

Cambridge Science park



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Cambridge Past, Present & Future

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Dear Project Team

Response to consultation on new gateway development at Cambridge Science park

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.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposals for the new Gateway development at Cambridge Science Park. We welcome the ambition to modernise this significant site and appreciate the shift toward a more permeable, landscape-led site. However, having reviewed the consultation boards and considered the EIA Scoping Report for the whole site, we have several significant concerns regarding the scale of the proposed buildings and their integration into both the local community and the historic Cambridge skyline.

Masterplan Integration and Phasing

CambridgePPF welcome a plan-led approach, but we are concerned by the apparent disconnect between the proposals for the gateway and the broader 50-year masterplan. We seek assurance that the Gateway application will not be determined in a vacuum, but rather as a clearly defined phase of a formally adopted masterplan.

Can you please clarify how these specific buildings integrate with the overarching framework and the requirements of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). It would be useful to understand the timing of the planning application for the masterplan and that for the gateway development. It is vital that this phase does not set a precedent for incremental change without a unified vision.

Design, Scale, and Skyline Impact

The Gateway occupies a critical 'edge of city' location that serves as a landmark arrival point.

- **Building Heights and Massing:** We reiterate our opposition to large, uninspiring blocks of uniform height. While the Landmark Building is intended to frame Gateway Square, we urge you to avoid building to a uniform maximum height simply to maximize floor area. We note from the EIA Scoping Opinion request (25/04309/SCOP) that you are seeking building heights up to 11 storeys at ~4.5m storey heights. This equates to ~50m plus roof top plant and potentially flues. At this scale, the development risks creating a 'wall' effect on the city's edge rather than a porous gateway.

The new buildings must respect the context of the site, having regard to its edge of city location and potential impact on the historic skyline of Cambridge. Cambridge has a distinctive skyline that combines towers, turrets, chimneys and spires with large trees. The overall character of the city's skyline is one of relatively few taller buildings that emerge as 'incidents' above the prevailing lower buildings and trees.

The Council's Scoping Opinion recognises that the building heights in this flat fenland landscape have the potential to appear incongruous and visually prominent giving rise to significant landscape and visual effects. We concur with their comment that the height and mass of these large scale buildings, may obscure valued long distance views from as far out as Ely, which contribute to the appreciation of the historic core and its landmark spires within the wider Fenland setting.

Your indicative sketches confirm our fears that the site will be comprised of large bulky boxes. The two HQ buildings are shown of similar height. They are also very close to each other, so when viewed from a distance will appear as one large block. Add to this the Landmark building, which is shown as just a bigger box, the development will detract from, rather than contribute to the historic skyline.

- **Architectural Innovation:** We therefore call for architecturally innovative designs that incorporate both tall and lower elements to respect Cambridge's distinctive skyline. The buildings should be elegant in form, avoiding the "bulky box" aesthetic that currently plagues many modern developments. The Landmark building should be purposefully designed to be a singular, distinct marker that adds quality to the skyline, rather than just reaching a maximum height limit.

Permeability and Public Accessibility

We strongly commend the move toward a more permeable and welcoming district.

- **24/7 Access:** To be truly inclusive, new public areas like Gateway Square must be made welcoming 24/7.
- **Active Travel Hub/Car park:** We would be interested to know what facilities you are providing in the Travel Hub to encourage and support active travel and prevent it just becoming a car park.
- **Western Entrance Access to Science Park:** We specifically request that the western entrance at King's Hedges Drive remain open during evenings and weekends. This is a vital connectivity point for residents in neighbouring wards and commuters from areas like Waterbeach

Genuine Community Benefit and Education

Community benefits must be genuine enhancements rather than afterthoughts.

- **Educational Partnerships:** Given the proximity to Kings Hedges and Arbury, we strongly support proposals that raise educational standards. We expect to see formal links with **Cambridge Regional College (CRC)**, **Anglia Ruskin University (ARU)**, or the **Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology** to support local technician training and support roles.
- **Cambridge Science Centre:** With the redevelopment of the Trinity Centre, please clarify the future of the Science Centre. Is it to be incorporated within the Trinity Wellness Centre or relocated to another building? It is important for this existing learning and community space to be retained.

Landscape and Biodiversity

The committee supports the "landscape-led" approach but requires specific ecological safeguards.

- **The Lake:** The indicative masterplan implies a reconfiguration of the lake. We would be interested to know if the size of the lake is changing. We would not support a reduction in the size of the lake. Any reconfiguration and/or development adjacent the lake, must be supported by surveys, ensuring no net loss of aquatic habitat or biodiversity.
- **The First Public Drain:** we support transforming this into an accessible corridor.

- **Early Planting:** We recommend that landscaping be established early in the development cycle, so it is mature before the buildings are completed.

In summary, while we support the principle of revitalising the Science Park, we believe the current proposals require significant refinement to avoid a bulky, inward-looking development. We urge the project team to prioritise architectural elegance and genuine community integration. We look forward to seeing more detailed designs that respect the unique character of the Cambridge 'incident' skyline and provide tangible benefits to the residents of North-East Cambridge.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer