



Cambridge Past, Present & Future
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Response to 26/01902/OUT Outline planning application with all matters reserved for a mixed-use redevelopment of Cambridge Science Park, Milton Road, 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 Hinxton Watermill.

1. Introduction

Cambridge Past, Present & Future (CambridgePPF) recognises the immense economic significance of the Cambridge Science Park. Consequently, we believe that an intensification project of this scale over a 30+-year period demands the highest possible standards of development. Trinity College has a unique responsibility to deliver an exemplary masterplan.

While we strongly support the ambition to shift away from a piecemeal, building-by-building approach toward a comprehensive set of Parameter Plans and Design Code, we wish to ensure that this outline application establishes binding, concrete commitments to safeguard local communities, protect environmental infrastructure, and mandate world-class design quality.

2. Strategic & Community Connectivity

If the application is approved, it must demonstrate rigorous, concrete integration with adjacent urban areas, ensuring that the Science Park becomes an organic and integrated extension of the city rather than an isolated enclave.

- **Targeted Community Benefit:** As the Park is redeveloped over the coming decades, it must actively benefit the neighbouring, less-advantaged wards.
- **Binding Section 106 Agreements:** We consider that the Section 106 agreement should include robust, enforceable commitments regarding local skills, employment pipelines, and meaningful community structures. The economic uplift of this expansion must be shared directly with the surrounding local population rather than solely employees.

3. Permeability & Active Travel

While the masterplan voices positive aspirations for physical and cultural porosity, we are concerned that the proposed framework lacks clear, legally binding mechanisms to guarantee delivery.

- **Guaranteed Access:** To prevent a continuation of a car-centric, insular business park model, any planning permission must explicitly protect and mandate permanent access provisions for walking and cycling. We specifically support the proposed improved western gateway from Kings Hedges Drive, but would like to see the permanent removal of the gates that currently block this access outside of office hours.
- **Greenway Integration:** The Science Park will be a primary destination for cyclists traveling from Waterbeach via the Mere Way and the upcoming Waterbeach Greenway. Access into and through the Park from these strategic routes must be seamless, high-quality, and convenient.
- **Transit Flexibility:** Public transport links must be flexibly designed so that transit corridors through the site must remain highly adaptable and integrated firmly into the wider city infrastructure. For instance, the Western Gateway could be an attractive route for unguided buses, both to serve the Science Park and to run to Cambridge North Station, avoiding five sets of traffic signals on Kings Hedges Road and Milton Road.

4. Height, Massing, and Townscape

- **Height:** CambridgePPF is dedicated to protecting the historic urban character and setting of Cambridge, we are therefore concerned that excessive building massing risks overwhelming the surrounding cityscape and landscape. The Parameter Plan for building heights, allows developments up to 45m high. The Design Codes for Character and Appearance must be strong enough and rigidly applied to prevent views of the historic skyline being hidden behind a large collection of high and square buildings. CambridgePPF wants absolute assurance that the long-term impact of heightened massing on both the immediate townscape and the wider setting of Cambridge will be sensitively mitigated.
- **The Mandate for Exceptional vs. Good Design:** Given the prominent scale of this masterplan and its long-term impact on the northern gateway of Cambridge, the development must be held to an exemplary standard of architectural design and placemaking. We are explicitly looking for exceptional design quality, rather than merely 'good' or compliant development.

In this context, 'good' design simply satisfies basic spatial requirements and standard planning policies. Exceptional design, by contrast, actively enhances its civic, architectural, and environmental setting. For a landowner of Trinity College's stature, an exceptional standard means delivering buildings that achieve architectural distinction, creating public spaces that foster genuine social integration, and pioneering a climate-resilient urban fabric. Because this build-out will span generations, the Design Code must establish an uncompromising baseline that prevents architectural mediocrity and ensures every phase contributes meaningfully to the future legacy of Cambridge.

- **Additional Design Code:** The proposed Design Code controls and guides specific design elements but there does not appear to be a requirement for exceptional architectural design. We therefore consider that there should be an additional design code, as suggested below, stating that developments must demonstrate exceptional architectural distinction.
CA.XX (Exceptional Design): Development must demonstrate exceptional architectural distinction. Proposals must actively enhance the civic realm by delivering exemplary placemaking, innovative climate-resilient architecture, and high-quality materials that will age gracefully.

