Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Cambridge Science Park Masterplan

Tuesday 30th September 2025

Novotel Hotel, Cambridge North Station

Panel: Robin Nicholson (chair), Meredith Bowles, Phil Armitage, Lindsey Wilkinson, Steve Platt and David Taylor

Local Authority: Katie Christodoulides, Jonathan Brookes, Emma Lilley and Judy Lau (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

A masterplan to help guide the redevelopment of Cambridge Science Park for the next 50 years is being produced.

The proposals seek to establish the principle for the long-term vision of the Cambridge Science Park which would comprise of up to approximately 820,000m² of new floorspace and a total of 965,000 m² of new and retained floorspace. This would include laboratory and office space, a 150-bedroom hotel and main conference facility, sport and leisure provision, MUGA, multi-use outdoor space, secondary conference, community and amenity space provision for the Cambridge Science Centre and nursery building.

Presenting team

The scheme is promoted by Trinity College Cambridge and supported by Gummer Leathes, DP9 Planning, AAM Architects Ramboll and KMC. The presenting team comprises Jamie Trivedi-Bateman (Trinity College Cambridge, Applicant); Ben Gummer (Gummer Leathes, Development Manager); Emma Woods and Jack Higson (DP9, Planning); Eric Martin and Charlotte Hindson (AAM, Architecture); Jai Warya (AAM, Landscape); Gavin White (Ramboll, Sustainability); and Stuart Morse (KMC, Transport)

Local authority's request

The Local Planning Authority has requested that the Panel focus its attention on several key areas: the provision and integration of active travel infrastructure and connectivity; the urban proposition, including delivery constraints and the long-term strategic approach; the level and type of amenity provision to support broader site use; long-term stewardship and governance; the relationship between density and landscape capacity; building height, massing, and overall site legibility; treatment of site edges in relation to the wider city context; and the development of a robust landscape strategy alongside fixed sustainable design principles within the Design Code.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel summary

The Panel thanked the applicant for presenting the scheme at such an early stage of its' development and acknowledged the substantial work completed to date. While generally supportive of the proposals, the Panel highlighted the importance of developing "what if" scenarios to better understand site constraints and how these could inform a coherent narrative. They also emphasised the need to consider how the place can be inclusive for everyone—not only as a space for scientists, but as a place for the broader community.

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"*

The Panel questioned whether science parks will remain relevant over the next 50 years in fostering scientific development and innovation? This invites consideration of what interventions may be necessary in the future.

While significant changes are inevitable over such a long period, the human need for interaction is essential. Even if the traditional five-day office model becomes obsolete, people still need face-to-face interaction, especially younger staff who grow through real-world experience and remote work alone can't replace that. The challenge, therefore, lies in designing environments and spaces that actively encourage these interactions to occur, how spaces use sun and shade, how they provide shelter and how they invite people to connect. Science parks must evolve to meet this need, developing as hubs of collaboration, mentorship, and innovation.

Another important consideration is the range of amenities offered within the science park. In today's fast-paced world, people value convenience—and that means access to services like crèches, hairdressers, shops, launderettes, and even pet care. As the science park becomes more densely populated, these amenities will not only become commercially viable but also essential to supporting the daily lives of employees.

Providing such services can significantly enhance the attractiveness of the workplace, helping companies retain top talent—especially younger professionals who increasingly seek a balanced and flexible lifestyle.

Building flexibility is crucial. Is there a way to join buildings up and share some of the core facilities to avoid isolated pavilions in the future?

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

Meaningful interactions often occur at crossroads The current approach to connection points appears passive. It seems these have been accepted as fixed, which feels underdeveloped. If the ambition is to create an urban environment, connections should ideally occur every 100 metres—though this may not be feasible here as a constrained site with the A14, Cambridge Busway and Milton Road acting as barriers.

Concerns were raised particularly about the treatment of the site edges, with the southwest corner seen as an opportunity for a bolder intervention. The Panel encouraged the consideration of a science bridge or a new point of infrastructure connection, so there is a three-dimensional connectivity that can enhance integration and movement across the site and questioned if there is an option of a science corridor that goes right to the centre of the site and local areas such as schools.

