

PLANNING

12 February 2025
10.15 am - 4.45 pm

Present:

Planning Committee Members: Councillors Smart (Chair), Baigent (Vice-Chair), Gilderdale, Howard, Porrer, Thornburrow, Todd-Jones and Young

Also present Councillors: Bennett, Robertson and Tong

Officers:

Delivery Manager: Toby Williams
Principal Conservation Officer: Paul Robertshaw
Principal Environmental Health Officer: Ben Walther
Principal Landscape Architect: Bana Elzein
Principal Planner: Cuma Ahmet
Principal Planner: Andrew Martin
Principal Urban Designer: Sarah Chubb
Principal Sustainability Officer: Emma Davies
Arboricultural Officer: Joanna Davies
Legal Adviser: Keith Barber
Committee Manager: James Goddard
Meeting Producer: Sarah Steed

Other Officers Present:

Independent Light Assessor: Ian Dias
Principal Engineer Major Developments: Tam Parry (Cambridgeshire County Council)
Local Highways Engineer: Jon Finney (Cambridgeshire County Council)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/26/Plan Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Bennett who would speak as a Ward Councillor and not take part in the discussion or decision making for the item, (Councillor Howard attended as her Alternate). Councillor Lokhmotova also sent apologies (Councillor Young attended as her Alternate).

25/27/Plan Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Baigent	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge Cycling Campaign. Attended some general meetings about the site in the past but discretion unfettered.
Councillor Porrer	23/30/Plan	Personal: Knew people who lived in Silverwood Close, but they were not in any of the houses affected by the application. Did not discuss the application with these people. Discretion unfettered.
Councillor Thornburrow	23/30/Plan	Personal: Lived close to site. Was a member of the Everlast Gym on site until five months before Committee. Used the site to access nearby common. Discretion unfettered.

25/28/Plan Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/29/Plan Committee Recording

The Committee minutes list public speakers at Committee. Please view the recording of the meeting on [Cambridge City Council - YouTube](#) to see/hear more detail about statements from public speakers and Ward Councillors.

25/30/Plan 23/03204/OUT Beehive Centre

The Committee received an outline application (with all matters reserved) for the demolition of existing buildings and structures and redevelopment of the site for a new local centre (E (a f), F1(b-f), F2(b, d)), open space and employment (office and laboratory) floorspace (E(g)(i)(ii) to the ground floor and employment floorspace (office and laboratory) (E(g)(i)(ii) to the upper floors, along with supporting infrastructure, including pedestrian and cycle routes, vehicular access, car and cycle parking, servicing areas, landscaping and utilities. (The Development was the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment.)

The Delivery Manager reported to Committee that an e-mail letter had just been received from the Secretary of State calling in the application. The letter was received twenty minutes before the Committee began. The letter was subsequently uploaded to the planning portal [23_03204_OUT-APPEAL_START_LETTER-6625147.pdf](#)

The Principal Planner said because the Secretary of State had called-in the application the City Council would be asked to ratify its position today and make a 'minded to' decision. The power to determine the application now rested with the Secretary of State not the local planning authority, i.e. the City Council. A revised recommendation was included at the end of the Officer's presentation.

The Principal Planner updated his report by referring to updates contained within the Amendment Sheet. These included:

- i. a representation from the Applicant on the daylight and sunlight considerations and assessment;
- ii. using a condition to overcome harm to amenity;
- iii. textual amendments to the Officer's report; and
- iv. additional third-party representations.

Five local residents addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application. A written statement from the fifth objector was read by the Committee Manager.

Matthew Howard of Railway Pension Nominees Limited (the Applicant) addressed the Committee in support of the application.

Representatives from three local organisations addressed the Committee speaking in support of the application.

Councillor Robertson (Cambridge City Councillor) addressed the Committee speaking in objection to the application and concluded by asking the Committee to refuse the application.

The Committee Manager read out a statement on behalf of Councillor Bulat (Cambridgeshire County Councillor) raising merits and demerits of the application.

Councillor Tong (Cambridge City Councillor) addressed the Committee raising merits and demerits of the application.

Councillor Bennett (Cambridge City Councillor) addressed the Committee raising merits and demerits of the application.

The Chair asked for discussion points to be raised under topic headings set out in 'key issues' (agenda page 13) plus a mop-up 'General' section.

Q: Questions from Councillors.

A: Answers from Officers.

General Questions

- i. Q: What weight should be given to the illustrative scheme?

A: Details were for information only, informative not determinative to the proposals.

- ii. Q: Could land use be controlled such as ensuring the skate park came forward?

- iii. A: Some uses could be controlled and the S106 / Management Plans could secure such uses

- iv. Q: Why did the item come to Committee when there was a difference of opinion between the Applicant and Planners?

A: Officers and the Applicant had held discussions. Officers raised concerns last year but these had not been resolved. The Applicant was unwilling to formally amend the application any further.

- v. Q: Would open space be defined by outline planning permission and then managed?

A: Yes and secured as such through any permission

(Only questions recorded from now on.)

- vi. Would the green space be protected and not built on if outline planning permission was granted?
- vii. When plans came forward, would they conform with building regulations?

Residential Amenity

- viii. Requested clarification on what vertical sky component (VSC) and daylight distribution (NSL) meant? What was the impact of light levels on residents?
- ix. What were the implications for residents if (day) light levels were lost/reduced such as more reliance on electric lighting in buildings?
- x. Reference was made to illustrative light levels in Islington. What were the likely light levels in the Cambridge application?
- xi. What was the process for assessing the impact of light levels and implications?
- xii. Raised concerns regarding the design:
- a. Sense of enclosure.
 - b. Scale and massing.
 - c. Blocks could dominate neighbours.
 - d. Proximity to neighbours.
 - e. Loss of privacy due to possible overlooking from people in the development into nearby residential properties.
- xiii. Requested clarification on the difference of opinion between the Applicant's light assessment interpretation and the Council's independent assessor.
- xiv. How many houses on or off the site (such as surrounding neighbours) would be affected by loss of light caused by the development?
- xv. Requested clarification on what minor or moderate light loss meant?

