

APPLICATION - CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Consultee:	Landscape
Reference Number:	23/03204/OUT
Proposal:	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 is the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment)
Site Address:	Beehive Centre Coldhams Lane Cambridge
Case Officer:	Cuma Ahmet
Responding Officer:	Bana Elzein
Date:	28 Nov 2023

- ☐ No objection
- ☐ Further information and / or amendments are required (requires agreement from case officer)
- ☒ Object for the following reasons:
1. Policy 55 – Responding to Context
 2. Policy 56 – Creating Successful Places
 3. Policy 57 – Designing New Buildings
 4. Policy 59 – Designing Landscape and Public Realm
 5. Policy 60 – Tall Buildings and the Skyline
 6. Policy 71 – Trees
 7. Policy 80 – Sustainable Transport
- ☐ Outside remit of this consultee's specialism

Documents Reviewed

- Plans
- D&A Statement by Leonard Architects
- Design Code
- LVIA and AVRs by Bidwells and AVR London
- **Parameter Plans**

Background information /additional comments:

Open spaces

Landscape does not support the current layout of open spaces within the scheme. The three main spaces are the Garden Square (North and South), Vera's Garden and Abbey Grove.

Garden Square is the most central of the open spaces intended to be the main gathering and open space for the use of workers on the site as well as visitors. Proportionally, the size of this space, dominated by water/wetland planting, provides little useable space which is predominantly pushed to the edges against the buildings and crossed centrally by a vehicular/bus route as well as edged at the southern edge by another vehicular/bus route.

This constrained landscape further limits the ability of the space to provide substantial, large-growing tree species. Large trees are needed to mitigate the losses being incurred across the proposals from the existing condition and also to provide characteristic layering within views of trees within buildings. In addition, Cambridge's tree policies seek to improve canopy provision across the city and large growing species are a key part of achieving that aim.

The open space is further compromised by the scale of the buildings around it making it feel enclosed and overwhelmed in an urban way that is not familiar to Cambridge and not entirely suitable in this location.

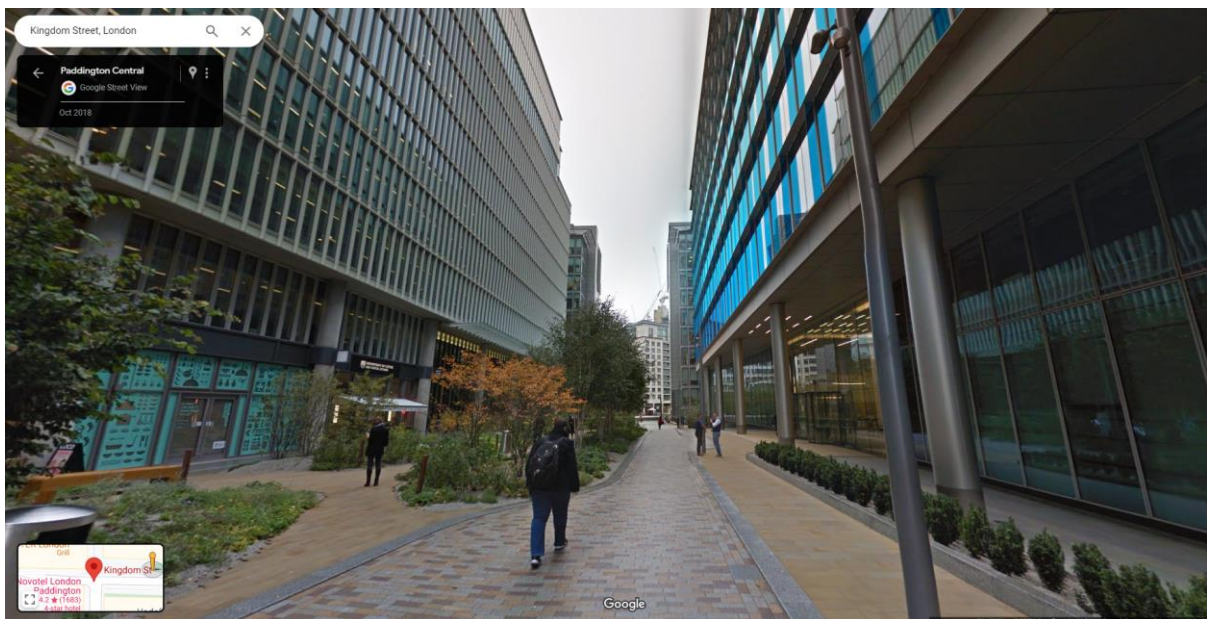
It is considered that the scale of this key open space must be increased, should avoid being crossed by vehicular routes and be more generous with dwell spaces.

