriate to provide significant public realm around the building, as it would likely receive little use.

12.16 Instead the building will provide a degree of activity and surveillance, and the overall scale and landmark quality will address the currently dominant Milton Road.

12.17 The proposed building form and scale is part of a new emerging building typology for the area, moving away from a generally lower density science park to a more urban building form.

12.18 Questions raised by the panel in relation to the detail of the proposed soft landscaping plan can be addressed by suitably worded planning conditions (**Conditions 20 and 21 – Hard and Soft Landscaping**).

12.19 Issues raised by the quality panel regarding connectivity and how any mechanism for securing off site works to improve public realm and road crossings will be achieved by a s106 agreement for a financial contribution for transport infrastructure.

12.20 Also, the travel plan for the building demonstrates that 43% cycle mode share is achievable. The proposal will have low car parking numbers (45 spaces compare to the 300+ spaces that a building of this size would attract if Local Plan Parking Standards were maximised) and the site is in a highly accessible location with more options for sustainable travel since Cambridge North Station opened.

12.21 The General Arrangement Layout Plan – Level 0 (Drawing No: MPC-HOK-BW-ZZ-DR-T-10101 Rev P01) and figure 3.4 of the Framework Travel Plan shows a raised table pedestrian crossing on Cowley Road to the east of the scheme which would need to be delivered by the County Council through planning condition [**Condition 16 – Cycle route details**].

12.22 Issues raised in relation to the community aspect of the proposed scheme have been addressed by showing more formal tree planting around the entrance to the building and café, and this will improve the visibility of this active use. The other planting and retained trees on that corner will help to shield the seating area from passing vehicles.

12.23 Other issues relating to the design of refuse areas, roof plant and substation can be addressed by appropriately worded planning conditions [**Condition 5 - Materials**].

Summary

12.24 Taking into account the changing context of the site and its relationship with the wider emerging northeast Cambridge area, this justifies the approach to plot coverage, scale and massing for the proposal. As such it is considered that the applicants have appropriately addressed the issues of layout, character and appearance in the proposed design. Subject to conditions, the proposal is in accordance with Local Plan policies 8, 55, 56, 57, 59 and 60, and NPPF advice.

Elevations and materials

12.25 The building is broken down into three primary elements – the South tower with the 'lantern' element, the west horizontal lab block and the east office block with the entrance colonnade.

12.26 As Milton Road is the main vehicular artery connecting the A14 to the city centre, the west façade of the building will be perceived predominantly by people in moving vehicles, as they pass by the site.

12.27 The locations of the main entrance and the café respond to the quieter eastern elevation, positioned along this edge of the site and acknowledging the emerging NECAAP masterplan.

12.28 Concrete vertical and horizontal elements will be employed to the lantern on the south, to the colonnade to the entrance and also the car parking area at the base of the building.

12.29 Curtain wall glazing is used for the entrance area, the façade elements to the lantern and to the recessed circulation areas which separate the two main blocks of the building. The roof plant screen will also be a PPC aluminium cladding system.

12.30 An office/seminar suite with a surrounding balcony will be located in the lantern. External roof plant is positioned to the north, behind the tower, behind an external plant screen.

12.31 The applicant has proposed red polyester powder coated aluminium for the middle five storeys, with the ground and top storeys having a different colour and material treatment. The ground floor comprises masonry walls and concrete cladding, together with glazing which establishes a more solid 'plinth' at the base of the building.

12.32 The setback seventh storey provides a screened plant enclosure with the lantern at the southern end of the building, rising up above the plant. The lantern provides a distinctive element to the building created by the

contrast in materials. The proposed flues rise up beyond the general massing of the building and are grouped and integrated into the overall composition of the building.

12.33 Concerns have been raised by the Urban Design officer, including in relation to the following elevation and materials issues –

- Ground floor appears ‘squashed’
- Level 6 does not seek to minimise the over-dominant plant room
- Competing massing elements result in an unremarkable building with compromised detailed design

12.34 The ground floor has been designed purposefully as a ‘plinth’ feature, with the first floors and above designed to float above this floor. The ground floor elevations facing out onto Milton Road, by virtue of this part of the building providing car parking, are intentionally less active.