- xvi. What light level targets were acceptable to both the Council and developer? Would it matter if occupancy changed and new occupiers did not know light levels had changed (and so would not notice), whereas current occupiers would have experienced light level changes?

Heritage Impacts

- xvii. Requested clarification on “less than substantial harm” description and what was the impact of this on the skyline and townscape?
- xviii. Would the maximum height standard be adhered to at outline stage or detailed design stage?
- xix. An attractive design was needed at high level (top of building) and low level (near ground floor) on the application.
- xx. Queried Officer confidence that future planning conditions would mitigate the impact of the building design on residents? Such as making the design as attractive and bearable as possible, because residents would have to look at the development, so would want ‘visual interest’ not blocky buildings to look at.
- xxi. The Principal Conservation Officer had ‘less than substantial harm’ concerns. Why was this not included in the Officer recommended reason for refusal?

Townscape and Visual Impacts

- xxii. Some trees would be lost. Some replacements were proposed. Was this realistic as the Tree Officer had concerns? How to ensure tree planting was realistic and occurred as quickly as possible?
- xxiii. How to mitigate the urban heat effect? Such as soft/green landscaping on site.
- xxiv. How to get an attractive architecturally designed scheme?
- xxv. Referenced the number of proposed trees (290) in para 3.6 in the Officer report page 23. 290 and 212 were referenced in the report. Would these be full sized trees or shrubs? Could all these be fitted on site? The canopy size was more important than the number of trees delivered to get the most benefit.
- xxvi. Referenced public art in paragraphs 8.11-8.13 of the Officer report page 30. There was insufficient budget to deliver public art on site. What was the design life of the project and how long would the buildings last?

Water Resources

- xxvii. Noted the reuse of grey water. What measures were in place to minimise water use in buildings and make it as efficient as possible? Would buildings comply with current water regulations?

- xxviii. Noted sustainability design features but there was high demand for water in Cambridge. Queried how to minimise water use throughout the whole life of the building from construction to the building being in use?
- xxix. How reliable was the intention to reduce water use? Could this be controlled through conditions or policies such as seeking BRE water credits?
- xxx. If the planning application decision was made by the Secretary of State, could the Secretary of State ignore planning conditions set by the Council?

Transport and Highway Safety

- xxxi. Retail park and Beehive Centre traffic currently used the site. If the retail park moved, the traffic would go north to the other site and extra/new traffic would go to the development. Had the Highways Authority factored this into traffic modelling for the city?
- xxxii. How to avoid multi-modal traffic conflict on the site between vehicles, cycles, pedestrians, scooters etc?
- xxxiii. Could landscaping prevent overlooking from double decker buses servicing the site into the new development or existing neighbouring properties?
- xxxiv. Queried measures to mitigate parking/commuting issues from the new site such as how to stop commuters parking in residential area? How would enforcement action be taken?
- xxxv. Queried the impact of the scheme on demand for park and ride services and parking spaces so people could get buses?
- xxxvi. Could the Applicant request a railway station on site?
- xxxvii. Queried lighting on site at night to allow safe pedestrian throughput and deter crime? Appropriate lighting was needed.

Planning Balance

- xxxviii. Queried expected lab work on site, would it be low risk?
- xxxix. Was the site appropriate for housing to attract workers to stay in the city?
 - xl. Referred to section 30 of the Officer's report (page 130). Could the benefits of this scheme be delivered on another site? The scheme delivered a number of benefits but Councillors had concerns as highlighted in the Committee debate and the Officer recommendation to refuse.
 - xli. Queried biodiversity net gain figures?
 - xlii. Could the move of the retail park and skate park installation to Cambridge Retail Park be confirmed/secured through conditions?

Section 106 Planning Obligations

- xlili. How to ensure apprenticeships were embedded in the s106 Agreement?
- xliv. Could a swimming pool be accommodated on site through the s106 Agreement?

The Committee:

Unanimously resolved to endorse a minded to recommendation of **REFUSAL** of planning permission which is put forward to the Secretary of State following her exercising call-in powers under S77 of the Town & Country Planning Act (1990) for the following reason:

By virtue of the scale, massing, and positioning of the maximum building parameters, the proposed development fails to keep potential reductions in daylight and sunlight to a minimum in St Matthew's Gardens, Silverwood Close and other adjacent properties and gardens. The extent and degree of harm would be both wide ranging, significantly adverse and acutely felt by existing occupants. Many habitable rooms would feel poorly lit, colder, and gloomier, particularly where living rooms are concerned. Multiple gardens would also feel less pleasant and enjoyable, due to the significant increase in overshadowing that would be experienced. Moreover, the proposed development would be overly dominant and imposing on neighbouring properties, particularly in St Matthew's Gardens and Silverwood Close, resulting in an oppressively enclosed outlook. The overall harm to residential amenity would be significantly adverse and permanent, contrary to policies 55, 56, 57 and 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and paragraph 135 (f) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Delegated authority is granted to Officers to:

- i. progress all matters necessary in the pursuance of defending the Council's minded to recommendation set out in para 31.1 of the Officer's report at any Public Inquiry;
- ii. to negotiate and agree the terms of any S106 Agreement necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and to complete that Agreement;
- iii. negotiate and agree the final wording of the draft planning conditions; and

- iv. to amend / revise the terms of the minded to refusal and / or the Council's Statement of Case subject to any additional evidence put forward and / or expert advice received.

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

CHAIR