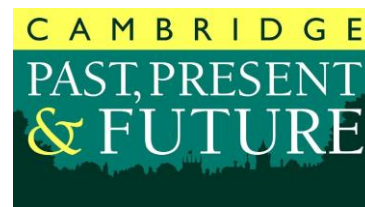


Greater Cambridge Share Planning Service



By Online Planning Register

Cambridge Past, Present & Future
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07/12/2022

Dear Fiona

Response to Amendments to 22/02771/OUT hybrid application for 425 residential units and commercial buildings at Land north of Cambridge North Station, Milton Avenue, Cambridge

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxtton Watermill.

Cambridge Past Present and Future have considered the feedback response to our initial representations. We are disappointed that there appears to be little amendment to the scheme but rather a justification of their design. We are not convinced by the additional explanation and our objections remain.

These comments need to be read in conjunction with our initial comments.

Eastern Edge

We retain our objection to the visual impact of the laboratory blocks (S6 and S7) on the eastern edge development.

In response to this objection the applicant refers to the Visual Assessment and Technical Visualisations. However, we consider that these illustrate our objections.

- The Visual Assessment (Appendix 12.3) demonstrates that there will be a significant visual impact when viewed from the river towpath.
 - The impact from viewpoint 8 is identified as 'major adverse'.
- The technical visualisations (Appendix 12.4)
 - viewpoint 6 demonstrates how visible the eastern elevations are even after 15 years of landscape growth. It also demonstrates that the higher blocks behind are visible and increasing the perception of a wall of development.
 - Viewpoint 07b from Baits Bite Lock demonstrates how the bulk of the development will impact views of the edge of Cambridge, even from some distance.

- Viewpoint 8 - View from footpath 86/6 Fen Ditton visualises the major adverse impact identified in the Visual Assessment. From this location, one will not only be able to see blocks S6 and S7 but also A9/10 (1 Chesterton Square) and the residential blocks. These latter blocks are higher than S6/S7. The impact does not diminish even after 15 years of vegetation growth.
- Viewpoint 9 – demonstrates how the blocks are visible above the roofline of Fen Ditton. Again, the taller blocks behind are visible, increasing the overall visual bulk of the development with large expanses of flat roof and little contrast in height. There is little difference to this view even after 15 years of landscape growth.
- Viewpoint 15 – The development is clearly visible across the meadows and appear as a single wall of development.
- Viewpoint 20 – The development is very visible. The hotel is already very visible from this location and therefore the additions of the mobility hub, blocks S6 and S7 will dominate. As with viewpoint 8, block A9/10 and the residential block is visible. It demonstrates the little contrast in height across the development.

- Heights/articulation/skyline

The feedback response to our representation explains that bulk of blocks S6 and S7 has been reduced by breaking each block into 4 fingers which are articulated up and back and introducing terracing. The highest parts of blocks S6 and S7 are 22.1m high and the lower 'finger' being 20.9m high. This is only a difference of 1.2m. This exceeds the height set out in the emerging Area Action Plan. The impact that these heights have on views from the surrounding countryside has been demonstrated in the visualisation exercise (see above).

The articulation aims to positively contribute to the Cambridge skyline. It is not considered that this has been successfully achieved. The visualisations demonstrate how, when viewed from the north or east, the skyline of the development is dominated by large blocks with even taller blocks behind (Viewpoints 6, 8, 9, 15 and 20). The modulations are hard to read from a distance and the overarching impression is that of a solid wall of development, with little variation in height, creating a hard boundary to the city.

- Greening

Planting of the terraces is proposed to soften the edge. This is considered to be a cosmetic solution to the problem and is dependant on the successful maintenance of the planting. It does not address the fundamental issue of the height and bulk of the buildings.

- Tree planting

We welcome the planting of large, medium and small trees along the eastern edge. The proposed London Plane has an eventual spread of about 20m. The width of Cowley Road between the buildings and the railway track is shown as 19.1m. The tree canopy would cover the entire width. Pollarding of the trees would remove their benefit as a tree screen and softening the development edge. It is considered that the buildings are still not sufficiently set back from the railway line to accommodate successful tree planting.

Wild Park

We are disappointed to learn that the wild park will not be retained in perpetuity. Any biodiversity net gain which the Park provides for the original development must be replaced, as well as providing a net gain for the redevelopment of the Wild Park.

Residential development

We retain our objection to the design of the open space and lack of connectivity to natural areas to the west.

The explanation provided about sufficient green spaces and planting to provide a nature corridor, bat and bird 'hop over' routes to the Wild Park, opening in fences, tree planting, green roofs and invertebrate friendly planting does not resolve our concerns. The conservation objectives set out in paragraph 2.4.4 of Ecological Design Strategy include 'retain habitat connectivity across the site and provide linkages to the wider environment through the retention of corridors around the perimeter of the site. Notwithstanding the range of habitat creation within the site, the layout of the residential area, the relatively narrow entrances into Chesterton Gardens and the wall of development of blocks S13-S16 are not conducive to wildlife connectivity across the development.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer