



Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Phase 3 Newbury Farm (GB2)

16 November 2023

Venue: South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne

Panel: Lynne Sullivan (chair)

John Dales

Luke Engleback

Fiona Heron

David Birkbeck

Kirk Archibald

LPA: Aaron Coe – GCSP

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

Development Overview

Newbury Farm is a site located on the south east side of Cambridge that is allocated within the Cambridge Local Plan as a residential site with a capacity of 230 dwellings, site allocation GB2. In 2021, outline planning permission was granted with all matters other than access reserved for the erection of 230 residential dwellings and up to 400m² of non-residential floorspace to be used for commercial and/or community uses, (application 19/1168/OUT). The Quality Panel reviewed the outline application on 29 November 2019. The proposed scheme is being presented to the Panel following a series of pre-application meetings, the most recent taking place on 1st November 2023.

The outline planning permission was supported by three parameter plans relating to matters of Land Use, Landscape and Movement and Access. Copies of these parameter plans were provided to the Panel.

The outline permission included the full approval of both access onto Worts Causeway and Babraham Road (i.e., not a reserved matter). Reserved matters consent was granted in 2022 for Phase 1 (reference 21/04186/REM) this application included the main infrastructure, spine road, landscape, drainage, and foot/ cycleway connections. Phase 2 (eastern side of the development parcel) was granted planning consent in July 2023 for the erection of 80 residential units and the creation of the central square (application reference. Phase 3 - land west of the spine road is to deliver the remaining 150 dwellings and is the land that is the subject of this presentation.

These reserved matters are being prepared by the Cambridge Investment Partnership. The development is to deliver 150 homes, 40% of which will be provided as affordable housing together with commercial and community floor space and associated open space.

Presenting Team

The scheme is promoted by Cambridge Investment Partnership with the design team lead by BPTW. The presenting team comprised:

- C Audrey Remery – BPTW Architects
- Kaloyan Valkanov – BPTW Architects
- Eric Molloy – Guarda Landscape

- Paul Belton – Carter Jonas
- Will Berry – Cambridge Investment Partnership
- Tom Conlon – Cambridge Investment Partnership

Local Authority's Request

In terms of the housing mix offered the applicants have engaged with the Council's Housing Strategy Team and concerns have been raised as the applicant is currently proposing 95% of the affordable accommodation within apartments and only 5% as 3-bedroom houses. This issue has led to concerns that the scheme is failing to achieve a tenure blind scheme. The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy (Annexe 10) 2019-2023 and related SPDs require a maximum of units in a cluster of affordable housing of 12 units per core of an apartment building or 25 units in a group of dwellings. In respect of clustering the applicants are working with the Council's Housing Strategy team to ensure the proposals do not contravene the clustering policy (as set out within annexe 10).

The proposed sustainability measures had not been submitted prior to the Panel meeting. However, the applicant has committed to engaging with the Council's sustainability officer prior to submission to ensure acceptable standards are met and relevant planning policy requirements are complied with.

The applicants are proposing to amend the building heights parameter plan to achieve a mixture 2.5 and 3 storey units in certain locations that were previously designated as '2 storeys' under the approved outline parameter plan. Officers consider that the principle of varying the approved parameter plans could be acceptable subject to this being a design led approach which respect the outline masterplan character areas, the interface with Phase 2 and the green belt surroundings.

Officers would also appreciate the views of the panel on the proposed interface and relationship between Phases 2 and 3. Officers have advised the applicants of the importance of achieving a cohesive and coherent relationship with phase 2 along the spine road.

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

There is a defined central core to this development that will form the basis for creating the community. However as this is in the control of This Land to deliver and both developers should work together to ensure that this area works for the benefit of the communities on both sites.

As a consequence of the outline parameters the focus of the landscape is on the perimeter of the of the site. Whilst this is necessary it has resulted in a lack of quality and quantum of green landscape within the development creating a built-up core in the central higher density residential blocks.

The Panel considered further consideration should be given to bringing the landscape into the development and enhancing the landscape in the community areas.

Planting needs to define the community lead spaces, for example the courtyard adjoining the central apartment block.

The routes to the play areas are well defined and legible. The play areas themselves could have a stronger sense of character.

The green corridor is a strong community space, however, it is not clear how the planting strategy relates to the This Land plot. It is critical that there is a shared and consistent landscape approach.

The community building would ideally add an element of retail and food and beverage as there is no provision in the locality.

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

The mews courts are likely to have very little traffic and it will be slow moving. Therefore could these spaces be designed with a more pedestrian focus. For example, could the kerbs be removed and replaced with common surface material that would encourage pedestrian activity and even play in these locations.

It is unclear from the supporting material what the car parking ratios for the different house types are. The ratio appears to be high and therefore there may be an

overprovision of car parking spaces across the development. This needs to be explained more clearly.

There is no issue with the on-plot car parking, however thought should be given to the impact in the streets when garages are not used for parking. More thought needs to be given to the cycle parking strategy. The on-street cycle parking sheds need more detailing.

The layout appears to be very tight for refuse and large delivery vehicles and therefore it is important that the tracking works. It was suggested that the applicant looks at other similar type of development in Cambridge to see what other solutions have been applied.

The western boundary cycle and pedestrian path requires more design and detailing to avoid potential conflict and accommodate the range of users. Further consideration should be given to how it connects with the GB1 site to the north of Worts Causeway. This will be a major route for cycles going between both development and the schools and the park and ride. Does a cycle crossing on Worts Causeway need to be considered?