When discussing movement within the development, the focus seems fixed on current trends—cycling and car access—as if responding to a planning application for today. But what is the long-term strategy? Where are the movement corridors, and how do they relate to the infrastructure pattern?

The phasing strategy needs to be resilient and flexible, built around 'what if' scenarios: shifts in car ownership, emerging mobility tech, and behavioural change.

Questions about where's the backbone of the scheme and how will the site grow and adapt were asked. What's the strategy for cars in the medium term before future changes come about? While it is understood what technology may deliver in the next decade, its impact needs to be mitigated now—through promoting cycling and strengthening connections. But is the cycling provision here sufficient? Are the links to the station robust enough?

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

While a 50-year timescale inevitably brings uncertainty, there are clear mid-term trajectories—particularly around carbon, water, energy, and transport—that can and should be planned for now. The design guide needs to reflect attitudes toward these trends and show how they shape layout and infrastructure.

Take electrified heat, for example—how is it integrated, and what are the implications for site layout? As the site intensifies, energy demand will increase. How is that demand managed, and how much energy will be generated on-site over time?

Has the potential for moderate to large-scale wind energy been explored? This location could benefit significantly, but if implemented, it would require integrated battery storage to mitigate power fluctuations.

Energy and carbon are increasingly critical considerations—not just in operational performance, but throughout the construction process. The design guide should address strategies to reduce embodied carbon, including the reuse of existing buildings. It would also be valuable to incorporate a place for storing reclaimed building materials, enabling future reuse and better adaptation to climate challenges.

The intensification of the site will inevitably impact water supply and storage. It's important to understand how these pressures will be mitigated and what the long-term strategy for water management looks like. What is the attitude towards water resilience over time, and how is it reflected in the design approach. Assess whether potable water storage is required to support long-term sustainability and operational continuity.

Standards need to be defined.

Character – *"Places with distinctive neighbourhoods and where people create 'pride of place'*

The Panel was concerned about the lack of explanation regarding site constraints. This makes it difficult to identify what might happen in the future, which buildings will be retained and which will not, and how understanding these constraints could help shape the vision for the site.

The applicant explained that, although the constraints were not presented, the building locations shown in the emerging masterplan indicate where development is feasible and have informed their phasing strategy. They noted that their key constraints include the existing infrastructure; the ownership structure of the park—although it is 100% owned by Trinity, several buildings are subject to long-term leases; carbon utility and carbon targets, with applicants committed to carbon efficiency; and the nature of international competition, such as Kendall Square, Maryland, and uCity Square in Philadelphia, among others.

The masterplan should be inclusive and avoid assumptions about science or scientists, as these can have implications for safety, security, comfort of space, and the overall character of place. A thoughtful approach ensures that design supports diverse users and makes everyone feel welcomed.

The landscape aspiration is commendable and offers a generous approach to placemaking at the concept level. However, challenges will arise around its long-term delivery and maintenance—especially over such a significant period. The management and maintenance model needs to be brought forward early. What is the stewardship strategy? This should be established at this stage to ensure a clear understanding of how the place will be maintained.

A clear definition of what is meant by a 'park of science' is essential. The term can be interpreted in various ways, so it’s important to be specific about its purpose, function, and identity within the masterplan.

In terms of urban intensification, there needs to be greater precision of what that means at the planning application level. This should include clear parameters around building heights and sectional treatments—both within the site and in relation to its wider context.

More detail is needed on the relationship between built areas and green soft open space. The proposal lacks a clear diagram showing what currently exists versus what is being proposed, and how each type of the green open space contributes to the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculations. A 20% uplift is proposed, but it’s unclear how this will be achieved and how efficient these spaces will be. It would be helpful to include a drawing or diagram that clearly shows which natural assets will be retained and what is being proposed.

