Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Cambridge Science Park Masterplan (2nd Review)

Wednesday 4th February 2026

Cambridge Science Park - Bradfield Centre

Panel: Robin Nicholson (chair), Phil Armitage, June Barnes, John Dales, Meredith Bowles, and Luke Engleback.

Local Authority: Katie Christodoulides (GCSP), Jonathan Brookes (GCSP), Annemarie de Boom (GCSP); and Emma Lilley (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

Cambridge Science Park, established by Trinity College in 1970, spans 152 acres and hosts over 170 companies, benefiting from strong links with the University of Cambridge and excellent transport connections. Many existing buildings no longer meet modern R&D or sustainability standards, and with no adopted masterplan, redevelopment has so far occurred in a fragmented way. Local planning policy supports renewed employment development and envisions North East Cambridge as a low-carbon, mixed-use, well-connected district.

In response, Trinity is commissioning a comprehensive 50-year masterplan to guide coordinated redevelopment across its landholdings and long-term leases. The emerging vision proposes higher-density, urban-scale development while retaining the park's green character, delivering new laboratories, offices, a hotel and conference centre, leisure facilities, community spaces, and a nursery.

Pre-application discussions and workshops are underway, with an outline planning application, focused on the next 25 years, expected in March 2026.

The applicant presented the masterplan vision and overall ambition to the Quality Panel on 30 September 2025 and is now seeking a second review to share the latest developments with the Parameter Plans and Design Code.

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 Paul Cutler (Gummer Leathes, Development Manager); Emma Woods and Jack Higson (DP9, Planning); Eric Martin (A&M, Architecture); Gavin White (Ramboll, Sustainability); and Stuart Morse (KMC, Transport)

Local authority's request

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service asked the Panel to focus on whether the masterplan provides strong, well-integrated pedestrian and cycle connections, responds to long-term mobility trends, and supports a growing community with adequate amenities and activity beyond working hours. They should also question how clearly the park's identity, constraints, density, building form and landscape

structure are defined, and whether these create a coherent, high-quality place. Finally, they should examine the robustness of the sustainability strategy, the clarity of climate-led design standards, and whether the biodiversity and green infrastructure approach is appropriate for a site of this scale and complexity.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel summary

The Panel were enthusiastic about the emerging proposals for this prestigious science park. However, they noted that the work is still at a formative stage, and therefore a March 2026 submission may be overly ambitious. After the meeting, the Panel expressed frustration that the presentation circulated in advance differed significantly from the one delivered on the day, which made it more difficult for them to prepare effectively.

Several questions of clarification were asked as follows.

To what extent has there been engagement with the County Council Guided Busway Team? There have been several discussions around what can is planned by the County Council (fencing of the busway) and what can be achieved, including how they can work together to create more space and remove 'barriers' to accessing the site. The new access from Garry Drive is agreed in principle with delivery by the County Council subject to funding being provided. There is a recognition that residents of Garry Drive have concerns about the creation of a pedestrian and cycle access that will increase movements along a currently quiet residential street.

Can diagrams be clarified as there are too many shades of similar colours and unclear contrasts? Yes, this can be reviewed.

What testing of performance standards has there been? Generally, there has been a high-level approach looking at other examples in the city and there is confidence that there is a good balance between what is achievable and stretched targets to allow for future adaptation.

What drivers for blue and green infrastructure are there – has wind and ventilation, soil and noise been considered yet? It is still early days, but deeper reviews of wind and noise have been considered at this stage.

How has health been considered (from a non-sport context) such as probiotic urban design? Yes, shadow studies on heights have been undertaken (there is a vertical difference of around 4 - 6m across the site) as well as on water too.

What is the phasing plan – it is not clear? Due to the variations in lease lengths**,** there is more control over some plots than others, and so the site will not be developed sequentially. The Design Code will offer a framework for all plots and enable occupants on long term leases to redevelop at earlier opportunities if they wish to.

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 would be helpful to illustrate the most likely sequence of development so the Panel can better understand how the site is expected to evolve over time. At present, the proposals still give the impression of an isolated 'island', and a clearer phasing narrative would help address this.

The Panel encouraged the team to think not only about the site's future occupants, but also about the wider range of people who could be drawn to use its facilities. Consider how they should be welcomed in, how they will access the site via different modes of travel, and what the actual 10-minute walk and cycle catchment reveals about the connectivity with the surrounding communities. It would also be useful to explore what the site could offer in the evenings to attract visitors and support activity beyond the typical working day.

The route from Cambridge North station uses a shared pedestrian–cyclist path, but it frequently experiences conflicts between the two user groups. The Panel recommend that this is carefully considered, with measures introduced within the science park to moderate fast-moving cyclists and create a more comfortable and balanced environment for all users.

