



Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel

Meeting Notes Confidential

Date and Time: Thursday, 23 May 2024

Project name: The Beehive Centre redevelopment

Pre-Application Reference: 23/03204/OUT

Address: The Beehive Centre, Coldham's Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3ER

Details of proposal: Demolition of the existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide new buildings comprising a new local centre, office and laboratory space, and associated infrastructure.

Panel Members:

Russell Brown (Chair) – Founding Partner of Hawkins\Brown Architects

Ian Johnson (Character, Conservation) – Manager for Heritage and Planning Compliance, Bedford Borough Council

Fiona Heron (Character, Landscape) – Founder of Fiona Heron Limited

Nicholas Anderson (Character, Connectivity) – Chartered Civil Engineer and retired South-East Development Lead at AECOM

John Leonard (Character, Architecture) – Director at NHA

Paul Bourgeois – Industrial Innovation Lead at Anglia Ruskin University

LPA Officers:

Bonnie Kwok – Principal Urban Designer / Design Review Panel Manager

Cuma Ahmet - Principal Planner

Sarah Chubb – Principal Urban Designer

Egle Packauskaite – Urban Designer

Joanna Davies – Tree Officer

Emma Davies – Principal Sustainability Officer

Mark Taylor – Access Officer

Brooke Moore – Business Support Officer

Maxine Ross – Admin Support Officer

Applicant's Team:

Guy Kaddish, Planning Partner, Bidwells

Jennie Hainsworth, Planning Associate, Bidwells

Martina Seohi, Head of Townscape and Landscape Assessment, Bidwells

Atholl Noon, Transport Planning Director, Markides Associates

Kate Hannelly-Brown, Heritage, Bidwells

Jack Tinsley, Sustainability, Hoare Lea

Michael Kingshott, Development Manager, Ridgelifft

David Leonard, Architect, Leonard Design

Lewis Kirk, Architect, Leonard Design

Harvey Norris, Leonard Design

Liz Stark, Landscape Architect, LDA Design

Dierdre O'Riordan – Gardiner

Declaration of Conflict of Interests

John Leonard declared that he has no conflict of interest despite sharing the same surname as the applicant architects.

Background

The DRP has considered this scheme previously on 9 June 2022 and 24 August 2023. There was an extensive site visit in 2023. Every effort has been made to bring the same DRP team to this further meeting, the Review Panel reports from the previous reviews have been circulated to all the DRP members.

A formal application was submitted around the time of the last DRP in August 2023, it has not yet been determined.

Submitted Scheme Concerns

The local planning authority advised the Applicant, and their team, of the following concerns with the proposals as they stood at the end of the statutory consultation period:

- 1) The proposals cause serious harm to the characteristics of the existing cityscape, including views from Conservation Areas. There are concerns with the scale, mass and lack of articulation.
- 2) The layout of the highway junction with Coldham's Lane.
- 3) Unclear pedestrian, cycle, vehicle and servicing strategy, including dangerous conflicts between these different types of movement.
- 4) Unsuccessful proposals for public open spaces.
- 5) Uncomfortable transitions in scale between the proposed science buildings and the adjacent residential neighbours.

The Urban Design team at Greater Cambridge had suggested a revised strategy for the 'spine' route and sequence of spaces through the scheme. This has been considered in detail by the applicant's team and the proposals presented to the DRP are the result of an updated/revitalised series of workshops with the planning team, over the last 5 months.

Presentation by the Applicant's Design Team

Leonard Design presented an edited version of the slides submitted to the DRP in advance of the meeting.

They described the changes to the scheme as being design-led; looking to create a new community centre. The focus has been on creating a legible route linking a people focussed series of spaces leading through the site, and a renewed focus on the sustainable qualities of the scheme; including addressing a circular economy, water management and reduced usage.

The main changes to the scheme are:

- 1) Providing a four way, 'cyclops' junction with Coldham's Lane that offers safer use for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 2) A clearer movement framework that creates a central spine running from Coldham's Lane to Sleaford Street. Cars visiting the site are still parked as early as possible on entering the site, a central, multi-storey car park has been relocated to the western boundary, on Plot 11.
- 3) The new linked sequence of public spaces with visibility from one to the next.
- 4) There has been some adjustment to the heights and layout of the buildings and the height of the flues; increasing the distance from neighbouring residencies, focusing the taller buildings along the railway line (seeking to harmonise the 'shoulder' heights with adjacent developments), creating a 'finer grain' of development, more in keeping with the surrounding context.
- 5) Some changes in building and ground floor uses around the revised landscape proposals.

The architects explained that the community benefits of the original scheme from November 2023 had been retained in the new proposals, and that the revised scheme had enabled them to have more positive engagement with the Heritage and Conservation bodies.

Hoare Lea presented the sustainability agenda including the circular economy and water management.

The Landscape Architects (LDA) explained the changes to the proposals in detail, including:

- 1) Dense planting of trees to the Beehive Greenway. The Hive Park, to the south, creates new opportunities for planting large trees. The quantity of replacement trees is increased (p91).
- 2) Maple Square (p97) offers a hard surface, civic space for a year-round programme of activities.

DRP Members Question and Clarification

Ian Johnson (Character and Conservation)

- Can Plot 7 be integrated with Plot 8 to move the bulk of Plot 7 further away from the residential neighbours? LD responded that they are looking at this option, but this would lose sight lines from the entrance at the north-west corner of the site to the new square (Hive Park)

John Leonard (Character/Architecture)

- Given the explanation about reducing the height of the ventilation stalks (by offsetting the P.V.s) and looking at the floor to ceiling heights in all the buildings and the updated plant requirements: could the buildings on Plots 2,3,4 and 5 be reduced further in scale and better articulated? LD responded that there had been an overall reduction in the height of the scheme with a view to reducing the heritage impact

- Can the plant areas be moved back from the facades, particularly where the building use is offices, rather than life science, and the plant rehomed over atrium to create more articulation of the roof line?

- Could the ventilation stacks be expressed as thinner, more vertical flues with a reflective finish such as chrome or stainless steel, that might be more appropriate as part of the Cambridge skyline? Are the plant areas included in the stated storey heights? LD confirmed that the stated building heights included the plant areas.

Fiona Heron (Landscape)

- Looking at the precedents cited for Maple Square, she observed that Aldgate and St Pancras (and the Barbican) hosted quite different activities. Could LDA explain how the harder landscaped areas would be used? As previously noted, can the landscape precedents also consider the scale of the enclosing buildings and not just the play area?

Nick Anderson (Connectivity)

- How many cars are intended to be parked in the new car park (Plot 11). He was concerned that the size of the carpark had been reduced, and whether all the cars would still fit in the new location (around 400 cars)?

Paul Bourgeois (Climate)

- How many of the parking spaces have EV charging points? LD answered that the provision is in line with the council's current standards, and there is provision for the addition of charging points in the future. Is there provision for parking and charging electric bikes?

- Only four of the buildings seem to have provision for solar P.V.s, can they be considered for all the buildings? LD agreed that all buildings will have P.V. provision.

Russell Brown (Character/Architecture)

There are a lot of different building precedents suggested for materiality and façade treatment. How does LD see that as being resolved through an outline application and the design guide? LD explained that this is still in discussion with the planning authority. The material palette will most likely be informed by the Mill Road Conservation Area. There is a movement towards a more consistent architectural language, and this will be described in the completed Design Code.

DRP Members Comments

Ian Johnson (Heritage/Character)

- 1) He was surprised and interested in the effect of changing the tones of the building materials, and thought this investigation was worthy of taking further. Will this inform the design code?
- 2) There is still significant impact on the wider heritage of Cambridge, including the views from Castle Hill. The impact has been estimated at 'less than substantial harm' and although matters have improved, this is still an issue for the scheme.
- 3) Given the requirements in terms of large floor plates and significant floor to ceiling heights these harmful impacts are unlikely to be removed, so it is important that the scheme is carefully designed in terms of modelling and articulation, and that it delivers significant wider community benefits and a sustainability agenda to balance this "harm".
- 4) The revisions to the scheme have helped reduce some of the impact on the Conservation Areas and the detailed use of a Design Code could improve matters further. For instance, concerns about overlooking between the residential neighbours and Plot 7 may result in a blank façade.
- 5) The parameter plans will need to be carefully drawn at Outline Stage to avoid challenge at the Reserved Matters stage. These should include detailed guidance on the extent of plant and the articulation of the roofscape. The introduction of variegated roof forms are not (yet) wholly convincing but he can see what LD are trying to achieve.

John Leonard (Character/Architecture)

- 1) The new layout is much simpler and much more legible.
- 2) The bulk of Plot 2 against Coldham's Lane is still excessive (refer to page 15) and is prominent in the views. It looks at least 2 storeys too tall. Previously the idea of massing was explained as building up to the centre (around Plots 4 and 5) and dropping down to the south next to residential neighbours and to the north against the main road. The building on Plot 2 'kicks up' at the end of the north-south view, so that it breaks the pattern of massing.
- 3) To avoid the rooflines of plots 3,4,5 appearing as a single mass (p137) when seen from a distance stronger design measures than just change of colours, materials or sawtooth outlines are needed. It is strongly recommended that the plant screens be better

articulated with recessed plant screens in the central portions of building footprints to break up the massing of these plots on the skyline.

- 4) The visibility of vertical stainless-steel flues as part of a roofscape should not be a concern. The servicing of buildings of this type is likely to require that the flues are collected in the centre, not at the edges as shown in the 3D sketches.
- 5) There is a need to consider wheelchair users across the site, particularly safe crossing of the cycle paths. The cycle route should not dominate the landscaped spaces.
- 6) The carpark ramps need to be 1:10 so that there are likely to be technical issues with the design of car parking layouts and ramps within Plot 11.
- 7) The height of the buildings will cast significant shadows over external space and neighbouring buildings e.g. to the north and west over the building boundaries. This is a key concern.
- 8) The lighting of the car park and the potential nuisance of car headlights (at night) need to be carefully designed to avoid nuisance to the residents outside the site.
- 9) The building on Plot 6 is a strange shape for a laboratory building and it presents a long wall too close to the residential terrace over the site boundary.
- 10) It is not clear how the architecture will respond to the allocation of Gateway or Marker Buildings. This has not emerged from the Design Code so far. Is it necessary to have 'Marker' or 'Centrepiece' buildings or should they all be well designed and appropriate to their use and specification?
- 11) The use of LETI (Low Energy Transformation Initiative) guidelines to achieve less than 600kgCO₂/m² for the shell and core will go beyond the scope of BREEAM and will provide the environmental performance which high quality life science tenants will be looking for.
- 12) The design does not have any service yard or lorry parking space to Plot 4.

Fiona Heron (Landscape)

- 1) The new masterplan is much improved, the revised series of spaces work well.
- 2) The new square, Hive Park is a positive addition. It will be a good place, south facing, with large trees to provide shade.
- 3) The updated proposals still have issues in terms of scale and massing, and a series of enclosure. They do not achieve the aim of 'elegant when seen from afar'.
- 4) The traffic route next to Plots 3 and 4 needs to be carefully designed to ensure that it is safe and provides high quality green space and a pedestrian friendly environment.
- 5) The gateway/entrances to the site could be stronger in terms of design, with more distinctive planting/ landscape features.
- 6) Can the building on Plot 9 edge back to allow for more planting on the boundary.
- 7) The series of landscape spaces are a bit disjointed, and it may help if some of the planting or landscape materials carry on from one space to the next, so that there is more continuity.
- 8) The edges of the buildings and the landscape need to talk more directly to each other.
- 9) As noted in previous DRPs, the landscape materials need to match the quality and materiality of the buildings.
- 10) The interplanting around the edge of the site, reinforcing existing planting is welcomed.

- 11) The scheme still requires more trees, to offer more new trees than it removes, or larger trees. This needs to be reviewed to offer a more positive outcome to balance the heritage harm. The importance size of tree and the contribution larger canopy trees could make to greening and scale of buildings could be clarified or explored.
- 12) The activities planned for the hard landscaped space, Maple Square, need to be tested on plan and scenario checked for services, access, space allocation, site lines etc. Who is going to use the empty circle, for instance?

Nick Anderson (Connectivity)

- 1) The introduction of a 'cyclops' junction is welcomed as it improves movement for both pedestrians and cyclists.
- 2) The new location of the car park is logical and addresses the concerns about conflicts between cars and pedestrians/cyclists.
- 3) There is a major conflict between the large trucks turning left and cyclists, and other conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists, particularly crossing the main cycle pathway. The location crossing points need to be carefully marked (are cyclist traffic calming/speed controls needed).
- 4) Can the team check that the distances between the accessible parking spaces and the buildings is acceptable.
- 5) From previous reviews, the impact of more pedestrians, cyclists attracted to the new development, need to be considered, outside of the site.

