



Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Trinity Hall Farm Estate (2nd review)

Wednesday 3rd July 2024

Fora, 20 Station Road, Cambridge CB1 2JD

Panel: Robin Nicholson (chair), Lindsey Wilkinson, Lynne Sullivan, Amy Burbidge, Meredith Bowles and David Taylor

Local Authority: Sarah Chubb (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 the demolition of the existing buildings on the industrial estate and the construction of a new urban quarter comprised of four new interconnected buildings, two lab buildings and two office buildings, with active ground floor use including a potential café and retail unit. Large tree planting is proposed along the Milton Road edge and a public garden is proposed to the southern part of the site fronting Milton Road. A landscaped courtyard is proposed in the middle of the site. The buildings are currently proposed to be between 14.8 metres and 27.1 metres tall, reflecting the site's position between a residential area and the science park. Car and cycle parking is located in the basement. The proposals will come forward as a full planning application.

Presenting team

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

Richard Selby and Vesna Bostandzic (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 have asked the Panel to focus on materials palette and detailing; narrative of impact to residential dwellings of the daylight/sunlight assessment; boundary planting, in particular the Nuffield Road edge; and travel plan.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel summary

The scheme has positively addressed the Panel's comments made at the previous review held on 14th December 2023. The proposals are a great response to the context and are well supported by the enormous amount of work carried out to date. The Panel supports the ambitious travel plan and welcomes its approach to flexibility and future proofing strategy.

This is an exceptional example of the future gateway for the northwest developments, sophisticated, with great quality, and well-presented so these comments should be taken with this in mind.

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”*

Setting the buildings back to allow more space for the public realm is a positive step and is more pedestrian friendly than the previous proposals. The public garden is in the right location, but questions about how the public, and children, will feel welcome in the public garden were raised and what subtle things can be done to make them more inviting. The southern mews and public garden should not be overly managed, so the public don't feel they are not allowed to be there. More thought on how this will be managed is needed.

The Panel was unsure if there was a clear narrative on how passers-by, local community, workers or residents will interact within the scheme or how they will perceive it. It is unclear where the entrances are. There needs to be a strategy to see how people interact within the scheme.

The Panel noted that two cafes are proposed, one public and one for staff but will both cafes be maintained? What would happen if the public café were not viable? This would mean that the public garden would have to do a lot more to provide the community provision required from the scheme.

The design of the private internal courtyard, especially the colonnade at the edge, is welcomed, but it was suggested different pocket spaces would enhance people's interactions by breaking the spaces down even more. One example can be seen at the Crusader Works in Manchester.

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

There is a need for an overall movement strategy for this area of the city, although it is understood that this falls beyond the red line boundary; opportunities such as a more direct access route to Nuffield Road could have been explored.

The impact of vehicle movements along Nuffield Road is positive by reducing the number of vehicle trips to the site, which favours air quality and noise pollution for residents and the nearby primary school. The proposed modal split should be celebrated and supported by the very ambitious travel plan.

The entrance into the basement car parking has a good rationale for its location, but how will security be managed? The applicant explained that entrances for cyclists and cars will have secured access.

It was noted that construction will be via Nuffield Road as requested by the Highways Authority, but could construction entrances be from Milton Road or the guided busway to avoid lorries and materials going through the residential and school areas?

The applicant explained that conversations with the County Council have been held in relation to the removal of the Milton Road underpass, but these were not positive. Although falling outside the red line boundary, the Panel supports the removal of the Milton Road underpass to favour better frontage of the site and enhancement of the public realm.

There could be conflict at peak times between public garden users, pedestrians, and cyclists entering the bike ramp, and therefore the space should be reconsidered. Perhaps relocating the ramp down into the basement cycle park from the South Mews might be a better solution.

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

The Panel was impressed with all the work carried out to date, and research undertaken on embodied carbon calculations. The future-proofing strategy and flexible designs of the buildings were welcomed.

The architectural language in terms of masonry and precast concrete is a surprising way to reduce embodied carbon; it would be good to see the details.

The reuse of materials and recycling of grey water for irrigation was welcomed.

It is assumed that a lot of excavation will be carried out on site, so there is a question of how best you can use it? The Panel also questioned the tree depth required for the courtyard planting above the car park. The applicant explained that there are a few bunds within the courtyard that can retain soil, also the car park could be re-purposed in the future.

The south-facing façade and full height glazing deals well with overheating, but glare also needs to be considered. The Panel questioned if there is a need for shading or shutters, to reduce the energy load.

The open terraces at roof level were welcomed but these are open to direct sun and daylight and could become extremely hot in high summer, so it is worth considering if some shading is needed.

The Panel was not convinced by the roof pavilions, currently presented as light grey boxes. They will have to work hard to be successful in terms of elevation and performance.

The planning application should include images of how the interior courtyard would look.

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

The roofscape needs to be more integrated, one of the LVIA views from Milton Road shows how prominent the roofscape is so it needs to be better integrated with the rest of building. Perhaps consider a framework that continues up from the building below to extend the language of the building. The Panel felt this may be too big a structure to create a separate language as it needs something to sit lightly on the top as shown in the diagrams. Long east-west sections are needed through the site and beyond.

A1 and A2 buildings have a similar kind of language of brick and precast concrete and could have a stronger character on their own. They have a muscular appearance, with

a horizontal quality to them that could potentially be brought out further rather than separating them with a 3-storey brick framing or there is a delicacy that might be brought into it.

The A4 building is rightly addressing the scale of the residential neighbours. The relationship between them seems comfortable but it is slightly austere. The Panel queried the obscure glazing and what would that be like from the inside of the building, would it be better to have a clear view of the sky rather than an obscured view through glazing to make those internal spaces work better?

The function of a sawtooth roof is to allow north light into the space, but what is its purpose here and could east-facing glazing be detailed so as to work.

There is a potential for some light colour and brightness to some of the secondary elements of the scheme.

The landscape approach to address the four edges of the scheme is done very well and integrated in the townscape and fit well within the context.

The Panel welcomed the use of mature trees and mounding to address the Milton Road frontage, so they have enough space to grow.

The public garden is lovely and will have a good quality space with some detailed planting, but is it doing the right thing in the right place in relation to how it is meeting the building?

Further thought on how to integrate the buildings with the landscape and public realm is needed.

Specific recommendations

- Consider how the wider population will feel welcome in the public spaces. Is there enough community provision if the public café ceases activity?
- Look at the Crusader Works in Manchester as an example of pocket spaces for the internal courtyard.
- Consider flipping the ramp into the basement cycle park to avoid conflicts between cyclist, and pedestrian in the public garden and enter from South Mews.

- Keep having conversations with the relevant authority to remove the Milton Road underpass to enhance the public realm.
- There is a need for an overall movement strategy beyond the site.
- Consider the impact of construction access and excavation on Nuffield Road.
- Importance of the trees in cooling the central courtyard and how is that going to work.
- Good to see the labs do not have full-height glazing but if the light works well for the laboratories, could it not work for the offices as well?
- Would some shading be appropriate and help the architecture in rear buildings?
- Views about some of the norther elevations were slightly dated but can that be enjoyed.
- Roof pavilions to be integrated in the overall design.
- Draw extended E/W section through site and beyond

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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Issue date: 17th July 2024

Appendix A – Background information list and plan

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

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

Masterplan