Will there be a community strategy to support and drive this ambition? Such a strategy could include programmes that promote science engagement for children during school holidays, as well as opportunities for adults. The Panel also suggest exploring

ideas such as a summer outdoor cinema or other activities that would help draw people to the site outside traditional working hours. Tenants should be integral contributors to a community strategy.

There are allotments nearby, and it may be valuable to engage with those communities to explore what relationships or shared opportunities could be developed within the park landscape.

An effective management and maintenance plan will be essential to ensure the park's high-quality environment is sustained over time. The Panel welcomed the commitment to early delivery of green and blue infrastructure, noting that these elements are not dependent on new development coming forward. They also recognised the long-term stewardship role of Trinity College, whose continued investment in the park is a positive foundation for its future management.

Consider incorporating meanwhile uses and policies that offer lower-rent incentives to support strong early take-up and activate the site during its initial redevelopment phases.

While landmark buildings that are expressed through (relative) height have their place, it is important to remember that many users may not always see them or use them to aid navigation. What happens at ground and first floors of buildings is also an important aspect of creating a 'landmark'. This needs to be supported by effective wayfinding therefore also relies on other cues, such as prominent trees, clear signage, or active uses like a shop, all of which provide reliable real-world markers that help people navigate the site.

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

Walking and cycling conflicts are a recurring challenge, and human behaviour is not always predictable. While it can be difficult to moderate faster cyclists, design measures such as gentle curves, rather than tight 'wiggles', which tend to be straight-lined, can help reduce speeds. Continue to consider who will be cycling, where, and at what times, and how their needs will be accommodated. Will there be cycle hubs? With only a limited number of access points into the site, these locations are likely to experience a high concentration of cyclists. It will be helpful to add some

(estimated) figures of cycle and pedestrian numbers expected along the main routes to further understanding and add weight to the diagrams. Aim to strike an appropriate balance between segregated and shared-use paths. The Panel also encouraged thinking of the east–west route through the 'Green Chassis' as a street rather than the simple path it currently appears to be. The central park will perform an important movement corridor within the science park itself.

Following the main session discussion, the Panel noted that the path along the north side of the guided busway is incorrectly described on the parameter plan legend as a 'Local Cycle Route', but it is in fact a shared-use path for walking, wheeling and cycling. It was mentioned in the meeting that the width of this path is already inadequate for the peak demands placed on it, and that this will shortly get worse when the safety railings, which will take 500-750mm of the existing width, are installed.

The Science Park is on the same side as the busway path and it should be an integral consideration and objective in the development of the masterplan that the path should be widened to provide separate, though contiguous, walking and cycling paths that meet the requirements of Local Transport Note 1/20.

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

The updated plans address many of the Panel's previous concerns, and there is now a clear and appropriate understanding of the place and the development constraints.

While the origin and evolution of the circular loop is understood, the Panel felt that an obvious arc route and desire line, from the D1 plot through the central park and out towards plot D10, appears to be missing. The introduction of an additional access into D1 should also be explored. The urban grain of the building plots seems to invite natural cut-throughs, but it is unclear whether these are achievable. The Panel encourage a closer look at routes and desire lines based on real-world movement patterns, rather than those that simply work on a plan.

The urban character of the place, combined with its park setting, means that ground-floor uses are critical, particularly along key routes. The Panel noted the proposed restrictions on percentage of floorspace occupied by these uses and questioned the need for such limitations. Why constrain them at all, given their importance in creating activity, vibrancy, and a welcoming public realm? If a range is to be specified it could be a minimum of 5% and maximum 100% for supporting activating uses.

Will there be provision for smaller scale concessions and businesses and not just larger, corporate chains?

The Panel have not yet seen the three-dimensional qualities of the proposals, but there is a need to understand these spaces, particularly the taller buildings, and to assess their wider visual and environmental impacts beyond the park boundary.

The typical approach of locating taller buildings toward the centre could be reconsidered, with alternatives such as placing them along the busway, or as later suggested, to the north of the site by the A14, potentially offering a better response to context and views and helping to mitigate environmental constraints such as noise.

How will building heights be constrained and sensitively located? This is a key consideration for the local planning authority, as the impacts of taller buildings could set unwelcome precedents elsewhere.

Although sections have been provided for the five-storey buildings, equivalent sections for the taller buildings are also required to fully understand their scale and impact.

Although the drawings are thorough, additional blue–green infrastructure detail is needed to show how these features connect with and reinforce the character areas.

It would be helpful to gain a clearer understanding of the wind impacts generated by the proposed building heights and massing, and to explore how trees and smaller landscaped spaces can contribute to cooling, comfort, and natural ventilation across the site.

Examples of how crushed limestone locks in carbon emissions were cited, with a trial scheme at Newcastle University, explaining how mineralisation can be used to sequester carbon. There is a story to tell that aligns with the development as a science

park. A soil strategy is needed, as construction has a far greater impact on soil quality than farming, and careful management will be essential to minimise long-term degradation.