Paul Bourgeois (Climate)

- 1) Pleased to see the circular economy will be considered following previous DRP recommendations.
- 2) Progress has been made on a water strategy in relation to reduction in SUDS trade off.
- 3) More onsite generation could be included as these buildings are likely to be very heavy users of electricity. If possible, battery storage options considered to smooth out demand peaks and better use electricity generated so it is not 'lost' to the grid. The applicant team should be researching the latest developments in solar PV generation to mitigate the impact on local electricity grid supplies and connection potential of others.
- 4) If the provision for EV charging is only 1:20, then this will be under provision equating to only 20 charging points. Significantly more should be provided from the outset notwithstanding the statement that all parking spaces will be charge point ready. Charging is also needed for electric bikes and scooters to support different lower impact forms of personal mobility.
- 5) The BREEAM standards cannot be relied on for high level of environmental performance. Consider what other standards could be committed to, to complement and bring more holistic, lower carbon impact delivery.
- 6) RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge (which relies on LETI data in part) could provide a robust set of standards to aim for (at least on the commercial space) but introducing a regime of carbon measure is the most important first step throughout the process.
- 7) Biodiversity Net Gain is concern given the loss of trees, too many trees are being removed, and not replaced. See the University of Leeds United Bank of Carbon <https://www.uboc.co.uk/tree-replacement-for-carbon-sequestration-parity/> methodology

to ensure that mature trees that are essential to this project are replaced with sufficient new trees in order to achieve BNG.

- 8) Keen to see the quantification of the embodied carbon with associated ambitious reduction targets to at least the RIBA Climate Challenge levels.
- 9) The potential to create an urban “heat island” on the site needs to be addressed. These could be mitigated by use of ‘cool’ materials incorporated into the design code for the scheme. Officers you are currently working with can support this process.

Russell Brown (Character/Architecture)

- 1) It is difficult to use only townscape analysis to design successful buildings. Sculpting buildings to reduce their apparent bulk or massing from particular views tends to create rather weak and ambivalent forms.
- 2) The massing of the site, both in terms of height and the width of the blocks, remains challenging. It is difficult to introduce a convincing level of articulation using a design code rather than detailed designs.
- 3) The leap in scale between the neighbouring two storey house and six storey laboratory buildings remains unresolved. Having distinctive roof forms could help reduce the apparent scale and introduce more articulation (the sawtooth profile hasn’t worked), the examples shown are all domestic.
- 4) The buildings need to be designed from the inside/out and be able to respond to more detailed plan analysis /servicing design to begin to address these issues.
- 5) It is still not clear which of the range of precedents will inform the materiality, calming and refining the architecture might help address the concerns over scale and massing.

Chair’s Summary

In general, the new masterplan, as a result of the intervention of the planning officers is an improvement on the proposals presented at previous DRPs in August 2022 and July 2023. The clear route through the site, linking a series of landscape spaces, gives the scheme a more logical starting point. The addition of the new park, adjacent to the residential areas to the south, helps gather the pedestrian entrances in to the site and helps reduce the impact of the large laboratory buildings on the neighbours, outside the site.

The relocation of the carpark, bringing the larger buildings on to the railway line and the reduction in some of the building heights, are a step in the right direction. However, there remains serious concerns over the use of an outline planning submission, and a design code, to achieve the necessary refinement in architectural design that buildings of this scale need in such a sensitive and highly visible setting.

Heritage

The changes to the layout, the scale of some of the buildings and the increased gaps between the buildings has reduced the impact on local heritage assets. However, the scale and bulk of buildings still causes harm to the Conservation Areas and in the longer views

across Cambridge. Therefore, the scheme needs to balance this harm with tangible community benefits, like the new Public Park.

Character/Architecture

The new site layout is much more legible and provides a guiding principle for the architecture. The precedents/illustrations of the buildings are still quite confused, and the architecture may calm down a bit, as the design code develops. There are still concerns over the height and mass of buildings, particularly on Plot 2, and as to how Plot 3,4, and 5 need to offer more significant variation in their roofline.

Plot 2 is highly visible in the views from Castle Hill Mound (p127) and Coldham's Common (p128) as it 'kick's up' at the end of the north-south sequence of massing. Plot 7's relationship with the adjacent housing has improved but could still move away from the boundary. Are there issues of overlooking from the roof terraces, as Plot 7, 9 and 6.

Plots 4 and 5 (and 3) impact could be further reduced through the further control of design (and introduction of articulation) through the design code. The plot area in Plot 4 could be pushed back (over commercial office space) to create further variety in the sequence of Plots 3, 4 and 5.

The 'tail' of Plot 6 is too close to the southern boundary and the residential terrace to the south of the site.