12.35 Ground floor activity is predominantly located in the north-eastern part of the site, and this is considered to be an appropriate location, forming a relationship with existing and future buildings on the adjacent St John’s Innovation Park.

12.36 The upper parts of the building, comprising the 5 storeys of the building that will comprise most of the proposed lab / office space and the lighter lantern feature on the top storey, provide a clearly articulated elevational treatment without compromising the quality of the overall design.

12.37 The materials to enclose the plant room and its surroundings will be secured by an appropriate planning condition [**Condition 5 – materials**].

12.38 Notwithstanding this, the materials proposed for the building, including the important ground floor, the colour of the aluminium panels and other materials, will be subject to detailed planning conditions [**Condition 5 - materials**]. This condition will also control the materials to enclose the plant floor and for the proposed flues.

Summary

12.39 The proposed elevations and associated materials combine to create a striking building that will provide a contrast with existing development around it and is consistent with the ongoing regeneration and redevelopment of the NEC area. Taking into account the concerns of the

urban design officer, It is considered that the applicants have appropriately addressed the issues of elevations and materials, and subject to conditions [**Condition 5 - materials**], the proposal is in accordance with Local Plan policy 57 and NPPF advice.

13.0 Landscaping and Trees

13.1 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF advises that existing trees should be retained wherever possible.

13.2 Policies 59 (Designing landscape and the public realm) and 71 (Trees) seek to preserve, protect and enhance existing trees and hedges that have amenity value and contribute to the quality and character of the area and provide sufficient space for trees and other vegetation to mature.

13.3 Policy 85 (Planning Obligations) seeks to ensure that there are suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision and phasing of infrastructure, services and facilities necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms, including ensuring the provision green infrastructure.

13.4 The application is accompanied by a Tree Survey, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), and a Tree Management Plan. The AIA judges that collectively the existing trees on site provide a significant contribution to local canopy cover and its associated ecosystem, but the site is poorly connected, and so are not considered to form part of any significant Green Infrastructure network.

13.5 As set out in the AIA, the development would result in the loss of 34 trees and 1 hedge, and the partial removal of another hedge. The losses include 2 of the 14 Category A trees and 8 Category B trees.

13.6 The AIA states that 16 of the trees to be removed are within the main development footprint, or so close as to make their retention unfeasible.

13.7 In addition to the removal of trees, works to retained trees will also be required including work within root protection zones and pruning of retained trees to accommodate construction and then to maintain a reasonable clearance to the building.

13.8 The Council's Tree officer has objected to the proposal, considering that the scheme is not in accordance with Policies 59 and 71, which supports

high quality development which demonstrates that existing features including trees, natural habitats and boundary treatments that positively contribute to the quality and character of an area are retained and protected. Furthermore, the remedial works required to retained trees, ongoing pruning required, and potential loss of sunlight will all impact on the retained trees.

13.9 Although the proposals include the planting of 86 new trees, it is considered that the scale of the proposed building and associated facilities results in limited scope for replacement planting, especially with trees of stature at maturity.

13.10 The visual relationship between the retained trees and the site's building will alter dramatically given the significant increase in height and footprint with the new building, dwarfing existing trees. This relationship is exacerbated by the close proximity of the building to the trees

13.11 The applicant proposes to mitigate the loss through new planting, see General Arrangement Plan 22029_L_200 rev D01 and with detail secured through planning condition [**Conditions 20 and 21 Landscaping**].

13.12 The applicant has also agreed to a s106 agreement to make a contribution towards the Council's wider green infrastructure aspirations to plant additional trees nearby that will contribute to the tree cover and provide additional ecological benefit to the wider area. This is considered to be a positive outcome, adding to the wider tree coverage in the area and contribute to the Council's wider green infrastructure strategy.

Summary

13.13 After assessing the impact of the loss of mature trees on the site, and taking into consideration the proposal for new tree planting nearby as well as the proposed new planting on the site, it is considered that applicants have appropriately addressed the issues of landscape and trees, and subject to conditions and s106 agreement the proposal is in accordance with Local Plan policies 59, 71 and 85 as well as NPPF advice.

