

**Cambridge City Council
Design & Conservation Panel**

Notes of the meeting Wednesday 11th January 2017

Attendees

Panel:

Terry Gilbert	RTPI (Chair)
Mark Richards	RIBA
David Grech	Co-opted member (formerly Historic England)
Ian Steen	Co-opted member
Stacey Weiser	Cambridge Past, Present and Future (CPPF)
Jon Harris	Co-opted member

Officers:

Mairead O'Sullivan	City Council
Gail Broom	City Council
Sarah Dyer	City Council

Presenters:

Bob Allies	Allies & Morrison
Andy Thompson	Beacon Planning
Chris Arscott	LDA

Representatives of King's College attended to assist in the Q & A section of the meeting.

Apologies – Di Haigh, Tony Nix, Helen Thompson, Jo Morrison

1. 1 Cranmer Road (King's College), Cambridge (16/1932/FUL)

Declaration of interest

The Chair informed the meeting that as CPPF had submitted a formal response to the planning application for the Cranmer Road scheme he had determined that Ms Weiser should be able to attend the presentation to seek clarification on detailed aspects of the proposed scheme but would not participate in the Panel's vote. An abstention would be duly recorded.

Presentation

Bob Allies of Allies and Morrison outlined King's College's need for new student accommodation by intensifying the current use of the site on Grange Road (bordered on the north by Cranmer Road and the south by Leckhampton Lane) to create a 'graduate campus' that would be well connected to the College's main site and University departments and amenities in West Cambridge. The application site is in the West Cambridge Conservation Area. On the site, Grasshopper Lodge is categorized as a 'positive' unlisted building and Cranmer Lodge is neither locally listed nor considered 'positive'.

Details were presented of the proposed built form for two new buildings, a villa fronting on to Cranmer Road and a garden building, yielding 73 student bedrooms (including provision for DDA), kitchens and common rooms, and associated external works such as cycle parking, access and circulation arrangements and provision for waste storage and collection. In addition, Chris Arscott of LDA outlined and elaborated the objectives for the re-modelling of

the existing private open spaces to improve the landscaped setting of the campus, this will entail the removal of some Category B trees together with replacement planting.

The Panel's overall comments

The Panel's principal consideration was to determine whether the application site has the capacity to accept the proposed quantum of development proposed and design of the additional buildings without causing significant harm to the character and appearance of the West Cambridge Conservation Area. Overall, it was agreed that the site has the capacity to accept the proposed additional buildings whilst retaining substantial private landscaped spaces. The development of the graduate campus still allows glimpses of the site from Cranmer Road and Leckhampton Lane.

In general, the Panel were comfortable with the scale, height and massing of the Villa and the Garden Building. The approach taken in the designs of the two buildings was felt to be an appropriate response to the different characteristics of Cranmer Road and Leckhampton Lane. Moreover, the proposed palette of materials for both buildings was considered to be appropriate. The Panel, however, expressed the reservations on some aspects of the detailed design of both the Villa and the Garden Building. These are presented below.

The Panel's comments on the Villa

The Panel noted the key design changes that had been made in response to suggestions made through the planning process. The Panel supported the proposal to move the chimneys to the gables, along with the reduced eaves line and a more prominent central opening in the brickwork for the stairwell window, but was not convinced by other proposed changes:

- **the principal entrance court to be sited inside the existing gate of Cranmer Road** The Panel was disappointed to see that the proposed siting had been constrained. There was some discussion within the Panel about the role of this entrance, and whether it should be regarded as the principal entrance on to the site, or a secondary entrance only used by residents. Perhaps other options could be explored that require the creation of a new opening in the boundary wall on Cranmer Road that directly addressed the new Villa, though this would require careful consideration of the historical integrity and contribution to the streetscape of the current wall. Such a move, along with further adjustments to the Villa's Cranmer Road elevation, could provide a better relationship between the new Villa and its 19th century neighbours to the east. The Panel also considered there to be merit in removing the asymmetry to the ground floor of the street elevation. Such a re-appraisal should clarify public, as opposed to student resident, entrances and the siting of cycle parking.
- **the extent of the cycle storage to be sited between the proposed Villa and Cranmer House** The Panel noted that such siting will obscure views of the proposed Garden Building and the central landscaped area.
- **the treatment of the single storey element** The original proposals included a single storey element on the west side of the Villa contained under a lean-to roof. In the revised proposals presented to the Panel this element had been changed to having a flat roof, so as to better relate to the adjacent cycle stores. The end result is a rather awkward brick appendage to the side of the garden elevation of the Villa, and it would be preferable to either reinstate the lean-to roof so that it has a better relationship to the Villa, or change the external materials on this element (say timber cladding) so that it reads as part of the bike stores.

The Panel's comments on the Garden Building

The use of brick on the parapet has arguably taken the layering of the facade too far. A comment was made that the building had been 'sandwiched' or capped inelegantly. The Panel suggests that the materials and detailing for the parapet be re-visited. The Panel also suggested that the windows at the ends of the corridors could incorporate window seats.

Landscaping

The Panel was supportive of the three over-riding landscape themes and of the proposed general layout of the landscaped spaces. However, if students are to be directly involved in growing vegetables, then practical issues such as storage for garden tools, outerwear for use in the students' vegetable garden etc. need to be addressed. The detailed planting scheme for the whole site should specify flora that will encourage biodiversity.

Lighting

To fully appreciate the impact of the scheme on the surrounding area a lighting strategy should have been presented as an integral component of the development. It was noted that a combination of lights mounted on the buildings and ground level bollards would be used to create a subdued, but safe and well-lit campus. The internal and external lighting of the glazed common room, in the undercroft of the Garden Building, should enhance its presence and its setting.

Treatment of the site's southern boundary

To enhance the streetscape of Leckhampton Lane, and the external appreciation of the Garden Building, it is suggested that the perimeter fence should vary so as to provide both privacy to the student rooms and offer glimpses of the courtyard landscaping and the architectural layering of the structure.

The Panel wishes to be assured that the route from the Blue Badge parking to the DDA bedrooms in the Garden Building will provide attractive and safe access. No detail of the design of this access, between the southern end of Grasshopper Lodge and the screening of the proposed site for the campus bin storage area, was presented.

Sustainability

The Panel applauded the proposed adoption of the Passivhaus approach to the design, construction, specification of materials and mechanical and electrical systems in the two buildings. This will result in significantly less energy use. The achievement of Passivhaus certification could provide a benchmark for new student accommodation in the City. It is hoped that the client and the experienced multi-disciplinary development team have the constancy of purpose to successfully deliver the Villa and Garden Building to the Passivhaus standard.

Conclusion

The proposed scheme that has evolved through a thoughtful and generally sensitive incremental approach to meeting the client's brief for a site in an area consisting mainly of 19th century family houses, set within generous plots, is a good one. The Panel has high expectations that, subject to successful resolution of the detailed aspects referred to above, the proposed graduate campus for King's College is capable of delivering benefits that more than outweigh any perceived harm to the West Cambridge Conservation Area.

VERDICT – GREEN (5 votes) and 1 abstention.

2. Notes of the meeting - Wednesday 7th December 2016. Agreed.

3. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 8th February 2017

Reminder

CABE 'traffic light' definitions:

GREEN: a good scheme, or one that is acceptable subject to minor improvements

AMBER: in need of *significant* improvements to make it acceptable, but not a matter of starting from scratch

RED: the scheme is fundamentally flawed and a fresh start is needed.