

Andrew Martin

From: Cllr Katie Porrer (Cambridge City - Market) <katie.porrer@cambridge.gov.uk>
Sent: 25 June 2025 21:41
To: Toby Williams; Andrew Martin
Cc: Cllr Katie Thornburrow (Cambridge City - Petersfield); Cllr Martin Smart (Cambridge City - Kings Hedges); Cllr Dave Baigent - (Cambridge City - Romsey)
Subject: Text of speech made at Beehive Appeal (as requested by the Inspector)

Dear Toby and Andrew

As requested by the inspector, here is the electronic version of the text that I read out at the appeal on Tuesday on behalf of Chair/Vice Chair, Cabinet member and Opps spokes (me) of planning committee.

Thanks

Katie

Cllr Katie Porrer

I am speaking as a member of planning committee at Cambridge City Council, and as you asked for representations to be combined, what I am saying in this statement has the support of four other planning committee members who sat for this minded to decision. This includes Cllr Thornburrow, Cabinet member for Planning and Transport, Cllr Smart, Chair of planning committee, Cllr Baigent, Vice Chair of planning committee, and myself, Opposition spokes for planning and for Planning and Transport. However I am speaking personally and we make this statements as local councillors and not on behalf of the LPA or the City Council.

I wanted to reiterate our support for the officer's recommendation for refusal, and in particular to note that we had no objections to the principle of development or to the change of use and we accept this is acceptable and welcome in our city, where there is a clear demand for this. We also recognised the positive aspects of the scheme as detailed in the report.

We feel that we have a robust planning committee structure in the city, all members receive annual training, and we are not afraid to support new developments of this kind - which is clearly evident from various large scale mid-tech and lab based proposals already consented in and around the city and its fringes. We are also clear that the planning balance can lead to some harm which can be outweighed by benefits in many instances and are quite capable of taking difficult decisions when needed.

However, like the officers, our decision of minded to refuse was based on the major adverse impacts on properties around the site, which would be permanent, irrevocable and damaging to the quality of life for current and future residents, were the scheme to be built out to its maximum building heights and plot coverage.

We spent considerable time at committee working through these with the BRE expert, as I am sure you will already be aware if you have watched the recording. It is clear that a betterment bringing the development in line with BRE guidance was clearly possible. However, if consented, there was no way to improve the situation for the homes and residents affected, both current and future, as these would be permanently damaged and the harm would continue in perpetuity.

Clearly, the applicant accepted that the BRE guidelines were breached and we saw that that the applicant was keen to offer reassurance that the site would not be built out to its maximum heights and plots, but we had no planning basis on which we could ensure that this was the case when Reserved Matters came forward. As you are of course aware, our decisions are made on the proposals irrespective of the current owner, as sites often change hands, and if REM came forward later to include the maximum heights and massings on the plots, we could not see a way that this could be refuted in future.

So in summary, I wanted to make clear that this was not a decision made to prevent the principle of this development from coming forward but instead the only decision we could make to avoid permanent, unchangeable harm to a large number of occupiers nearby homes, both now and in the future. We already have many examples around the city where developers have taken careful account of BRE reports and amended their schemes to ensure that guidelines are not breached. I do still believe that this could be the case here too, were you to refuse it consent now and the applicant to return with a revised application which addresses these material breaches and avoids this permanent harm to so many nearby residents' homes.