14.0 Transport and Access

Northeast Cambridge Transport Position Statement

14.1 A Transport Position Statement (TPS) has been issued by the County Council regarding development in Northeast Cambridge. The County's approach is informed by the transport evidence base for the emerging NECAAP, including the A10 Study, which establishes that Milton Road is already at capacity.

14.2 The studies recommend the application of a vehicle trip budget in preference to providing additional highway capacity to accommodate new growth. The trip budget works by calculating the existing peak trips generated within the area and apportioning these to the individual sites.

14.3 The purpose of the TPS is to ensure that development proposals within Northeast Cambridge that come ahead of the NECAAP submission, do not prejudice or frustrate the delivery of the strategic transport solution or wider development aspirations of the NECAAP area.

14.4 Paragraph 111 of the NPPF advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

14.5 Policy 80 (Supporting sustainable access to development) supports developments where access via walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised and accessible for all.

14.6 Policy 81 (Mitigating the transport impact of development) states that developments will only be permitted where they do not have an unacceptable transport impact.

14.7 The applicant has submitted a Transport Assessment (TA) and a Framework Travel Plan (FTP) to support the proposal.

Transport Assessment and Framework travel plan

14.8 The FTP is a tool that sets out the commitment of a development to promote travel by sustainable modes. This FTP will be used to help staff and visitors make informed choices by providing them with the information needed to make that choice. This may be making them

aware of where local bus services go / how much they cost or providing information about what facilities are available in the local area, and will be managed by a designated Travel Plan co-ordinator.

14.9 Measures proposed within the plan are intended to encourage employees to reduce their reliance on single occupancy private car travel.

14.10 The application has been subject to formal consultation with Cambridgeshire County Council's Local Highways Authority and Transport Assessment Team, who raise no objection to the proposal subject to a mitigation package being agreed. This can be secured through various planning conditions and s106 mitigation. [**Condition 9 – Traffic Management, Condition 10 – Construction Access, Condition 11 – Kerb reinstatement, Condition 12 – Visibility Splays, Condition 16 – Cowley Road crossing, Condition 17 – Low Emissions Strategy, and Condition 18 Travel Plan**].

Summary

14.11 Subject to conditions and S106 mitigation as applicable, the travel plan proposals accord with the objectives of policy 80 and 81 of the Local Plan and NPPF advice.

Transport Mitigation

14.12 The NPPF states that LPAs should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations.

14.13 Policy 85 of the Local Plan states that planning permission for new developments will only be supported where there are suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision and phasing of infrastructure, services, and facilities necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms.

14.14 The mitigation for the Merlin Place application is focused on the need to provide the infrastructure to enable a mode switch from private car to cycling and public transport. The highway capacity has reached its maximum threshold and the area is dependent on significant internal, local, and strategic sustainable transport infrastructure.

14.15 The mitigation requirement from this development will be to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure in the vicinity of the site (including infrastructure

schemes promoted by the Greater Cambridge Partnership and Combined Authority).

14.16 The Northeast Cambridge Area Action Plan Transport Evidence Base report of 20 September 2019 sets out the package of transport infrastructure required to unlock growth in the area (tables 55 and 56).

14.17 The developer of the adjacent Hartree site has commented on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which identifies what strategic infrastructure interventions will be required to support the level of growth anticipated, commenting that each developer should pay a fair and equitable proportion of those costs.

14.18 While noting their comments, appropriate transport mitigation for this scheme will be secured through either planning condition or s106 contribution.

Access

14.19 The single point of vehicular access is proposed towards the southern end of the site on Cowley Road. This will be a shared access for goods and car park entry/exit. The existing vehicular access point will be removed.

14.20 The access has been tracked for a large car, a 10.595m refuse vehicle, and a 10m rigid vehicle - the largest service vehicle expected to deliver to the site. All vehicle tracking demonstrates this access is adequate.

14.21 A shared footway / cycle way (the Waterbeach Greenway) is being proposed along the eastern side of Cowley Road, providing a safe, direct route from the north.