There are concerns over whether the position of the ventilation stacks, etc will need to change once the buildings are designed in detail. Can the areas that are less heavily serviced have less plant at roof level?

Wheelchair access around the site needs to be carefully considered along with clashes between pedestrians and cyclists?

The capacity and plan area of the carpark may need reconsideration.

Landscape

The sequence of landscaped spaces could be linked as a more coherent sequence of spaces.

There is still a deficit in biodiversity and a net loss of trees, can more large trees be provided?

Given the scale of the buildings the enclosed spaces need to be carefully considered in terms of overshadowing and uses, and again, the landscape needs to be integrated with the ground floors of the buildings.

Connectivity

The new highway interchange with Coldham's Lane is an improvement, there are still significant clashes within the site between the movements of servicing vehicles and cyclists, and between pedestrians and cyclists within the public spaces.

There is still a need to consider the impact of increased footfall outside the site.

Climate

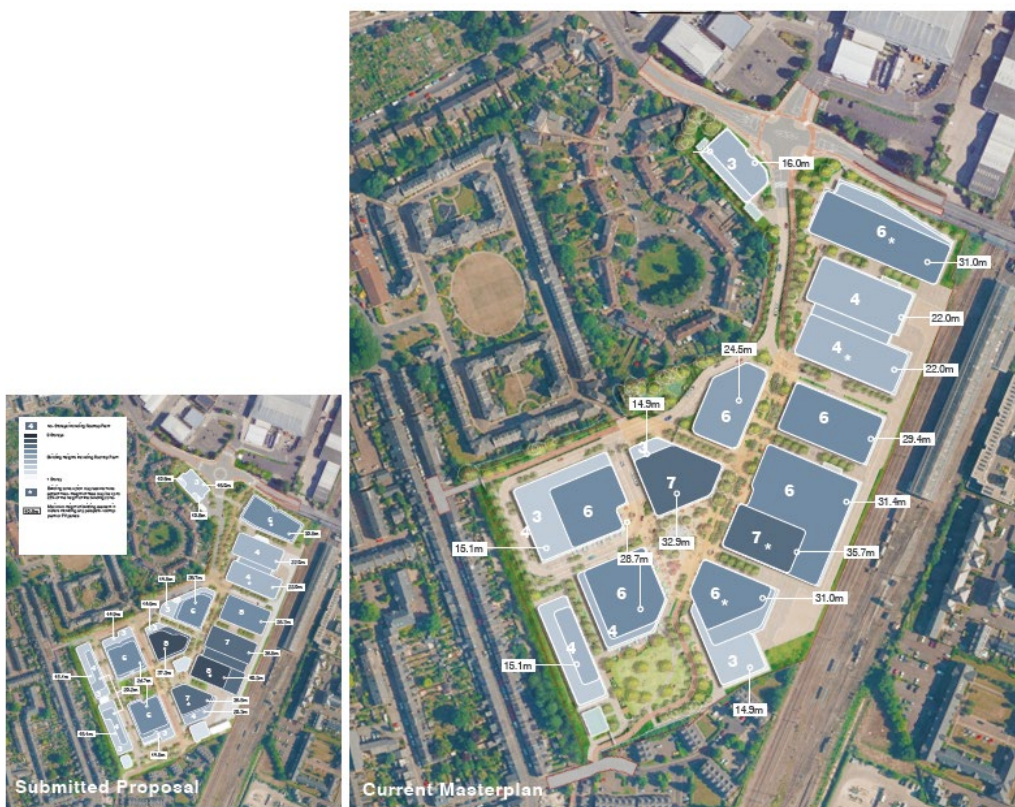
Using the standards/guidance of LETI, BREEAM, and the RIBA Climate Challenge standards in combination can help introduce guidance on standards prior to the issue of the UK Net Carbon Building standards. What is critical is to introduce a system of carbon analysis measurement (for construction and operation) that can provide the data for later decision-making.

Community

Can the developer make every effort to include the local supply chain and SMEs in the construction and operation of the development. (can the community initiatives in the earlier schemes be bought forward in the new proposals).

More EV charging points are needed, and for disabled vehicles too.

Images extracted from the applicant's presentation pack:





17

Townscape and Heritage Enhancements
Coldhams Common B - Amended



Disclaimer

The above comments represent the views of the Greater Cambridge Design Review Panel and are made without prejudice to the determination of any planning application should one be submitted. Furthermore, the views expressed will not bind the decision of Elected Members, should a planning application be submitted, nor prejudice the formal decision-making process of the council.