



Cambridgeshire Quality Panel

Station Road, Longstanton

Wednesday 4th December 2019

Cambridgeshire County Council HQ

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.

Scheme Description

Architect/Designer: Carter Jonas

Applicant: Endurance Estates

Planning status: Pre-planning application stage

Issue date: 16th December 2019

Declarations of Interest

Panel members are required to declare any interests they may have in relation to the development before the Panel and any such interests are recorded here.

None.

Previous Panel Reviews

Masterplan, design code and numerous parcels for Northstowe.

Development Overview

The proposal is for up to 103 residential dwellings, access, car parking, open space, play area and a wildlife zone. The site was previously identified as a reserved land for residential development for Northstowe. It is now within the Northstowe Policy SS/05 so will help to deliver the 10,000 new homes. As presented, this submission will be for an outline permission with all matters reserved except access and is accompanied by an illustrative masterplan.

Cambridgeshire Quality Panel views

The Panel has been issued with background reference information from the applicant and local planning authority ahead of the review session. This information is listed at Appendix A.

The advice and recommendations of the Panel reflect the issues associated with each of the four 'C's' in the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter and the main comments below include both those raised in the open session of the meeting and those from the closed session discussions. The comments refer to the illustrative masterplan.

Community – “places where people live out of choice and not necessity, creating healthy communities with a good quality of life”

The Panel recognised that there is potential for more green spaces within the streetscape and better integrated play provision. With the different styles of housing proposed, there will be different types of linkages between the site and other places such as schools, the park and ride, employment areas and local centre, which need to be mapped. The Panel suggested that these routes need to be greener and better integrated within the fabric of the development with the roads being designed as streets to create a series of linked public places.

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

The Panel questioned whether this site is a “front door” or “back door” to Site 3b to be developed by Homes England and currently being masterplanned. The physical shape of the site suggests the site is a “front door”, especially in relation to connections across Station Road to the Cambridgeshire Guided Bus stop and associated cycle route.

Plans for a direct cycle route east to west were unclear to the Panel and the cycle routes did not seem to be intuitive or well integrated.

The Panel considered the scheme weak in terms of movement and needs to include the full movement hierarchy with routes to the schools, the park and ride and local shops.

The Panel suggested that streets could be tightened up with swales as part of the streetscape to provide green linkages across the site and to create a more convincing SuDS network.

Character – “Places with distinctive neighbourhoods and where people create ‘pride of place’

The Panel were concerned that the existing strong landscape assets had been swept away and not used as the basis for a ‘green masterplan’ with green links north-south and east-west. The applicant explained that drainage had been a key driver and that they are retaining the existing boundary trees. The pond is located to the North West because historically it was a gravel pit but the Panel was not persuaded.

The Panel noted the lack of a site analysis and were unconvinced by plans to increase biodiversity if the intention is to remove existing vegetation and create an artificial green corridor. The Panel felt that the illustrative masterplan was at odds with the site analysis given the disconnect between the existing landscape and the illustrative proposals.

Although the applicant explained that the landscape is not currently well managed the Panel insisted that this should provide the basis for the biodiversity and character of the site. The proposed landscape has been pushed to the outside edges and there is little if any biodiversity gain and so the Panel thought this a weak landscape scheme and did not support the idea of off-setting bio-diversity gain off site.

The Panel were disappointed that the presentation did not include plans and images of the neighbouring sites (such as the park & ride, Digital Park scheme or Parcel 3b). Questions about routes to the Park & Ride and other sites surrounding H9 were raised.

The Panel found it difficult to understand how the development is addressing the 4 ‘Cs’ and suggested further conversations were needed with Homes England who can help inform and advise on the developing character areas. The applicant explained that they were already in conversation with Homes England.

Materials and typologies should reflect 21st Century challenges and give this development a unique identity. It is difficult to comment at outline stage but the development needs to develop a stronger sense of character. The Panel felt that the density could be greatest along the western edge to be associated with the emerging ‘centre’ on the Homes England site.

The Panel was concerned by the prominent position of the utilities compound including space for the gas governor and suggested that there would be no gas given that this

will not be an option for new developments going forward. The applicant explained that the associated utilities compound is placed in case it is required in the future. The Panel suggested moving the substation as this location requires strong frontages onto Station Road.

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

The world is moving towards carbon-free power and fuel and gas-free heating solutions, so questions about what was being planned to address this were raised. All houses will need to be adaptable for renewables in the future and the new homes will need to prepare for an ageing population too.

The applicant explained that they are seeking to go beyond 10% carbon reduction, however, the Panel indicated that this target should be stretched to beyond 50% by 2025. It was highlighted that it isn't all about technical solution; for example simply building more terrace houses at a greater density and fewer detached houses would help achieve these targets.

Panel Conclusions and Recommendations

The Panel thanked the applicant for bringing the scheme at such an early stage of the development and would like to see how the scheme progresses with the addition of the parameter plans to help provide greater certainty about the wider fit into adjacent sites and to guide a future Reserved Matters application.

The consideration of typologies, height and orientation are important as we are living in rapidly changing times in terms of energy, now and in the future. It is expected that the later phases of Northstowe will provide some of the answers, whereas the design aspirations of this scheme seemed to have regressed. More elements of character could be provided by doing something less conventional.

In summary, the main recommendations of the Panel were:

- 1) The existing trees and ponds are important site assets and should not be moved if they are already *in situ*.
- 2) Make sure the current biodiversity is enhanced on site.

- 3) Plans need to show how the new community will travel to other locations such as schools, shops, employment areas and the park and ride.
- 4) Plans showing cars parking relative to dwellings would be helpful.
- 5) The road layout needs to both reduce the impact of the car and work with the existing landscape to form a series of connected streets.
- 6) Consider integrating play areas into the normal street scene.
- 7) Cycling provision must provide direct and clear routes to identified destinations.
- 8) The dichotomy between back door and front door to Parcel 3b needs to be resolved with the possibility of the greater density being along the western edge.
- 9) Station Road frontage should be stronger and the substation be relocated.
- 10) Homes need to be adaptable for climate change over the time.
- 11) Keep densities higher particularly if that allows retention of existing green assets but will require a higher quality design.
- 12) Carry on conversations with Homes England and the neighbouring sites.

References

n/a

Next Steps

The Panel would welcome the opportunity for ongoing engagement with the developer and design team as proposals for this site progress.

Attendees

Chair: Robin Nicholson

Panel Members: Lynne Sullivan
Lindsey Wilkinson
David Taylor
Oliver Smith
Simon Carne

Panel Support: Judith Carballo – Cambridgeshire County Council

Local Authority: Andrew Thompson – Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
Trovine Monteiro – Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
Jonathan Brookes – Greater Cambridge Shared Planning
Nigel Eggar– Highways Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council
Tam Parry– Transport Assessment, Cambridgeshire County Council

Applicant Team: Peter McKeown – Carter Jonas
Johnny Clayton – Carter Jonas
Jake Nugent – Endurance Estates

Observer: Cllr Katie Thornburrow

Appendix A – Background Information List and Plan

- Applicant's briefing note
- Local Authority Officers Pre-Meeting Briefing Note

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

Illustrative Masterplan