Summary

14.22 The access proposals are acceptable and accord with the objectives of policy 80 and 81 of the Local Plan and NPPF advice.

Cycle and Car Parking Provision

Cycle Parking

14.23 The Cambridge Local Plan (2018) supports development which encourages and prioritises sustainable transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport.

14.24 Policy 82 (Parking management) of the Local Plan requires new developments to comply with the cycle parking standards as set out within appendix L.

14.25 Included in the TA is an assessment of the bike and car parking requirements to support and encourage sustainable transport to the site.

14.26 A total of 313 cycle spaces will be provided for the development. These will be located at ground level. 248 of these will be 'double-stacked' spaces located within external, secure pavilions. 10 Sheffield spaces and 15 cargo cycle spaces will be located internally, and a further 40 Sheffield spaces located within the public realm as short stay places.

14.27 The proposed cycle parking will be monitored for take up, and a condition will be required to ensure that, should cycle demand exceed the current proposals, then the current proposals will be subject to review and upgrade [**Condition 15 – Cycle parking provision**].

14.28 A cycle workshop/maintenance area will be included within the internal cycle store. Cyclists will have direct access to the parking spaces at ground level. From here, users will access changing, shower and locker facilities on Level 1, via an adjacent stair.

Total parking spaces: 313
2-tier spaces: 248 - 79% of total
Cargo bicycle spaces: 15 - 5% of total Sheffield spaces: 46 - 16% of total
Showers: 14 + 1 Accessible shower
Lockers: 76

Car parking

14.29 Policy 82 (Parking management) of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) requires new developments to comply with, and not exceed, the maximum car parking standards as set out within appendix L.

14.30 The TA states that 45 car parking spaces will be provided, including 2 spaces for accessible users and an additional 6 spaces for motorcyclists.

14.31 This will be a significant reduction from the existing number of parking spaces on site (93), leading to fewer car trips, in line with the recommendations of the NEC AAP.

14.32 Approximately 50% of car parking spaces will be fitted with active electric vehicle charging infrastructure, with the rest of the spaces having passive provision, meaning that wiring and ducting will be in place to allow for the future installation of additional charging points (**Condition 17 – low emissions strategy**).

14.33 After entering the site from the single access off Cowley Road, cars will enter into an open-sided under-croft car park.

14.34 Car parking has been intentionally positioned along the Milton Road part of the building, which has less pedestrian activity and is a less active edge. The existing topography to this side of the site provides some natural screening with the building set slightly lower than the surrounding ground.

14.35 Existing trees and proposed additional defensive planting and hedgerow along Milton Road will also provide additional screening to this side of the building.

Summary

14.36 The cycle and car parking proposals accord with the objectives of policy 82 of the Local Plan and NPPF advice.

15.0 Construction and Environmental Impacts

15.1 Paragraph 185 of the NPPF advises that planning decisions should aim to avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life resulting from new development, as well as limiting the impact of light pollution on local amenity.

15.2 Paragraph 186 of the NPPF advises that opportunities to improve air quality should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management.

15.3 Policy 33 (Contaminated land) states that development will be permitted where it is demonstrated that there will be no adverse health impacts to future occupiers from ground contamination resulting from existing/previous uses of the area.

15.4 Policy 34 (Light pollution control) states that development proposals that include new external lighting or changes to existing external lighting will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that, amongst other things,

upwards or intrusive light spillage is minimised particularly at sites on the edge of Cambridge.

15.5 Policy 35 (Human health and quality of life) states that development will be permitted where it is demonstrated that it will not lead to significant adverse effects and impacts on health and quality of life / amenity from noise and vibration.

15.6 Policy 36 (Air quality, odour and dust) states that development will be permitted where it is demonstrated that it will not lead to significant adverse effects and impacts on health or amenity from noise and vibration.

Air quality

15.7 The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment.

15.8 The report sets out the potential air quality impacts associated with both the construction and operation of the proposed development.

15.9 The report recommends that a Dust Management Plan is secured by planning condition. This is agreed as part of as wider Construction and Environment Management Plan [**Condition 3 – Demolition and Construction Management Plan**].