Have noise impacts been fully considered beyond the statutory requirements, particularly in terms of how they affect people and the wider park environment? The development should proactively incorporate noise-mitigation measures as part of its design approach.

Examples of good design that manages water where it falls were highlighted from the Stuttgart region in Germany. In Steinheim, the natural impact basin underpins a series of local water-infrastructure projects, while Vinningen demonstrates effective recycling and managed stormwater systems. Within the Asberg locality, engineered water-management approaches move runoff through channels, culverts, and, where necessary, pump-assisted drainage.

Finer-grain drainage plans should further refine the proposed water systems, reducing reliance on pipes and keeping water at or near the surface, expressed differently across the various character zones.

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

The overall approach is still relevant and supported. However, it would be helpful to see performance figures for the proposed standards; without them, the commitments remain aspirational rather than evidenced.

Taller buildings could potentially be located to the north of the site to act as a noise buffer to the A14. Consideration of overheating and shading of taller buildings needed.

The approach to climate adaptation needs to be set out more clearly within the Design Code. The Eddington Design Code and Sustainability Statement (Planning Reference 25/03753/OUT) was highlighted as a good example to review.

There is a strong opportunity to communicate a compelling climate narrative through the Science Park and its development. This could help build trust in science and act as a way of encouraging people to the science park.

A site-wide energy strategy is needed now, as delaying this risks losing coherence in the future. It was noted that an ambient loop system is unlikely to be suitable for this site given the nature of the uses.

What is the proposed approach to renewables, and could on-site generation, such as a wind turbine, be considered?

Specific recommendations

1. **Provide a clear phasing and development sequence-**illustrate the likely order of development to show how the site will evolve over time and avoid the impression of an isolated 'island'.

2. **Broaden the understanding of future users and access patterns-**consider not only future occupants but also the wider community who may use the site, examining access by all modes and what the 10-minute walk and cycle catchment reveals about potential users throughout the day and evening.

3. **Improve pedestrian–cyclist balance on the approach from Cambridge North -** recognise conflicts on the existing shared path by designing measures within the science park that moderate fast-moving cyclists and create a safer, more comfortable environment for all.

4. **Develop a community strategy to activate the site beyond working hours and establish a programme of activities—**such as science engagement for children, adult learning opportunities, or seasonal events like outdoor cinema to attract visitors and build a sense of community, with tenants playing an active role. These cultural elements need to be delivered in the early phases of development.

5. **Strengthen relationships with neighbouring communities and support early activation -** engage with nearby groups, such as local allotment communities, explore shared opportunities within the landscape, and consider meanwhile uses or lower-rent incentives to encourage early occupation and activity during initial phases.

6. **Design to minimise walking–cycling conflicts** - introduce measures such as gentle curves, appropriate widths, and clear sightlines to moderate cyclist speeds and create a safer, more predictable environment for all users.

7. **Plan for cycle hubs and manage pressure at key access points** - given the limited number of entrances, provide well-located cycle hubs and design these gateways to safely accommodate high concentrations of cyclists at peak times.

8. **Reimagine the east–west route as a street** - treat this corridor as a key movement spine with a street-like character, rather than a simple path, to support a richer mix of users and activities.

9. **Correct the classification and address capacity issues on the busway path** - update the parameter plan to reflect that the north-side busway path is a shared-use route

10. **Widen the busway path to provide separate walking and cycling routes** - make it a masterplan objective to widen this path and deliver contiguous but segregated walking and cycling facilities that meet the standards of Local Transport Note 1/20.

11. **Re-examine movement routes and desire lines based on real behaviour** - review the internal movement network to ensure it reflects natural desire lines, particularly the potential arc route from D1 through the central park to D10 and confirm whether the apparent cut-throughs suggested by the urban grain can genuinely be delivered.

12. **Enable a broader mix of active ground-floor uses** - reconsider the proposed restrictions on ground-floor uses, as these spaces are essential for creating vibrancy along key routes. Allowing a wider range of uses will help generate activity, support placemaking, and create a more welcoming public realm.

13. **Provide opportunities for smaller, independent businesses** - ensure the masterplan includes space for smaller-scale concessions and independent operators, not only larger corporate tenants, to support diversity, affordability, and a richer everyday experience.

14. **Present three-dimensional studies of massing and taller buildings** - provide 3D visualisations and sections for the taller buildings to understand their spatial qualities, wider visual impact, the acceptability of the heights being proposed and environmental effects beyond the park boundary, including alternative locations such as along the busway or to the north.

15. **Strengthen blue–green infrastructure integration across character areas** - enhance the drawings with clearer blue–green infrastructure detail, showing how water, landscape, and ecological systems connect across the site and reinforce the identity of each character area.

