

University of Cambridge

West Cambridge Community Group

Minutes of the Meeting

6 November 2019 in the Oak Room at Gravel Hill Farm, North Wet Cambridge site.

Attendees:

Harvey Bibby, Lansdowne Road resident (Chair)
Matthew Danish, Cambridge Cycling Campaign (part)
Dai Davies, North Newnham Residents' Association
Henry Day, Conduit Head Road
Jon Elphick, Clerk Maxwell Road Residents' Association
John Evans, Cambridge City Council
Humphrey Gleave, North Newnham Residents' Association
Morcom Lunt,
Eddie Powell, Clerk Maxwell Road Residents' Association
Hugh Purser, Clerk Maxwell Road Residents' Association
Karen Wiemer, Madingley Road Residents' Association

Heather Topel, University (West Cambridge)
Matt Allen, University (Estate Management)
Mark Parsons, University (Estate Management)
Biky Wan, University (West Cambridge)
Jim Strike AECOM
John Hopkins, Peter Brett Associates
Peter Swallow, Grimshaw

Apologies:

No apologies were received.

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed the group. Introductions were made.

The Minutes were noted as correct.

2. SITE UPDATE

Matt Allen gave an update on the current site developments including Cavendish III and the Shared Facilities Hub. The structure is appearing and there have been several concrete pours which have required extended working hours agreed with the planning authority. A tarmac road is within the perimeter of the site and roadsweepers are in place to minimise any construction impact on the road. Residents meetings are now in place in the evenings for the local community which people are invited to attend. Leaflets were circulated about Cavendish III. There are also infrastructure with UKPN taking place at West Cambridge.

Henry Day congratulated Bouygues on good neighbours.

Harvey Bibby asked what is Practical Completion for the project? Matt Allen said that the two aspects on the project had different completion dates. The Shared Facilities Hub would be completed in July 2021. Cavendish III would be completed in April 2022 and occupied in August 2022, with a transition period of 12-18 months.

Harvey Bibby asked if the Cavendish II will get decommissioned. Matt Allen and Mark Parsons said that the Cavendish II is being discussed internally at present.

Hugh Purser asked if that is a change from the plan? Heather Topel said that the plan for the demolition of Cavendish II in time, but until its future is determined it will remain.

3. WHITTLE LABORATORY

Mark Parsons introduced Peter Swallow from Grimshaw architects who are working on the Whittle Laboratory extension. Mark explained that the reason why this application was coming forward as a planning application separate to the Outline Planning Application was because funding had been secured which is time-sensitive so the University is planning the Whittle now. Mark stated that the University is under the floor space of the previous Outline and is working to parameter plans in the new Outline Planning Application and the design terms are in line with reserved matters. This application can mitigate its own impact. The application is at pre-application status with planning officers and there was a public consultation event last week. The Planning Application will be submitted at the end of November.

Peter Swallow gave a presentation of the Whittle Laboratory and the ambitions of the department and work to be carried out at the premises taking into account the rate of decarbonisation and looking to the future for technologies. The department are looking to compress the time it takes for research to be done and the routes to market. The department needs a new dedicated test facility to support rapid prototyping. Their existing building is from early 90s so the new facility will allow them to grow. Peter gave a presentation on the design proposals, context, layouts, spatial plans, amenities, materiality, a viewing area, servicing and access, landscape design.

Henry Day asked why the building is not squared up to JJ Thompson Avenue. Peter Swallow explained that there are two reasons why the building is off-set. Firstly, the floor space required and interaction with existing building was a key factor. The gross square area was not required from the brief which is why the building is not widened. Secondly, by pulling the building back it reveals the adjacent Gates building and Engineering buildings as well as drop off square to provide a nice eyeline across the frontage of JJ Thompson.

Morcom Lunt asked what are the options for future extensions. Peter Swallow said that there are possible areas near the green areas in the landscape areas at the rear or to demolish the older facility for a replacement.

Jon Elphick asked if the image represents a good gateway for the West Cambridge site. The statement was echoed by Karen Wiemer who added it was a missed opportunity. Peter Swallow said that the functional requirements are important, particular for noise and plant for cooling and this drives the massing requirements of the space. He explained that the team looked at the other areas and use; they considered the factors such as locating office space on Madingley Road however it wasn't viable for windows to be on Madingley Road and to address the needs of the engineering and daylight requirements. The team reconciled that the best way is to put the turbine on that aspect. Mark Parsons added that form follows function in this building and this is part of the history of the Whittle – it is a science building within a science campus. This approach is peer reviewed by planners and the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel and they felt that this response was acceptable. The turbine hall and interests of the window gives a balance from the view of Madingley Road.

John Elphick asked why are you making this plan while Masterplan is being approved, for example, the access for the multi-story car park will be an Outline issue. Does it stop access from being put in? Mark Parsons said that the designs would not stop car access to Clerk Maxwell Road. There have been further reductions in the number of car parking spaces in the multi-storey car park proposed where the current Park & Cycle is located. Heather Topel said that access could go in between two roads, but masterplanning could be difficult. This plan for the Whittle Laboratory is an extension, which constrains our options rather than demolishing the building and starting again.

John Elphick asked if the western service road south of the Whittle would be used. Heather Topel said that technically this could access the car park. In urban design and placemaking terms, sending traffic through the site would be less desirable. John Evans says approval of the Whittle would not prejudice the issue.

