



Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Marleigh – Phase 3

Tuesday 31st January 2023

Mandela House, Cambridge

Panel: David Pritchard (chair), June Barnes, Meredith Bowles, Lynne Sullivan, David Taylor, and Lindsey Wilkinson.

Local Authority: Michael Sexton (GCSP), Sarah Chubb (GCSP), Louise Lord (GCSP), Helen Sayers (GCSP), Jon Finney (CCC-Highways).

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

Phase 3 is the final phase of development at Marleigh, land North of Newmarket Road, Cambridge. The outline consents provide for up to 1,300 homes, across the whole site, of which 968 have reserved matters permission across Phases 1a, 1b and 2, leaving 332 homes to be delivered on the final phase. Phase 3, it is proposed, can 'comfortably' accommodate more development than the remaining 332 balance. Any intensification/uplift in numbers is to be design-led but numbers are not yet agreed – but could be around 102 units. The proposal also includes the relocation of tennis courts within the wider site and the repurposing of an area of consented informal open space to a community garden, play and woodland.

Presenting team

The scheme is promoted by Hill Marshall (LLP), supported by their consultants JTP, The Environment Partnership, Terence O'Rourke and WSP.

The presenting team was: -

Chris Flood (Hill Marshall), Henry James (Hill Marshall), Will Berry (Hill Marshall), Jeremy Thurlby (Hill Marshall), Dave Swindells (JTP), Fraser Aitchison (JTP), Olivia Fearon (JTP), Jake Marshall (JTP), Steve McCoy (The Environment Partnership), Jason Giddings (WSP), Will Copley (Terence O'Rourke Ltd (TOR)) and David Birkbeck (Design for Homes).

Local authority's request

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) have asked the Panel, in summary, to focus on: -

- Uplift – The design-led approach to the increased residential units within Phase 3 and alignment of the emerging masterplan with the key principles of the Design Code.
- Connectivity – modifications to the movement strategy
- Green infrastructure and the Public Realm – connectivity and optimisation of green infrastructure, wildlife, and mitigate urban heat, incorporation of sustainable drainage features. The principle of relocating the tennis courts and community garden.

- Sustainable Design and Construction – Efforts to reduce the amount of single aspect apartments. The sustainability and comfort challenges for the podium apartment blocks.
- Beta Square – Beta Square is an important focal space (node) within the development with a landmark building and needs to meet the challenges set out in The Design Code.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel summary

A planning application for this phase is envisaged during May 2023 and the Panel encourage the applicant to develop the themes of the discussion to make this a great place and submission. The Panel were broadly supportive of aspects of the design that have evolved since the outline planning stage, such as reclaiming road space for green corridors, however overall, they considered the scheme needs to enhance its' character and 'personality'; re-think approaches to affordable housing solutions; model the proposed density increase and dwelling typologies across a wider area than just the southern edge and amplify the vision for Beta Square.

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

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

Whilst much of the design around connectivity has been established in the Design Code, the humanisation and removal of unnecessary streets is supported. The Panel were unsure about aspects of the loop road serving the entire development and in particular the crossroads section and southern part of Austin Street. Whilst the relationship between the site and neighbouring car dealerships is given, because it is one and the same landowner, future uses may not be so. It is important to think about potential future relationships and how that might impact on residents in this phase.

The east-west route between the Fyson estate through Beta Park towards Jubilee Square was discussed in detail and whether the dog-leg routing should have better sighting of Beta Park. This will be a main route through the site yet has a slightly disjointed feel rather than a necklace of distinct places. Should the buildings within

Beta Park be taller to give a stronger urban presence or be more reflective of Cambridge design?

The applicant was asked if they had looked at comparable Cambridge spaces, to which they replied they had been looking within the city centre, whereas this is suburban fringe and so similar suburban sites and spaces maybe more useful.

The Panel asked about routes to schools and other social infrastructure and requested the master plan mapping be included and updated. The applicant advised the new primary school, to the east of phase 3, opened in September 2022 and the development is making a financial contribution towards a new secondary school on the Land North of Cherry Hinton development site. As the secondary school is less than 3 miles away, no school buses will be required from Marleigh, pupils will travel to the secondary school by active travel or parents' cars.

Where previous roads have been reclaimed for green spaces, think about whether these are now connecting park spaces or travel routes. This applies to the north/south route at the front of the site too, so think about how and by whom will it be used?

Will there be dedicated parking spaces for hire car /car club providers?

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

Within the affordable housing provision there are numerous 2-bed apartments that will have no private garden access. These units will undoubtedly accommodate children for which this solution is unsatisfactory. The affordable provision also has a higher proportion of apartments than the market offer, many overlooking the neighbouring car sales, which needs further design consideration. Can the affordable homes be more widely dispersed in the layout?

