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CAMCYCLE



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Camcycle

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Mill Road Depot plans: consultation response

We write to comment on the above proposals, following the recent consultation event and the opportunity to discuss the development in more detail with you in person.

By way of introduction, Camcycle, the Cambridge Cycling Campaign, is a local voluntary organisation with over 1,200 members. We work closely with local government and others to improve conditions for cyclists in Cambridge and the surrounding area. Government statistics show that in Cambridge more than 25% of local people cycle to work and that this is much the highest figure for the UK. Much of our work involves scrutiny of transport schemes and planning applications.

Summary

We comment below on four main aspects of the development which are of concern to us. We are keen to work with you to see these areas improved.

In summary our views are that:

- We believe the development should be a low-car development. The proposals provide a level of car parking which is inappropriately high for the already congested Mill Road area. The proposal currently has a ratio of 0.87 cars per dwelling. This is far higher than the surrounding area of Petersfield which we estimate to be 0.5. We will object in all future stages of work on this development to any proposal which goes above this base level.
- We suggest that there should be no at-grade car parking (except for car club, disabled, short-stay/loading spaces). This would mean 115 spaces in total, a level of 0.5, as explained below. This would mean more living space or decreased housing cost, either of which would be welcomed by buyers.

- We welcome the siting and proposed width (6m) for the Chisholm Trail.
- We welcome the overall street pattern and welcome the principle of permeability for walking and cycling but not through- motor traffic.
- We would like assurances on the way cycle parking is to be provided for the housing units but are broadly content with the proposed direction outlined to us in discussions.

For the avoidance of doubt, we have no view on the principle of development on this site. Our involvement is aimed at ensuring that whatever proposals come forward will encourage as high levels of cycling as possible, and as little motor traffic as possible, in order to help achieve a sustainable site.

Parking

Our aspiration for this site is for a low-car development. We think this is one of the sites in the whole of Cambridge with the highest level of sustainable transport accessibility, with good access to walking and cycling (especially with the introduction of the Chisholm Trail), bus routes, and the railway network.

At a time of significant investment being made under the Greater Cambridge Partnership (City Deal) process to attempt to reduce traffic, it would be totally inappropriate in public policy terms for any development to be introducing significant new residential car traffic in the Mill Road area. The development threatens to increase car dependency by introducing car storage which residents will continually be reminded to use once a car is purchased. We think it better not to encourage this from the start.

The SPD requires “low car parking provision”. Currently, a level of 0.87 of cars per dwelling is proposed (after excluding 10 spaces for visitors). This cannot be described as “low”. The Local Plan permits a level of 1, and the surrounding area of Petersfield we estimate to be 0.5 (as parking is often on side of the road and the space needed for a car is slightly longer than the width of a house).

We will be making a strong case at all stages of consideration of this development that the level of parking relates strongly to public policy objectives and should not simply be a consideration of commercial potential on the part of the developer.

As a general principle, we would object to any proposal which has a higher level of car storage above the surrounding area.

We find it totally untenable that a low-car development in such a central and accessible location would not see very high demand, given the Cambridge house price market. We note your admission that car parking provision does increase in house price cost, since providing a basement or extra floors to provide such car parking comes with a non-trivial construction cost.

Surely, would people prefer additional living space to car parking? We note a new build development in nearby Abbey Street which has seen garages converted quickly to larger front rooms: <https://goo.gl/maps/DxsGg6aFq722> .

If the current level of parking is still wanted, we would want to see some proper market research to prove this is needed is really acceptable. We note that that the CB1 Pink Phase Great Northern Road development has a 0.35 ratio of car parking. Residents are required to pay £20-25,000 for parking space plus a monthly service charge. The development, which is similar to your own proposals, has been perfectly saleable.

We will object to any proposal that sees a higher level of parking than surrounding area (0.5) of Petersfield, as absolute maximum - ideally it should be lower.

However, in our view the most sensible compromise position is to have parking only in the basement, and no service car parking on street. This would be achieved by removing all (non- visitor, car club, disabled) at-grade parking. House owners needing car parking would this simply be required to use the basement, as works fine for many other developments. Then, reduce this level of 135 to 115 to reallocate 20 of the current spaces to cycle parking to ensure that there is actually sufficient space for cycle parking. In practice, we think cycle parking will in practice be used more than car parking. This total of 115 spaces would mean a maximum level of 0.5 for the whole site, matching the surrounding area.

In addition to this 115, we agree that there should be 10 short-stay/loading spaces, and a specific allocation for car club and disabled spaces to the level required by the City Council planning department. Visitor parking would need to be within the basement, by arrangement with a resident, as there would be no way to monitor and enforce free parking above ground.

Car club spaces we suggest should be subsidised by developer to make as viable as possible.

You made a suggestion that spare car parking capacity could be used to replace on-street parking on Ainsworth Street. Whilst we feel that Ainsworth Street parking is higher than would be ideal from public space usage perspective, we feel there would have to be extremely clear reassurance of their actual removal, i.e. not an expansion and not ending up with both, as happened on St Matthew's Gardens.

Chisholm Trail

The Chisholm Trail will enhance the attractiveness of the development, providing its future residents with access to an attractive greenway and giving easily-accessible links to key areas of employment.

We welcome the proposed siting, alongside the edge of the development, next to the railway. This is in our view the optimal location.

The proposed width of 6m (3m cycle, 2m pedestrian, 1m buffer total) is welcomed.

It will be important to ensure the Chisholm Trail is fully permeable to the development. Entrance points between every building should be aimed for. Good visibility splays will be needed at every entry point. That means doors should never open up directly onto the cycleway, and there should be unobstructed sight-lines from both sides of people entering the cycleway¹.

The corner with Hooper Street will need to be carefully designed to ensure plenty of visibility. The junction with Ainsworth Street needs parking moved back from junction.

We will be keen to ensure that the Chisholm Trail route will be open from the very start, and will ask that this be a trigger point in any approval. This will of course depend on agreement to use the spare arch. Hensa fencing to segregate it from the work site would be acceptable, and we realise that occasional incursions or narrowing may be necessary during construction of the adjacent buildings.

We recommend that the cycle side needs to be next to railway side, so that pedestrians don't have to cross the bike track.

The buffer space should be used to protect people from colliding with walls, poles or other vertical obstructions. Any kerbs within pedal-strike distance of the cycleway should be

chamfered to create "forgiving kerbs". Any vertical obstructions under 60cm tall need to be separated from the cycleway by at least 25cm. Any vertical obstructions, poles or walls taller than 60cm need to be separated from the cycleway by 50cmⁱⁱ.

Cycle parking

We recommend a level of more than one per bedroom: 2 for first bedroom, 1 per additional bedroom. We know from other developments in Cambridge that cycle parking will be in high demand. We expect almost every resident on the development is likely to want to have a bike.

Our general policy on siting of cycle parking is that it should be as convenient as possible so that it becomes the natural choice for most journeys. This would normally mean siting near the entrance. We reluctantly accept that some basement cycle parking is going to be needed, as otherwise the level of space required on-street would probably lead to too high a loss of open space amenity.

In terms of design of cycle parking in the basement area, we welcome the assurance given to us that there would be a cycle ramp not shared with vehicles down to it. This will ensure that the parking can be ridden to, making it much more convenient than steps (to which we would object). However, a ramp will be needed at each end – it is likely that residents on the Ainsworth Street side entering from that end would leave their bikes on-street rather than go all the way through the development then double back.

Double-stacking or other high-density racks would be completely unacceptable in a development such as this. Given the large land area proposed for car parking, use of such racks, which are not accessible to a significant number of people and can be awkward to use, means that car parking would be being provided at the expense of cycle parking. We strongly encourage the use of standard Sheffield stands or 'A frame' racks, or the new type of rack outside Cambridge Guildhall which adds a wheel stabiliser to the standard Sheffield rack design.

At our meeting with you, you also sought our views on the use of security cages. In general we agree that these are sensible to cater for those with child/shopping trailers (both of which are likely to be found in Cambridge) or high-value cycles. However, this type of provision reduces convenience for others. Our experience in other developments is that a balance is desirable – the majority of people prefer convenience over very high security. So we recommend that 25% of overall provision is high security in cages suitable for off-gauge bikes (trailers, oversize bikes) / high value cycles, and the remainder is standard security using Sheffield stand type designs.

Street layout

We welcome the general street layout concept, which in our view is in line with Manual for Streets principles.

We strongly welcome the lack of motor permeability on north side, and that cycle permeability will be provided here. We would like a clear assurance on the proposed arrangement here, such as whether this will be achieved using bollards.

The one-way 'plug' section near Mill Road must be two-way for cycles, as you noted in our meeting was indeed proposed.

We are strongly in favour of adoption of the street. It will be important to make sure adoption happens quickly. Areas like St Matthew's Gardens have experienced significant problems

when there is a gap between private enforcement and the official Decriminalised Parking Enforcement regime.

You noted the challenge of ensuring the design avoids fly-parking of motor vehicles. We agree it must be clear where parking is permitted, to avoid the visual and social amenity of the development being compromised by vehicles strewn wherever space can be found.

We would support the garages being moved into basement, to free land space. We estimate that this is equivalent to 10 terrace houses with good gardens, and we feel that is a far more sensible use of valuable land in Cambridge.

We hope the above comments are useful. We hope you are able to address as many of these as possible, particularly the issue of car parking over-provision, as we would like (as always) to be in a position to be actively supportive of the development by the time of the planning application. We are happy to meet in future if this would at any time be helpful.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Martin Lucas-Smith
Liaison Officer

ⁱ Chapter 2.2.6 of Highways England Interim Advice Note 195/16

ⁱⁱ Chapter 2.2.11 of Highways England Interim Advice Note 195/16