The cycle paths within the site need to connect with the new cycle path running along the south side of Nine Wells. The distance between where the western boundary path joins Babraham Road and where the Nine Wells path does is only a little over 100m and this provides an ideal opportunity to join the two.

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

Landscape

With longer and hotter summers likely to be more frequent the whole layout needs to respond more positively to the challenges posed by the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

The engineered SuDS basins appear to suggest a carbon-intense drainage infrastructure. There is an opportunity to capture water closer to where it falls by introducing rain gardens and rills with less dependence on pipes and underground

storage. This will reduce the embodied carbon in the infrastructure and contribute towards enhancing the landscape character.

Similarly, if the amount of paving can be reduced this will allow the soil to absorb and store more water with less dependence on pipes and consequent embodied carbon. The Panel recommended more tree planting within the residential areas to help break up the predominance of paving and encourage variety of uses within the public realm. This would also help manage peak water flows and capture the pollution in the water.

The green spaces can be used to sequester carbon, especially through hedgerows, trees, and ditches along the perimeter of the site. This will also enhance biodiversity.

The paved areas should use a porous material with a specific recommendation to use crushed carbon or dolerite as a subbase as this will support the capture of carbon.

The site has an inherently field character comprising hedgerows and ditches. The other key structuring element is the gas main easement which drives the landscape and open space concept and the planting strategy. The Panel suggested that a more fluid path through the opens space is needed to make the character less regimented.

To assist the needs for more internal greening the Panel suggested that vertical landscaping should be installed in locations where space is constrained and prevents more conventional planting.

Architecture

The large executive style housing fronting onto Babraham Road does not seem to be in the right location for such high value properties, given the outlook onto the road with its potential traffic and acoustic issues. This typology of housing would be better suited to fronting onto Worts Causeway or the green space.

The Panel was concerned about the lack of architectural response along the western edge. The movement corridor will need good level of surveillance from these properties and it will be important to maximise the fenestration along that boundary together with limiting the amount of boundary enclosures fronting the corridor.

At the northwestern corner there needs to be an appropriate house type that bookends the end of the street and avoids a blank elevation.

The Panel noted the apparent contradictions in the height parameters in the outline permission, which needs to be resolved. It is sensible to use the 10.2 metre parameter to maximise the option for 3-storey units to give more volume.

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

Avoid traditional water attenuation, bring water to the surface and aim to retain as much surface water as possible on the site.

The emerging climate and sustainability strategy needs to demonstrate how the development will address the climate emergency. Integrating landscape along routes will reduce ambient temperatures. This phase needs to ensure that it provides the environment for future residents to adapt their lifestyles to engage with the climate emergency.

Whilst there is a strong emphasis on house cost affordability there needs to be much more done to make it affordable in terms of the living and operational costs of the housing, such as cost of utilities through on-plot renewable and energy efficiency (Octopus Energy zero bill guarantee for installed PVs and battery storage).

An allowance should be made on-plot for the storage of batteries. There needs to be a diagram showing the location of heat pumps within the gardens to ensure that any noise impacts are mitigated.

The provision of 100% EV chargers is welcomed however consideration should be given to providing 2 per plot on the larger house types which may have several cars. There also needs to be a strategy for EV charging in off-plot parking areas.

The Panel supported the dual facing aspect of the apartments and the provision of outdoor space, however care need to be taken to prevent overheating. It would be beneficial to climate resilience if buildings could be designed with good floor to ceiling heights.

It was noted that the community building will be targeting BREEAM Excellent which is supported.

Embodied carbon contributes significantly towards the whole life carbon impact of the development and it would be good to see firm proposals on how this may be reduced and supported with calculations.

Summary

The Panel thanked the design team for a thorough presentation of the proposals and particularly for bringing the scheme forward at such an early stage of the design process.

Community

The Panel found the development to be well connected to amenities and places the community at its heart. However, whilst there are green areas that will be used for recreation and open space these are generally located at the margins of the site and need to be more integrated. Therefore the landscape needs to be brought into the centre, especially the mews courtyards.

It was recognised that the western edge is principally about movement, however, more needs to be done to enhance its landscape, recreation, and amenity function to complement the cycling and pedestrian function.

The Panel encourages the flexible use of the community space which is a great asset for the development.

Connectivity

The parking strategy needs more rigour and coherence to ensure that all facets of parking, including visitors, deliveries and off-plot EV charging are properly considered.

Securing a safe crossing over Worts Causeway is essential for the success of the western cycle corridor given the anticipated trips from the development to the schools to the north.

The cycle paths through open space need to flow more and avoid straight alignment.

Character

The key issue is to resolve the conflicting issues in the courtyards.

Further ideas about the building heights are logical.

Surveillance along the western corridor is critical to activate the frontage and to enhance the amenity value.

Climate

The Panel recommended a strategy to combine the retention and use of water within the site to support the landscape which will enable climate resilience and enhance the character of the development.

The amount of hard paving should be reduced where this is feasible to minimise the carbon impact of the materials.

The emerging sustainability strategy is very generic and needs to be enhanced to meet the ambition proposed in the emerging local plan.

Contact details

For any queries in relation to this report, please contact the panel secretariat.

Email: GrowthDevelopment@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Author: Colum Fitzsimons

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Background information list and plan

- Main presentation
- Local authority background note

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