Will the commercial unit, serving the community, be viable? How visible is it from different travel corridors, and is it best placed and/or designed to optimise customer catchment?

Will there be a 'pot of money' available to the emerging community for them to decide how to develop community assets? Experience shows this approach is more

successful to the community for looking after, and taking collective ownership of, the design and provision of such assets.

Affordable housing is more likely to accommodate residents who have jobs that require use of a car or van, yet the lower 0.5/6 spaces per dwelling for parking would seem inadequate.

More terraced housing or maisonettes in place of apartments would be a better outcome for the affordable housing provision. 2-bed apartments with small balconies are in demand but mixing 1-bed and 2-bed units together can result in vulnerable people being housed alongside children, which can be problematic.

The community garden is supported as an important piece of community infrastructure. Can other green spaces maximise community interactions, both formal and informal? The panel reiterated support for a capital budget be attached to the community garden and a collaborative approach to designing it.

The relocation of the tennis courts to the sports area makes sense and is only a short walk away. This frees up green space for a better landscape.

How will the public spaces be maintained? Will there be a fee each household pays, and will the developer provide an upfront instalment to ensure there is no shortfall? It was responded that there will be a Land Trust type arrangement in place and that Marshall, as current landowner, wishes to retain a long-term interest in the site through this mechanism. Such landscape maintenance can create local employment.

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

The use of heat pumps is supported. Has thought been given to where the external units will be placed and the impacts of aesthetics, noise and micro-climate?

Similarly, has the strategy for PVs ought to maximise potential for roof capture? Recent Home Building Federation advice is that energy use and energy saving are a key priority amongst house buyers.

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

The approach to greening up the scheme and facilitating a low carbon lifestyle is supported. Green spaces are embedded in the scheme and have been integrated within the design process.

The change from Beta Square to Beta Park was supported and sets the character aspiration for the space. The space could be better expressed as a destination by pushing the green spaces to the edges, so that it becomes a park with good linkages rather than a cross route with a green edge. The park and its setting could be much better expressed to show personality and character. Opportunities for other uses, whether temporary or permanent would help – such as food trucks, a nursery or as healthy space for exercise.

It was suggested that the commercial unit in Beta Park, if a café, should be on the north-west edge of the park for better footfall and to provide more prominent character and presence to the park.

Density intensification should be spread more evenly across the parcel and further testing is needed as to how dwelling typologies can achieve this attractively.

The vision is not clear, and the character areas talked about are not reflected in the designs. It presents as city, some town houses and then suburban. These spaces do not always have the enclosure it is suggested they would benefit from.

The over-all design is not convincing enough yet. There is an emphasis on semi-detached town houses, but the higher density now intended suggests terraced forms are needed which could greatly improve the design. The image at page 52 of the supporting documents illustrates this point well.

Generally, the design of the Austin building was liked although the very deep plan upper floor dwellings have internal kitchens and dining rooms and the commercial unit on the ground floor needs further thought.

The apartment blocks include podium, pavilion and decking designs. Why not consider the successful solution on earlier phases and repeat? Likewise, adopt the same approach to parking.

The approach to ensuring key rooms in dwellings enjoy views over green space is supported, as well as minimising single aspect units.

The PTE Deck Access Design Guide was referenced as worth consulting as well as Levitt Bernstein schemes in London (E17 and South London).

The use of front decking for amenity space was questioned. People generally prefer the privacy and security of a rear, enclosed space albeit acknowledging opportunities for community cohesion that front spaces present.

The streets as shown lack bins, bikes, porches and other street scene infrastructure which all need to be considered to create an attractive coherent place.

An alternative approach to intensification that was suggested is the rural edge to the west; woodland edges can take a bolder response with apartments enjoying overlooking the green edge.

Specific recommendations

- Use this opportunity to innovate and learn from earlier phases. Consider the examples of good practice raised by the Panel.
- The design doesn't gel yet, keep working to bring the vision together to maximise green spaces, and make character and personality.
- Beta Park could be a great space. Make the most of the green space, ensure the Austin building is the best it can be, especially the commercial element, and re-consider how all the buildings frame the setting.
- Re-think the affordable provision, who will live in these dwellings and what their needs will be.
- Is the east-west link optimised?
- Review parking provision. Are there better solutions. Where will residents park in relation to their home, where do visitors park and can delivery vans/lorries access where they need to?
- Ensure densification occurs more evenly across the phase.
- Uniformity works and could be used to enhance the design. Find successful solutions for the apartments, parking and amenity spaces and repeat.

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

Contact details

For any queries in relation to this report, please contact the panel secretariat via growthdevelopment@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Author: SC

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Appendix A – Background information list and plan

- Applicant background note
- Local authority background note
- Presentation

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



Source: Applicant's Presentation Slide