15.10 The proposed energy strategy for the operational use of the building is for all electric, which will have zero emissions, and will therefore generate no significant local air quality impacts.

Land contamination

15.11 The application is supported by a Ground Investigation Report.

15.12 No land contamination concerns have been identified, but a standard contamination condition will be added should unexpected contamination be found [**Condition 30 – Unexpected Contaminated Land**].

Lighting

15.13 The application is supported by an External Lighting Report. The report sets out the potential lighting impacts associated with both the construction and operation of the proposed development.

15.14 It is not anticipated that there will be any significant lighting effects from the proposed development of from the surroundings on future users of the

proposal, but for clarity, lighting of the site will be controlled by planning condition [**Condition 26 - Lighting**].

Noise and vibration

15.15 The application is supported by a Ground Investigation Report. The report sets out the potential noise and vibration impacts associated with both the construction and operation of the proposed development.

15.16 It is not anticipated that there will be any significant noise and vibration effects from the proposed development of from the surroundings on future users of the proposal.

16.0 Biodiversity

16.1 Para 174 of the NPPF advises that decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by providing net gains for biodiversity.

16.2 The Environment Act 2021 and the Councils' Biodiversity SPD (2022) require development proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity following a mitigation hierarchy which is focused on avoiding ecological harm over minimising, rectifying, reducing and then off-setting.

16.3 Policy 70 (Protection of priority species and habitats) states that proposals that harm or disturb populations and habitats should secure achievable mitigation and / or compensatory measures resulting in either no net loss or a net gain of priority habitat and local populations of priority species.

16.4 The applicant has submitted an Ecological Impact Assessment to support the application.

16.5 The key findings of this assessment are that the following protected and priority species are either present or could be potentially present on site:

- Bats that may commute along the hedgerows and treelines;
- Nesting birds that could use the hedgerows, shrubs and mature trees and were seen nesting on a building ledge;
- Hedgehogs and rabbits that could utilise the site for resting and foraging;
- Orchids were noted within the neutral grassland, there is the potential for other plant species of botanical interest.

- There are negligible opportunities for other protected or priority species.

16.6 The assessment recommends the following measures to avoid and/or reduce impacts:

- Retention of the grassland due to the presence of orchids, or the translocation of the orchids;
- Habitat creation to improve the biodiversity value of the site;
- Implementation of a sensitive lighting scheme to avoid disturbing bats;
- Vegetation clearance undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) or be preceded by a check from a suitably experienced ecologist;
- The completion of a biodiversity impact metric and assessment to establish the development's impact in relation to biodiversity and to demonstrate how a net gain in biodiversity will be achieved in line with planning policy (see information below regarding this).

16.7 A Biodiversity Impact Assessment was submitted with the application. This stated that there will be a Biodiversity Net Gain ('BNG') increase of 17.4%.

16.8 This proposed increase has been achieved through the proposed removal and replacement of species poor hedgerow, replacement trees, and the proposal to lay an 'intensive green roof' on both the main building and the outbuildings.

16.9 The applicant is proposing to provide ecological enhancements in the form of bat boxes, bird boxes and nest boxes.

16.10 The City Council's nature conservation officer is content with the Ecology Impact Assessment and recommendations but is not convinced that the prediction of 17.4% BNG is achievable, and requests that the condition of these habitats be revised to reflect the influence of trees and establish if a minimum 10% BNG is still achievable.

16.11 The applicant has suggested that the mechanism to ensure that the anticipated BNG is secured is through a Management and Monitoring Plan to be conditioned, and this is agreed [**Condition 25 – Construction Ecological Management Plan**]. Some of the habitat types, such as formal landscaping, will be secured by a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) [**Condition 27 – LEMP**].

16.12 A s106 agreement has been agreed with the applicant to ensure that additional tree and other planting will take place nearby to help address the aims and objectives of the Cambridge Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Summary

16.13 Based on the information submitted, officers are satisfied that subject to conditions, the proposed development can achieve at least 10% BNG, and together with proposals to provide additional tree and other planting nearby, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with Policy 70 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and the NPPF.