More clarity is needed on the purpose and character of the landscape setting. It's important to define which areas are intended for public interaction, social space, active recreation, or purely for nature—or where these functions are combined. A clearer breakdown would help articulate how the landscape supports the proposals and how natural assets solutions are incorporated into the design code, with particular attention to the edges and interface spaces around buildings.

There is a risk that some roads may become barriers; permeability should be addressed to enhance biodiversity contributions. Developing a design code for a 50-year horizon is very challenging, so it must be precise—clearly distinguishing what is critical from what is less critical. There also needs to be allowance for innovation, going beyond current best practice.

The Panel questioned the narrative of the proposals which are landscape-led and well-connected to the wider community. They considered the site to be an island, with permeability and connections almost impossible to improve due to significant barriers such as the A14, the Cambridge Busway, and Milton Road—which is expected to become even busier with the Waterbeach development. The proposed connection to the Regional College was seen as unimportant, serving only that destination. The Panel suggested that the only meaningful pedestrian and cycling connection may be a bridge to St John's Innovation Park. If this is an island site, why not treat it as an opportunity and work with the constraints it presents?

If the intention is to create a more urban environment—especially given the proposed intensification of the science park—perhaps it can no longer be called a science park in the traditional sense, and it may evolve into a new urban quarter with a park at its heart. What kind of place is it?

One of the diagrams focuses on green clusters and their connections, but it's unclear how these will function given the proposed buildings of up to six storeys. This scale will significantly alter the spatial relationships between buildings and impact the character of the green spaces. It raises several questions such as what constitutes the front and back of these buildings?

In terms of the buildings themselves, could something more interesting be done? The current flat-roofed, tall buildings in NE Cambridge feel monotonous. How can

this be incorporated into the document to help illustrate what your future development might look like?

The Panel would have liked to see more illustrated precedents of other science park locations or urban environments that could help indicate what these places might be like. There is a need to better understand the balance between buildings in a park-like versus urban setting, and to clarify what types of spaces and places are being created between the buildings.

Concentrating social interaction and activities in fewer, more central locations could ultimately prove more successful. Consider evening use.

There is further work needed between the strategy and the narrative, as the narrative isn't talking of what you are trying to do, there is a mismatch.

Specific recommendations

- The schemes at Discovery Drive on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus offer valuable lessons and should be reviewed as a precedent. While not without its limitations, it successfully tackles several key challenges—albeit on a smaller scale—including the relationship between front and back façades, servicing and the quality of the public realm.
- Design environments and spaces that actively encourage human interaction and social connection.
- Incorporate a diverse range of amenities—such as crèches, hairdressing services, shops, and other everyday facilities.
- Prioritise building flexibility by exploring opportunities to share core facilities.
- Opportunity to be bolder in how edges are treated and activated. Consider interventions such as a "science bridge".
- Consider the importance of intensification on movement over time, where is the backbone?
- Explore the potential for on-site energy generation, including the feasibility of wind energy and ensure that integrated storage solutions are considered.
- Prioritise embodied carbon management and consider on-site storage and reuse of building materials.
- Consider the integration of a smart grid and resilient water supply systems.

- It is essential to establish a clear strategy for its long-term management and stewardship of the landscape.
- Clearly define what is meant by a "park of science" and the concept of the "chassis." Articulate what gives this landscape its distinctive character.
- Include clear parameters around building heights and sectional treatments.
- Provide a diagram illustrating both the existing and proposed landscape.
- Clarify the strategy for achieving the 20% BNG and identify the specific areas within the site where this target will be delivered.
- Given the critical role of the edges and interface spaces are critical, consider making the edges more permeable.
- Clearly distinguish between essential and potential elements within the design code.
- Reflect on the narrative of the proposals, is the site an island? Can the site be better connected?
- Consider what kind of place this is intended to be. Is it a park or an urban environment?
- Provide a better animation of the roofscape.
- Illustrate precedents of science parks and urban environments, highlighting examples of places that have succeeded and those that have not.
- Concentrate most activity in the centre to help creating a stronger sense of place.

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

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

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

Masterplan