Abbey Grove has been commented on throughout the preapp process as a less desirable space due to its location along the main access route and adjacent to Coldham's Lane. It feels like it is 'left-over' rather than designed as an intrinsic part of the development. It's lack of connection has resulted in proposing a skate park, which is not unsupported but the space as a useable, welcoming open space is not considered to be achieved. The entrance to the development, in this area, is poorly realised and not fully legible. The replacement tree planting should form a more integrated approach rather than gathering the majority of it in one space which doesn't relate well to the whole of the development

Vera's Garden is intended to be a buffer space between the York and Sleaford Street houses and gardens and the development. It is also necessary to negotiate the considerable change in level from Sleaford Street down to the level of the development. It is also intended to provide some community garden/allotment-like space for local residents. The space itself is very narrow and accommodates not only the narrow strip of green space but also a vehicular route, pedestrian footway, and a split two way cycle route on a variety of different levels. It is considered that the space is compromised by its narrowness as well as the number of uses being pushed through it makes it a confusing space to negotiate and with a poor identity of its own.

Together these spaces, form the majority of the intended useable open space and due to the reasons stated above it is considered that the spaces are not suitable both in design or size leading to an overly urban expression which is not particularly characteristic for Cambridge or for this particular area of Cambridge.

In addition to the three main spaces are some support spaces, one of which is references as the Creative Exchange. The purpose of this space is to provide some informal collision spaces for the R&D offer. Comparisons have been raised with Kingdom Street in London. The screen capture from Google Street view below shows this space which highlights not only the landscaped areas, but also the looming properties of the buildings to either side. Acknowledging the foreshortening properties of Street View it is felt that this is too narrow and urban a setting for the development and sets a poor precedent for Cambridge. The trees provided in Kingdom Street are small Amelanchiers and multi-stem birch. Both small trees, with the birch reaching around 10m or slightly more in good conditions. The scale of this space does not allow for any substantial tree planting and may suffer from overshadowing, which will affect the planting.



Overall, it is considered that the open spaces are not achieving what is needed to support the open space and recreational needs of the development or the surrounding residential areas. Larger, more useable spaces suitable for large growing trees and for replacement tree planting are needed and the leaky, left-over spaces near the frontage could be better utilised.

Supporting Landscape

Other aspects of the landscape and townscape proposals continue to be of concern. This is primarily related to the conflicts between movement, parking, streets and tree planting. Opportunities for street tree planting is often in conflict with on-street parking bays and loading bays to the point where the streets, other than at junctions, are quite bare of vegetation and have become very hard landscape and vehicularly dominated.

The rear aspect of the development along the railway line has been left to retain a very back of house appearance and does not provide opportunities for tree planting which can aid in softening and integrating the development into the surrounding landscape, particularly when viewed from up or down the railway line rather than when viewing straight on like from Coldham's Common. We strongly recommend the addition of trees to the rear to soften the views which will likely require the adjustment of building lines and the use of the space between buildings to achieve.

LVIA

Mitigation Measures

The LVIA identifies 4 primary mitigation measures:

- Articulated skyline
- Careful location of flue zones
- Reshaping of buildings to create more slender silhouette and create articulation of the elevated forms.
- Alter heights to favour a cluster of tall buildings to reduce impact on openness of views from Coldham's Common.

Whilst to some extent the measures are reasonable, it is not considered that the illustrative masterplan, nor some of the parameters, such as height and building plots accord with the recommendations. This is particularly relevant of skyline and elevation articulation along with the reshaping of buildings to favour a more slender series of forms.

Secondary mitigations are applied in the form of the Design Code (and DAS) being part of the approved documentation for the application. The Design Code would be placed to apply limitations and requirements for buildings, landscape, materials and so on. The DAS provides a strategic proposal for how the development could be achieved within the parameters set out in the outline. However, there are fundamental issues to which the Landscape team find must be systematically reconsidered and to which the DAS must also be amended if it is to form a part of the approved documentation. An acceptable option includes the alternative layouts recommended by the Urban Design Officer's comments.

Table 10.5 lists all the receptors both visual and townscape based and the levels of harm which the development causes them. The Table also reassesses the impact following the primary and secondary mitigations. It is considered that Landscape does not entirely agree with the following:

- Townscape - Introduction of the Proposed Development in the Cambridge Skyline – Due to the fundamental concern we have over massing and scale (discussed in more detail within the Views section below) it is considered that the finding of Moderate (Beneficial) is not agreed with. The Magnitude of change upon various views upon the skyline is not Medium but rather High resulting in Major significance and upon the application of Secondary

mitigation it is not considered that the result would be Beneficial, but rather Adverse while the Significance remains Major.

- Visual – The first two rows identify a final assessment of Beneficial which we do not concur with. Castle Hill and views from Coldham's Common will be irreversibly impacted in a Major-Moderate and Moderate way and it is hard to justify this as being Beneficial when compared to the visual openness and lack of impact from the existing development. We feel the impact assessment should be rated as Adverse

Viewpoints and AVRS

Viewpoint photomontages provide a visual way to assess the impact of a development on an area from both near and distant views. Comments below are related to selected views.

Policy 60/Distant Views

View 1 – Castle Hill – The proposals as experienced from Castle Hill illustrates an uncomfortable agglomeration of scale and mass of the buildings resulting in something of a cluster of mass to the right hand side of the site in the image and a larger singular mass to the left. What is critical in this view is the cluster of mass which breaks the horizon lines and creates a visual gravity which distracts from the more slender and elegant forms of height across Cambridge. It is considered that the proposals are inappropriate and changes which reduce the massing to appear as more separate entities is needed.