17.0 Carbon Reduction and Sustainable Design

17.1 Paragraph 152 of the NPPF advises that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.

17.2 Policy 28 (Sustainable design and construction, and water use) states that all development should take the available opportunities to integrate the principles of sustainable design and construction into the design of proposals. This should include climate change adaptation, carbon reduction and water management.

17.3 The same policy requires non-residential buildings to introduce high levels of water efficiency in new developments in order to respond to the water stress facing Cambridge, including full credits for Wat 01 of BREEAM.

17.4 The Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2020) sets out a framework for proposals to demonstrate that they have been designed to minimise their carbon footprint, energy, and water consumption and to ensure that such buildings are capable of responding to climate change.

17.5 The applicant has submitted a sustainability statement and an energy strategy. The energy strategy is proposing to use photovoltaics and air source heat pumps to provide the energy to serve the building, with an anticipated 19% reduction of CO2 compared to a notional building (L2A 2021).

17.6 In relation to water usage, officers acknowledge that the emerging Integrated Water Management Study for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan indicates that groundwater abstraction is placing significant pressure on water bodies (including chalk streams) that are sensitive to abstraction,

and there is a risk of causing deterioration in the ecology if groundwater abstraction increases.

17.7 In this case, and given the scale of development (net increase of about 10,000 square metres), the applicant has provided supporting information which demonstrates that the increased pressure on water resources would be very low. Impacts can be minimised through the use of planning conditions.

17.8 The applicant has stated that their proposals will result in a minimum of 3 credits under the Wat 01 section of BREEAM to be achieved. This equates to a 40% improvement over the baseline and therefore represents a significant reduction in water consumption. Full credits under the Wat 01 section of BREEAM however are required in accordance with Policy 28, and this can be secured by planning condition [**Condition 7 – BREEAM).**

17.9 In addition, the applicant is considering the implementation of rainwater recycling for irrigation purposes and within the Wat01 assessment. A rainwater harvesting study will be undertaken as the design progresses to confirm whether this is feasible and whether it would be beneficial to the proposed development beyond irrigation. This can also be secured by the same planning condition. [**Condition 8 - BREEAM**].

17.10 The Council's Sustainability Officer welcomes the proposed sustainability measures proposed for this development subject to planning conditions requiring the following –

- BREEAM 'Excellent' Design Stage Certification to include 4 credits under the Wat 01 section of BREEAM [**Condition 8 - BREEAM**]
- BREEAM 'Excellent' Post Construction Certification [**Condition 9 – BREEAM Post Construction Certificate**], and
- Renewables 10% Details Compliance [**Condition 7 – Energy Delivery Strategy**]

Summary

17.11 It is considered that the applicants have appropriately addressed the issues of carbon reduction and sustainable design particularly in relation to water usage, and subject to conditions the proposal is in accordance with Policy 70 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and NPPF advice.

18.0 Flood Risk and drainage

18.1 Paragraph 167 of the NPPF states that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere.

18.2 Policies 31 (Integrated water management and the water cycle) and 32 (Flood Risk) of the Local Plan require developments to have appropriate sustainable foul and surface water drainage systems and minimise flood risk.

18.3 The applicant has submitted a flood risk assessment and drainage strategy report in support of the application.

18.4 The site is located within flood zone 1 and is a “less vulnerable” use. Flood Zone 1 is land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding (<0.1%). The development therefore meets national flood risk guidance regarding being an appropriate location for this type of development.

18.5 The risk from surface water flooding and artificial sources are also considered to be low. Groundwater levels have been recorded on site at a level of 2 metres below ground level.

18.6 The proposed surface and foul water drainage layout is shown on Appendix B and C of the submitted Drainage Strategy Report and includes on-site attenuation to limit and control surface water discharge.

18.7 The applicant has demonstrated that surface water from the proposed development can be managed through using blue roofs, green roofs, rain gardens, permeable paving, swales, and below-ground attenuation. Surface water will then discharge into the site-wide private surface water drains at a controlled rate (3 litres per second per hectare), which then outfalls into the Anglian Water sewer in Cowley Road.