16. **Develop a comprehensive environmental performance strategy** - address key environmental considerations, including carbon-sequestering materials, wind comfort, soil protection, noise mitigation, and surface-level water management, through a coordinated strategy that reflects best practice and supports the science-park narrative.

17. **Provide measurable performance data for proposed standards** - include quantifiable performance figures to demonstrate that sustainability and design commitments are deliverable rather than aspirational.

18. **Explore the potential for taller buildings to act as a noise buffer** - assess the feasibility of locating taller buildings to the north of the site to help shield the development from A14 noise impacts.

19. **Clarify the approach to climate adaptation within the Design Code** - set out a more explicit and integrated adaptation strategy, ensuring that climate resilience is embedded across all design decisions.

20. **Use the Science Park as a platform for a strong climate narrative** - develop a clear story about innovation, carbon reduction, and environmental stewardship that aligns with the identity and purpose of the Science Park.

21. **Establish a coherent site-wide energy strategy, including renewables** - develop an overarching energy plan now, recognising that an ambient loop system is unsuitable, and explore on-site renewable options, potentially including wind generation.

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

Contact details

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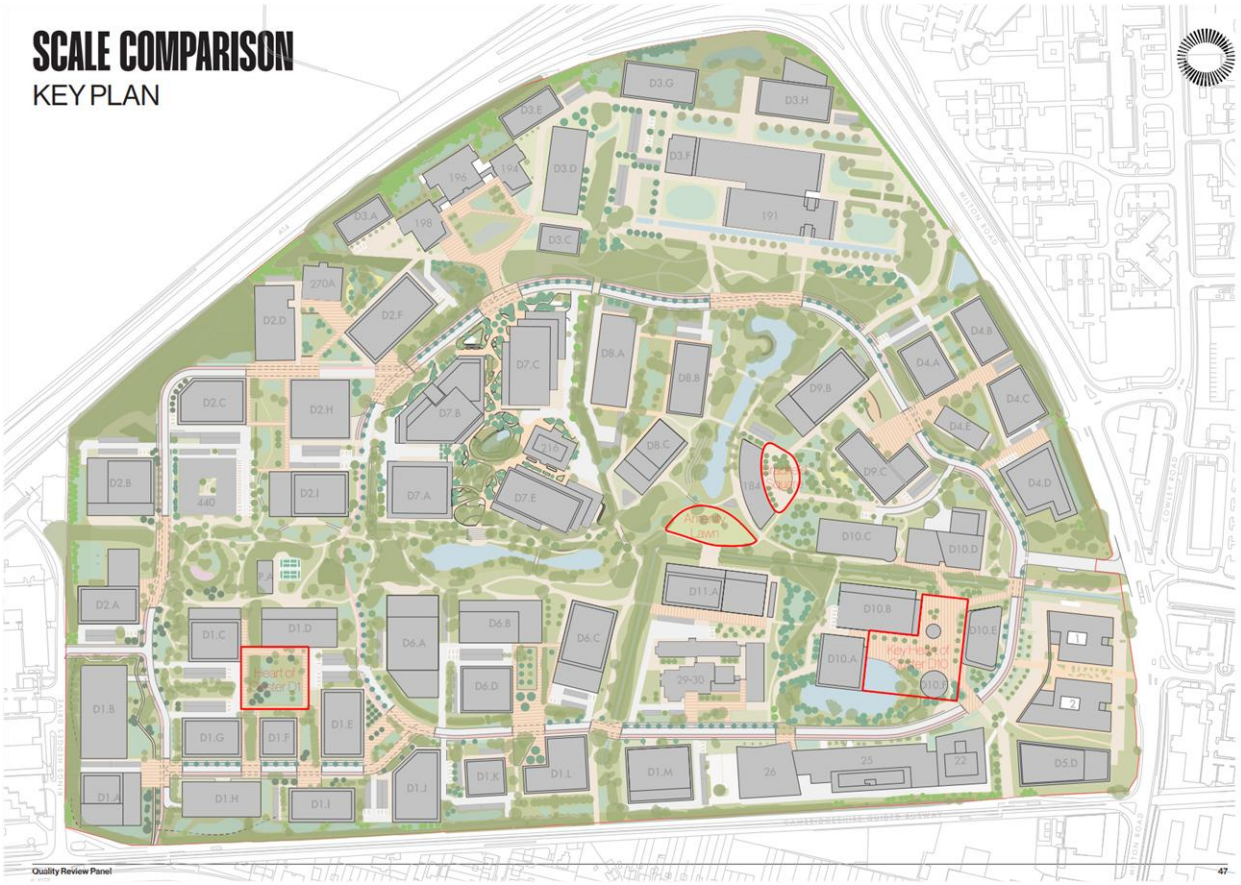
Issue date: 12th February 2026

Appendix A – Background information list and plan

- Main presentation
- Local authority background note

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

Key Plan



Source: Applicant Presentation Pack