



**PROOF OF EVIDENCE of JAMES LITTLEWOOD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
CAMBRIDGE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE**

Summary

**APPEAL BY BROOKGATE LAND LTD
ADDRESS: LAND NORTH OF CAMBRIDGE NORTH STATION, MILTON AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**LPA REFERENCE: 22/02771/OUT
APPEAL REFERENCE: APP/W0530/W/23/3315611**

- 1.1. Development of this site will create a new edge to the city. It is vital that it is designed and developed to the highest standard so that it makes a positive contribution to the special characteristics and setting of Cambridge. These are identified in the Local Plan as:-
 - Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;
 - A soft green edge to the city;
 - A distinctive urban edge.
- 1.2. Overall, the character of the land to the east of the appeal site is open and rural on the chalklands and intimate and pastoral in the river valley.
- 1.3. There is a strong relationship between the countryside and the appeal site because the city edge is visible from the Cam Valley and higher chalklands. Hence it is important for the development of this site to respect the edge of city location in terms of scale, mass and form.
- 1.4. Until recently that edge was 'soft' because of the lack of development but we can now see the impact of the recently constructed Novotel and One Cambridge Square on this edge. These developments give us an insight into the impact the proposal will have on the character of the river corridor and higher chalklands to the east. (Appendix A)
- 1.5. The proposed buildings S6 and S7 are 22.1m high and exceed emerging Area Action Plan policy.
- 1.6. When viewed at distance buildings S6, S7 and the Mobility Hub will create the appearance a wall of development 200m long.
- 1.7. The appellant's Visual Assessment and Technical Visualisations demonstrate the impact that the mass and bulk of the buildings would have on the character of the landscape to the east.
 - The Visual Assessment (Appendix 12.3) demonstrates that there will be a significant visual impact when viewed from the river towpath. The impact from the river tow path in viewpoint 8 is identified as 'major adverse'.
 - The technical visualisations (Appendix 12.4) demonstrate how visible the eastern elevations are even after 15 years of landscape growth. They also demonstrate that the higher blocks behind are visible and increase the perception of a wall of development.
- 1.8. The appellants have attempted to reduce the bulk of buildings S6 and S7 by breaking each block into 4 fingers which are articulated up and back introducing terracing. However, there is only a difference of 1.2m in height meaning the modulations will be hard to read from a distance and the overarching impression is that of a solid wall of development, with little variation in height, creating a hard boundary to the city.
- 1.9. The limited variation in height is uncharacteristic of Cambridge's distinctive skyline that combines towers, turrets, chimneys and spires with large tree. The overall character of the city's skyline is one of relatively few taller buildings that emerge as 'incidents' above the prevailing lower buildings and trees. This development is one of large blocks, all at similar heights with no noticeable variation. Currently the Novotel is a single high block, overshadowing the existing lower buildings off Fen Road but the proposed development would result in the appearance of a wall of development at a similar height.

- 1.10. We are concerned that the high density of the development leaves insufficient room for the tree planting to fully mature. The distance between the blocks S6 and S7 and the railway track is insufficient for the full spread of the proposed London Plane trees. The eventual tree canopy would cover the entire width. Pollarding of the trees would likely become necessary and reduce their benefit as a tree screen softening the development edge.
- 1.11. We object that the application does not intend to retain the Wild Park in perpetuity. It is assumed that the park forms part of the biodiversity net gain and the Environment Act states that habitats should be secured for a minimum of 30 years but the intention of the Act is for it to be in perpetuity.
- 1.12. We are concerned that the overall design does not allow connectivity between green spaces to benefit wildlife. In particular Blocks S13-S16 form a barrier between the open space and the allotments and Bramblefields Nature Reserve to the west; and the relatively narrow entrances into Chesterton Garden are not conducive to wildlife connectivity across the development. The appellant's attempt to overcome this with bat and bird 'hop over' routes to the Wild Park, openings in fences, tree planting, green roofs and invertebrate friendly planting does not mitigate for the lack of ecological connectivity in the design.
- 1.13. The Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Area and the Fen Ditton Conservation Area are characterised by commons and open fields. A backcloth of trees surrounds the commons, softening and, at times, hiding the built-up area beyond. The Conservation Area Appraisals (CAA) identify the overwhelming character as one of a rural and open nature which is not dominated or overshadowed by adjoining buildings in the city. It highlights the importance of the relationship between the river, open spaces and views across the meadows and fenland. The attractiveness of Stourbridge Common and Ditton Meadows means they are important open spaces for Cambridge, benefitting the health and wellbeing of people across the city. The CAA notes that it is important to preserve and enhance the setting of the commons (section 7).
- 1.14. Development of the appeal site will have a significant impact on these conservation areas. The height and mass of the buildings will dominate the views westwards and lead to a significant degree of change to the character. These are already being impacted by the Novotel and One Cambridge Square which give an indication as to the impact of the block S6 and S7 with the higher development behind. The feeling of the countryside, with its open views and attractive villages, extending into the city will be replaced by the feeling of being in a constrained green space in a large city; with a wall of development looming behind the meadows and commons. We consider this to be a moderate level of harm.
- 1.15. This harm will not be outweighed by the benefits of the development. We consider that these benefits do not compensate for the permanent loss of the rural and open nature of the conservation areas nor the hundreds of thousands of people who enjoy the meadows and commons who will no longer experience the open vistas.