18.8 The Lead Local Flood Authority have no objection in principle to the proposed development, subject to planning conditions requiring a detailed surface water drainage scheme [**Condition 28 – Surface Water Drainage**] and a scheme to manage surface water while construction takes place [**Condition 29 – Surface Water Drainage Scheme During Construction**].

18.9 Anglian Water has recommended a similar surface water drainage condition to the LLFA.

Summary

18.10 It is considered that the applicants have appropriately addressed the issues of water management and flood risk, and subject to conditions the proposal is in accordance with Local Plan policies 31 and 32 and NPPF advice.

19.0 Utilities

19.1 The applicant has submitted a utilities strategy. As discussed in the sustainability section, the applicant is proposing to adopt and electricity only approach, with no mains gas connection.

19.2 The strategy reiterates Cambridge Water's policy requirement that water metering will be mandatory for new developments, and that Cambridge Water will reserve the right to install a new meter chamber and associated logging equipment to monitor consumption data for the proposed development, and to identify any subsequent leakage, should it occur.

19.3 Fire hydrants will be secured by planning condition [**Condition 31 – Fire Hydrants**].

20.0 Third Party Representations

20.1 Third-party representations have been addressed in the body of the report.

21.0 Other Matters

Secured by Design

21.1 In response to Cambridgeshire Constabulary's Designing out crime officer's comments, secured by design accreditation can be achieved through an application from the applicant to the Police Service.

Public Art

21.2 Policy 56 (Creating successful places) states that developments will embed public art as an integral part of the proposals.

21.3 The applicant has submitted a Public Art Strategy, which will be secured by condition [**Condition 24 – Public Art**].

Equalities Act 2010

21.4 The application has been assessed against the relevant sections of the Equalities Act 2010, and it is not considered that the application discriminates against people with protected characteristics specified in the Act.

Waste

21.5 Policy 57 (Designing new buildings) requires development proposals to successfully integrate functional needs such as refuse and recycling.

21.6 The design has considered the waste generation, storage and collection associated with a laboratory building and other uses such as the café, and has been designed with consideration for the RECAP Waste Design Guide document.

Planning Obligations (S106)

21.7 The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 require all local authorities to make an assessment of any planning obligation in relation to three tests. If the planning obligation does not pass the tests, then it is unlawful. The tests are that the planning obligation must be:

(a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
(b) directly related to the development; and
(c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

21.8 Policy 85 (Infrastructure delivery) states that planning permission for new developments will only be supported/permitted where there are suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision and phasing of infrastructure, services and facilities necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms.

21.9 The applicant has indicated their willingness to enter into a S106 planning obligation in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Local Plan and the NPPF. The s106 will contribute towards suitable provision and phasing of transport infrastructure, in accordance with Policy 85, as well as appropriate on and off site green infrastructure, in accordance with Policy 15.

Heads of Terms

21.10 The Heads of Terms (HoTs) as identified will be secured within the S106 and are set out in the summary below:

Obligation

21.11 Transport –
S106 contributions will be required to contribute towards the Council's transport infrastructure strategy, with the detail to be discussed further at a later stage.

21.12 Green infrastructure –
S106 contributions will be required to contribute towards the Council's strategic green infrastructure strategy, with the detail to be discussed further at a later stage.

21.13 The planning obligations are necessary, directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably in scale and kind to the development and therefore the proposed Planning Obligations pass the tests set by the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 in accordance with policy 85 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018).

Planning Balance

21.14 Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

21.15 The NPPF is a material consideration which must be taken into account where it is relevant to a planning application. This includes the presumption in favour of sustainable development found in paragraph 11 of the NPPF, which requires approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay, or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

21.16 The NPPF lists the three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways to achieve sustainable development.

21.17 The benefits and dis-benefits of the development proposals have been evaluated against the objectives of the NPPF and the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as summarised below.

Economic Objective

21.18 The NPPF places a clear emphasis on the importance of economic growth and delivering economic benefits as a key component of sustainable development.

21.19 The proposals will deliver over 10,000 square metres of new office and laboratory space, and create construction jobs and employment. Due to the scale of the development these should also be afforded substantial positive weight in the decision-making process.