Jon Elphick raised concerns about the number stated of HGVs using Clerk Maxwell Road in this application which is the same as Civil Engineering documents. Mark Parsons said that that is coincidental and the number is derived from asking the users of the departments explaining that they are similar in terms of academic and research users. If there is an impact then planning conditions will be added.

Jon Elphick asked do you expect contractors to use Clerk Maxwell Road. Mark Parsons said that it's likely that contractors would use JJ Thompson and this commitment would be part of the CEMP as part of the Planning Application.

Karen Weimer said that the existing Whittle building has the turbine which is good – what features can be added to make it eye-catching? Peter Swallow said the department would like to use something from industry partners.

Mark Parsons said that cycle lanes on Clerk Maxwell Road would be included as part of mitigation – this has been offered to the County Council as a priority to improve the parking. Any changes would be delivered by the County, funded by mitigation from this development.

Harvey Bibby stated that the density on the corner feels very industrial on a prominent point; Cavendish III works well; but this doesn't look as good and it goes against the green-ness of the Madingley Road frontage. All of the positive elements are for within the building. Humphrey asked how high and set back is the corner: Peter Swallow stated that there was a 25m set back and the height is 13m.

Harvey Bibby asked what the timescales are for consultation. Mark Parsons said that we would continue to look at further items and we can review feedback.

4. OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE

Jim Strike gave a presentation on updates to the Outline Planning Application and the issues which the team have been dealing with. Issues will be dealt with in a re-submission to the Planning Authority in mid-December with the hope for the Committee to determine the Application in February / March 2020 for Planning determination. The issues included transport, building heights, Clerk Maxwell Road, cycling, air quality, ecology and Planning Policy.

Karen Wiemer asked if parking on Clerk Maxwell Road would go completely? Heather Topel said yes and the University would hope to make that commitment through the Whittle application, not just the Outline so it will be expedited to the County. Heather said that we are promoting off-carriageway cycling and key routes i.e. Coton Path and the central green space through West Cambridge, as well as along High Cross and JJ Thompson.

Heather Topel said that the Greater Cambridge Partnership proposals will run through the site but we have had little discussion as to what happens outside the site. We expect the GCP in the New Year to say it will come along a new bridge over the M11, which is a prioritized bus route on the carriageway and exit the site south off the site in between buildings [beside the south residences]. We have been feeding into the discussion. GCP were expected to consult on the cycleway on Madingley Road and this has been postponed to the New Year, but the County is seeking a financial contribution from the University towards that.

Morcom Lunt raised a point about conflict between buses and cyclists/pedestrians at footways, particularly at Clerk Maxwell Road. Heather Topel said that we appreciate cycle and bus conflicts and reiterated that there will be GCP consultation on this.

Matthew Danish informed the group that he attended the GCP workshop for the busway. He was concerned about the early designs of the Southern ecological corridor in particular the blind corner and no visibility at the junction. He stated that at the GCP workshop they proposed a busway to cut across it; last night they changed the design to have bus stop and pulled it away from the corner. Can you ensure that stop is taken into account? Heather Topel said we would put the University's views forward but it is a GCP scheme and we cannot control the detail of what they consult on.

Matthew Danish recognized the point about cycling routes from east-west and southern ecological corner being as being the principle cycle routes; however nothing was mentioned about Charles Babbage Road which is important as it poses a danger for cyclists. Heather Topel said we expect the bus to run on the existing

carriageway and the pedestrian and cycleway will be off carriageway. John Hopkins said that Charles Babbage Road is a secondary routes for cyclists as opposed to being the primary route. Our strategy seeks to keep modes of transport separate whilst providing quality access and balance. We are looking at the betterment for Charles Babbage Road.

Jon Elphick queried the building heights. The dip of the land towards Clerk Maxwell Road is 4 m, and the buildings are higher than the plan. We are looking for a commitment for the buildings on the eastern site will be compatible with the one beside it. Have you committed to reducing the height to those next to properties on Clerk Maxwell Road to reduce the visual impact? [Post-meeting note: We have reviewed the visual impacts and the heights have already been reduced in this area in previous amendments.]

Harvey Bibby asked if the site was undertaking pollution monitoring as there is a smell of generators from construction impact? Matt Allen said he would investigate.

Harvey Bibby was interested to know about what the impact of the Climate emergency is on the Outline Planning Application.

Harvey Bibby said that he hoped the GCP would take on board the green improvement as they implement the cycle and bus provision. Heather Topel said that the landscape buffer is retained in the Outline Planning Application.

Harvey Bibby asked if the reduction on car parking at the north east corner would transfer to other locations like near Lansdowne Road, and asked if they could instead put it towards the M11 part of the site. Heather Topel explained that the Outline Planning Application includes the worse case number for planning. If the University reviews this and car parking is not needed then we won't want to build car parking. The multi-story car park levels were at 640 cars; in 2017 it was reduced to 540; now it is proposed to 450 cars. Only 60 more spaces than in the Park & Cycle and CMR, which is a very modest increase.

Harvey Bibby expressed concerns about the quality of design if the Whittle is the gateway to West Cambridge, and it was previously suggested that the car park could be an iconic building.

Hugh Purser added two points of gratitude to the University: firstly on the lighting issue on the corner off the Coton path which is now lit. Secondly, he added that the planting beyond the Sports Centre towards the Data Centre is impressive.

5. NEXT MEETING

John Evans suggested that the Group reconvene to discuss again the issues raised. It was agreed that dates could be circulated for a December meeting.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.