



Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Trinity Hall Farm Industrial Estate

Thursday 14th December 2023

Trinity Centre, Cambridge Science Park

Panel: Robin Nicholson (chair), Meredith Bowles, Amy Burbidge, Lindsey Wilkinson and Kirk Archibald.

Local Authority: Julia Briggs (GCSP), Sarah Chubb (GCSP) Emma Lilley (GCSP) and Sarah Cheng (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

The proposal is for demolition of existing buildings on an industrial estate and the construction of a new urban quarter comprised of two mixed use laboratory buildings and two office buildings with active ground floors including ancillary uses.

Presenting team

The scheme is promoted by Brockton Everlast supported by Stanton Williams Architects. The presenting team was: -

Richard Selby and Richard Berry (Brockton Everlast), Gavin Henderson and Eleni Makri (Stanton Williams Architects), Andy Moffat (Savills Planning), Jonathan Freeman (The Townscape Consultants) Simon Neesam (The Landscape Partnership), Neil Porter (Gustafson Porter + Bowman Landscape Architect) Kartik Amrania (SWECO Sustainability), Patrick Lanaway (Vectos Transport)

Local authority's request

The local authority asked the Panel to focus on massing and scale, impacts on number 454 Milton Road from overshadowing, the southern boundary landscape, and the impact of parking on surrounding streets and the guided bus crossing.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel summary

The Panel were supportive of the development and its ambitious environmental targets. It was commended for having a full team on board from the beginning and for the amount of work carried out to date. The consultation with residential neighbours should help progress the scheme and dealing with the south elevations satisfactorily.

Some of the words used should be reconsidered to explain for instance the desire to establish a presence on the Milton Road corner. However, there are two fundamental issues that need to be resolved; the car parking basement and its embodied carbon footprint and the cycling underpass, transformation of which is fully supported.

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

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

It is admirable that the applicant intends to act as a good neighbour. Inviting people into the site is desirable and will enable the site to become part of the city where everyone is welcomed. Need to consider the public/private boundary and how this is managed. Make sure the glazing and terraces facing residential properties to the south avoids any overlooking issues.

The idea of animated and active frontages is commendable and will provide a significant change in this part of the city which needs to become a vibrant place.

Consider potential noise and pollution impacts that deliveries, cars and taxis may have on adjacent properties. The vehicle entrance to the site is very tight but if the car park size were reduced it could improve the sense of arrival and avoid potential conflicts.

Multiple entrances to the site and the concept of breathing places for pedestrians to meander around are welcomed. These spaces would benefit from tackling the cycling underpass, so the Panel urges the applicant to continue the dialogue with County Highways on how this can be removed. Currently this is an unpleasant environment and impacts on how people move around and how they feel, it drags on the ambition of the scheme and the wider area and it would be a “crying shame” if the underpass is still there in 20 years’ time.

There was a debate about the garden court idea as a transitional space or a place where people want to linger. Consideration should be given to how pleasant this place will be on Milton Road due to its heavy traffic. It is important this area feels like part of the public realm rather than a private part of the estate.

Crossing points are critical and so is the experience of what happens in these incidental spaces, but it would be important to understand better how these are going to work, especially at peak times with people rushing about.

The detail of the internal courtyard space and terraces would benefit from using different planting and levels to create special spaces so people can work outdoors without being disturbed by others.

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

The footway on the north side seems very generous, it was suggested that some footfall calculations are carried out to see what the number of people walking there is. Is there an opportunity to use some of the footway land so there is no need for underground car parking? The applicant explained about the easement but this area needs further thought.

Basement car parking is discouraged due to its high proportion of embodied carbon. It is understood that there might be some expectation of car parking on site, but the site could work without one or reducing the numbers even further, as the development is in a very accessible location, with the guided bus, Cambridge North Railway Station, park and ride bus stops, cycling and pedestrian links into town.

The basement cycling parking is not welcoming, even if there is basement car parking, as cycle parking is better suited at ground floor level.

The busway crossings were welcomed.

Eastern visualisations weren't shown but it was recommended future walking and cycling networks to the eastern side are explored with discussions with other developments to think about the movement network.