Social Objective

21.20 The NPPF places a clear emphasis on the importance of supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

21.21 The social benefits of the scheme arising from the provision of new jobs is considered to be of major significance.

21.22 The agreed transport mitigation package will also bring social benefits, through prioritising sustainable travel modes to the development.

21.23 The social benefits arising from the development proposals are afforded major significance.

Environmental Objective

21.24 The NPPF places a clear emphasis on protecting and enhancing the built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

21.25 In relation to the environmental role of sustainability, the proposed parameters of the development demonstrate that the site can appropriately accommodate the quantum of development proposed.

21.26 The proposed development will contribute to improvements in habitat quality and a net gain in biodiversity to a minimum of 10%.

21.27 The agreed transport mitigation package will also bring environmental benefits, through prioritising sustainable travel modes to the development.

21.28 Whilst the development will result in harmful impacts on the area in terms of noise and disturbance as the development is completed and disruption through the implementation of the traffic mitigation, this would be minimised and mitigated through the implementation of construction management plans, and as such carries moderate weight.

21.29 Some weight can also be attached to the environmental harm in relation to the loss of some mature trees, particularly along Cowley Road. However, the proposal to both plant additional trees on the site and to agree to plant additional trees off site nearby will contribute to the wider green infrastructure aspirations of both Councils, and this can be considered to be a benefit.

21.30 Officers are of the view that the environmental benefits outweigh the dis-benefits, particularly given the provision of net gain in biodiversity and measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change and additional off-site contributions to the green infrastructure strategy. As such, moderate weight can be attached to the environmental benefits of the scheme.

Summary

21.31 Overall, the proposed development will bring significant measurable economic, social and environmental public benefits that accord with the three dimensions of sustainable development set out in the NPPF. It is a finely balanced judgement, but in exercising the planning balance, and in assessing the concerns raised by consultees and others, officers consider there are no sustainable planning objections that would outweigh the positive benefits arising from the development which forms a key part of the emerging North-East Cambridge Area Action Plan. This finely balanced judgement is therefore considered to weigh in favour of recommending the granting of planning permission.

Conclusion

21.32 The application is consistent with the policies of the development plan for the area. This is principally owing to the site being allocated for development in the adopted Cambridge Local Plan.

21.33 Having examined the development proposals against other material planning considerations, none are identified that would on their own, or in

combination, lead officers to consider recommending refusal of planning permission for the Application.

21.34 Officers' analysis, as set out in this report, triggers the '*presumption in favour of sustainable development*' set out in Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, which means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

21.35 Furthermore, the direction at Section 38 (6) of the 2004 Planning Act that the proposed development *'must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise'* points firmly towards the granting of planning permission in this case.

21.36 Officers have carefully considered all the issues raised by the planning application, including evidence and opinions submitted on behalf of the applicants, the contributions of consultees, wider stakeholders and members of the public.

21.37 Having also taken into account the provisions of the development plan, the NPPF and PPG, section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and the views of statutory consultees and wider stakeholders, as well as all other material planning considerations, the proposed development is recommended for approval subject to the completion of a section 106 planning agreement to secure necessary developer contributions and subject to a number of controlling and safeguarding conditions.

22.0 Recommendation

22.1 APPROVE application 23/00835/FUL subject to conditions and informatives as detailed in this report, with delegated authority to officers to carry through minor amendments to those conditions and informatives (and include others considered as appropriate and necessary) prior to the issuing of the planning permission.

22.2 In the event that the application is refused, and an Appeal is lodged against the decision to refuse this application, delegated authority is sought to allow officers to negotiate and complete the Planning Obligation required in connection with this development.

22.3 The prior completion of a Section 106 Agreement under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 with delegated authority to officers to

negotiate, secure and complete such an Agreement on the terms set out within paragraphs 21.11 and 21.12 of this report and any others considered appropriate and necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; and

22.4 The planning conditions specified in this report and detailed in Appendix 1 with authority delegated to officers to include any minor drafting changes thereto; and

22.5 The relevant informatives as set out in Appendix 1 to be included at the discretion of officers.

Background Papers:

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

Cambridge Local Plan
Supplementary planning documents and guidance - Cambridge City Council