View 10 – Red Meadow Hill – Whilst distant, the AVR demonstrates how the accumulation of mass within the buildings agglomerate to create a large, singular mass which breaks the skyline in a clumsy way.

View 11, 13, 14 – Worts Causeway, Little Trees Hill, Limekiln Road – These AVRs demonstrate how the accumulation of mass results in a vastly overwhelming cluster of development which breaks the horizon line and which sits uncomfortably within it's context of much lower and finer grain development and how the development creates a gravity similar to that of the much larger Addenbrookes complex

Local Views

View 2 - Coldham's Common North – The view here illustrates how the impact of the largest Block F creates a harmful impact on the surrounding area. The looming feel of the mass detracts from the less harmful levels of mass and height at Block C.

View 3 – Coldham's Common South – The lack of articulation between the forms and within each block itself create a large accumulation of masses which do not feel distinct from each other and which loom over development in the foreground, some of which is already relatively large and tall. It is considered that adjustments to building envelopes and heights which can create a finer grain appearance to the mass is needed to create something which become more contextual.

View 4 – York/Sleaford Street – This view in landscape terms is less problematic but there is an indication of a very cluttered backdrop of three to four different buildings

which are out of proportion with the terraces and their gable ends. This creates a tension between the development and its context which can be improved through significant design interventions. Refer to Urban Design Officer alternative options for further information.

View 8 - This view illustrates how the massing alters the perspective of the developments arising along the railway. The overwhelming mass of the agglomerated blocks give it an appearance of a singular mass which causes harm to the townscape from this location.

Overall, the views illustrate how the development will be experienced in various key viewpoints, however, the conclusion of harm to landscape and townscape is particularly high and adverse due to the scale and mass of the development. This is not to say that development is not possible, nor that height is the essence of the issue but rather the impact that the large footprints have on views. The development must seek to articulate the buildings to appear of finer grain with a wider variety of rooflines and sky gaps allowing a greater complexity of experience from all viewpoints.

Design Code

1.2.1 – Primary street distribution. The creation of three Primary Street areas which are connected via secondary streets is poorly reconciled. It is considered that a single primary street is utilised with the secondary loops and other sections reducing in scope to Secondary and/or tertiary standing. This will aid in wayfinding, legibility and retain a singular high street character. Refer to Urban Design options and comments for further information regarding street distribution and hierarchy.

Page 17 – the image used at the bottom of the page to illustrate a ‘main cycle entrance’ is difficult to discern where the cycle movement is. It is shown as more of a dwell space full of cycle conflicts. A different image showing cycle movement would be a better choice.

1.5.2 – 100% Biodiversity Net Gain – National Policy only requires 10% while in Cambridge we are working towards a policy requiring 20% Net Gain. Are you sure this is correct?

In relation to both strategic and specific tree planting principles, reference is made to slow-growing and/or long-lived specimens. Please ensure that this also includes ‘large-growing’ species to ensure that the largest trees achievable for an area are considered and used throughout. The idea is to ensure meaningful canopy trees which can contribute to the long-term canopy coverage goals city wide.

2.1.1.7 Regards irrigation priority. Whilst the intention to ensure that Abbey Grove survives difficult summers, all trees should be considered and trees which compete for water such as trees planted in hard paving or in streets should also receive irrigation during drought conditions.

2.5.1.5 There is a concern that this statement may limit the potential stature of trees capable of growing in this area and encourage small-growing/medium-growing trees

or fastigate trees, neither of which we would immediately encourage when a large naturally crowned tree might suit.

2.6.1.3 Any tree strategy which encourages fruiting trees and shrubs must consider maintenance and management. Dropped fruit underfoot, fermenting fruits, pruning and disease care must all be considered when providing orchard and foraging garden areas.

Plot Specific Codes – all plot codes should encourage the use of green roofs.

3.4.1 Green walls are not encouraged in Cambridge as the climate is often too dry and hot to enable them to grow successfully or without the need for intensive plant intervention by way of hydroponics or constant irrigation. We tend only to support planting which is placed in the ground and encouraged to climb which can have limits to height. We recommend that any use of the term Green Wall through out the code is removed and the use of 'façade greening' or similar used instead.

3.13.13 Roofs MUST be green roofs. It is expected they will be flat roofed and to that end, must be green in order to comply with Policy 31.

Summary

There are a number of issues which have been discussed throughout the Pre-app period but which we feel have not yet been resolved. The proposed development represents an overdevelopment of the site and creates a form of development whose scale and mass is out of context with the local area. Whilst it is understood that there is a balance to be had between development and harmful impacts, it is considered that the balance is currently weighted too far towards major adverse harm and cannot be supported.

We encourage the applicant to consider the alternative approaches to development which have been presented by the Urban Design team in collaboration with Landscape, Heritage, Trees and Sustainability consultees.