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

The scheme does not seem to be driven by sustainability and is building heavy, but this is mitigated and responding well with the roof line; but further consultation with residents about the massing of the buildings is important.

The landscape proposals need further work; the public realm and pedestrian spaces were welcomed but these should be carefully designed, in particular the Milton Road side which can be an unpleasant place to sit due to traffic.

The Panel suggested revising the terminology used to describe the scheme and to define the spaces better in what they are trying to achieve to avoid any confusion.

The scheme seems to be shielding from the residential, so it was questioned what can be done to enhance that boundary and make a more positive interaction with the residential neighbourhood. It was also noted that the separation from residents in the south is less generous than the promenade on the northern boundary.

The courtyard garden, referred to as a cloister (although the character of the scheme shouldn't be a collegiate scheme) would benefit from clear and defined spaces, these niche spaces in the landscape should be differentiated. The gated access should be carefully managed.

It isn't clear what the architecture of the marker building is trying to achieve in relation to the building form and how this is being manifested. The language used should be consistent; is this a gateway or a marker building or something else? If this is a transformational scheme, the ambitions should be clearly defined, what makes this a unique design?

A section through the residential area to the courtyard garden would be useful to understand the massing and volume of the proposed buildings.

The scale and how it works in this context is demonstrated and Building A2 has a prominence that is appropriate; the scale related to the residential properties is critical, but this is a big "jump" and the Panel hadn't seen enough views from the distance to understand this scale. It is worth checking what would happen in the future to the garage opposite in Milton Road and how the site responds to both the residential development and the garage site in the future.

The Panel was not convinced that the smaller building, with the sawtooth roof, was providing the form or the character that relates to the residential properties and the taller buildings with flat roof are not providing enough of a transition between the two.

In terms of the articulation of the buildings and how the top roof pavilions might work, the Panel questioned if something more vertical or celebratory can be done on the corner or does the scale needs to be broken down in the façade treatment? The proportions of the parts are not working. Could this be more dramatic than pavilion buildings?

There should be a clearer conceptual strategy to differentiate the buildings by scale and articulation. It is not clear whether the site is a collection of four different buildings, making an urban setting, or one building articulated to produce a sense of scale.

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

Climate targets are ambitious but how these can be achieved with four fragmented buildings, a courtyard and a basement car park.

The water and power strategy should be embedded in the scheme. The importance of water, particularly on this side of Cambridge, was highlighted.

It was suggested using PVs on all roof orientations.

The Panel understood that elevations present 30% of glazing but questioned the use of full height windows.

What is the impact of achieving ‘net zero carbon’ on the architecture, and what does this look like?

Specific recommendations

- Make sure the glazing facing the residential properties to the south avoids overlooking.
- Consider the noise and pollution impact that deliveries, cars and taxis will have on adjacent properties.
- The garden court might not be the best place to enjoy a coffee, but this might change over time.
- The courtyard garden area could be developed to include levels to allow for individual spaces for staff to meet.

- Have you got the best solution to the sewer pipe easement. Is this still a good use of the space. Provide footfall numbers to justify the design of the northern edge.
- Engage with County Council Highways to remove the cycling underpass.
- Provide a detailed design of the eastern edge which wasn't shown as part of the presentation.
- What are possibilities for connections at the south east corner?
- Overall happy with the way buildings are organised and what has been done to arrive at the quantum on the site, but it needs bigger and longer sections to understand the impact the scheme has on the residential area.
- The landscape is fine and has a good pedestrian focus, but more detail design is needed for it to be an exemplar.
- Consider the terminology used to define places: courtyard, cloister and how the design responds to it.
- Push even further in terms of biodiversity net gain. Be more ambitious.
- How can the "marker building" be more demonstrative and give presence?
- What is the nature of the sawtooth roof and how this relates to the residential and other commercial properties.
- Explore how the site can celebrate this sector of Cambridge, where is the drama? How does it all fit together?
- Consider whether full height glazing is necessary.

During the closed discussion, the Panel highlighted the importance of the big trees proposed along Milton Road.

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

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Appendix A – Background information list and plan

- Main presentation
- Local authority background note
- Applicant's background note

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

Urban Block