Specific comments on Proposed Character and Appearance Design Codes

We offer the following observations on the proposed Character and Appearance Design Codes:

- **CA.08 (Ely Cathedral View):** This code should be significantly strengthened by designating a formal 'protected view' of the Cathedral. The policy language should explicitly state that development must retain an unobstructed view, as opposed to the current phrasing which only requires a "sensitive response."
- **CA.09 (Building Top) & CA.10 (Roofscape and Articulation):** We support the inclusion of these codes as they will help to break up the overall composition of the development. Nevertheless, as with any large cluster of buildings, the scheme is likely to be perceived from longer-distance views as a single, substantial built mass. The application of these codes in achieving an appropriate balance between height and overall massing will therefore be critical. We question how a design's sensitivity to Cambridge's historic skyline will be objectively judged. Further information must be provided, referencing established Local Plan evidence to define what makes Cambridge's skyline uniquely distinctive. The diagram provided in the *Key Objectives for Building Heights* (page 84) is insufficient for this purpose.
- **CA.17 (Cumulative Impact):** We support this code but suggest it includes an additional point. As it stands the proposed code is an essential tool to prevent uninspiring blocks of uniform height by requiring consideration of the articulation of the building forms and their massing to reduce the perceived visual bulk and improve the legibility of the development. However, equal emphasis, should be placed on the siting and orientation of the buildings across the site to create a layered and visually rich composition when viewed from a distance, and we recommend that this is included in Code CA.17.
- **CA.21 (Building Line Continuity):** While we support the intention of this policy to provide interest and articulation to building facades, the current mechanism is flawed. By specifying a *minimum* percentage of façade length on the building line, the code inadvertently permits 100% of the façade length to be built on the line. This would completely fail to achieve the depth, enclosure, and articulation being sought. Instead, the code should be rewritten to set a *maximum* façade length permitted on the building line.

5. Green and Blue Infrastructure

To achieve the layered richness required by Design Code CA.17 and set out in the Design and Access Statement, the prominence of the landscape must remain a fundamental consideration throughout the future development of the site. Adequate space should be safeguarded along the site boundaries and within key landscaped areas to enable forest-scale trees to be established and reach maturity without being constrained or managed primarily to accommodate adjacent buildings.

- **Landscape Buffers and Forest Scale Planting:** The Parameter Plan, or appropriate document, must set out and secure minimum landscape buffer depths around the site perimeter to provide effective visual mitigation and support the long-term establishment of substantial tree planting. These buffers should typically be between 15 and 30 metres wide, allowing sufficient space for forest-scale trees to mature and contribute meaningfully to the landscape structure and the site's integration within its wider setting. To enhance the resilience of the planting strategy and improve its capacity to adapt to climate change, consideration should be given to incorporating suitable ornamental tree species within the woodland mix, provided they are appropriate to the site's soil conditions and growing environment.

We are concerned that the proposed blue infrastructure lacks technical rigour and fails to account for existing ecological realities on the ground.

- **Existing Water Body Failures:** The Science Park's existing ponds and lakes are prone to being in poor ecological health due to minimal water flow and severe drainage issues linked directly to the first public drain.

- **Functional SuDS Design:** CambridgePPF recommends a planning condition requiring detailed coordination with drainage engineers. This must ensure that the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are fully functional, actively resolve existing drainage and flow blockages, and promote real climate adaptation rather than failing under environmental stress.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain:** we expect the masterplan to exceed statutory minimums. The early establishment of native landscaping and structural tree planting must be mandated to guarantee that canopy shade and ecological networks successfully mature over the lifetime of the build.

6. Long-Term Implementation & Code Enforcement

Managing a 30+ Year Build-Out Lifespan: The applicant is proposing a 30+ year implementation period. Because economic, social, and environmental circumstances will inevitably shift over three decades, it is vital that design standards are continually enhanced and elevated over time, rather than watered down or eroded.

Enforceable Monitoring and Compliance Mechanisms: To secure the successful delivery of the applicant's stated vision and high ambitions, any granted permission must include robust, formalised mechanisms to actively monitor compliance with the Design Codes and the strategic framework. This is essential to ensure that subsequent phased developments remain strictly within the agreed parameters and consistently fulfil the project's intended civic and architectural ambitions.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer