



Historic England

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Dear Greater Cambridge Planning Policy Team

Draft Cambridge Biomedical Campus Supplementary Planning Document 2024

Thank you for providing Historic England with an opportunity to comment on the Draft Cambridge Biomedical Campus Supplementary Planning Document 2024.

As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process.

There are two designated heritage assets close to the campus. These are the grade II listed Nine Wells Monument (NHLE 1127825), celebrating the important role of Hobsons Conduit in bringing fresh water into the City. The springs at Nine Wells have supplied Hobson's Conduit in Cambridge since 1610, and the inscriptions include in the dedication the name of Thomas Hobson the carrier who 'paid' for the 17th century fountain house which once stood in the marketplace and formed part of this enterprise. Inscriptions also refer to other local people including Stephen Perse and Andrew Perne.

The spring at Nine Wells also forms one of two main water sources that feed into Hobsons conduit via Hobsons Brook. This is an important source of water for the conduit and is a managed water course. As such this should also be considered as a non-designated heritage asset.

This area is also close to the scheduled monument (NHLE 1006891) which is an archaeological site revealed by aerial photography west of White Hill Farm to the west of the railway line.

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There are a number of other heritage assets on the higher ground to the south of the City (Wandlebury, Little Trees Hill etc). Views from these assets across the City are identified in the Local Plan. CBC features prominently in these views.

Historic England welcomes the preparation of an SPD for the Cambridge Biomedical Campus. This is a significant growth area on the edge of the City and a co-ordinated approach is needed to the development of the site.

We broadly welcome the development principles in Chapter 4.

However, we make a number of suggestions below to strengthen those principles and provide greater reference to the historic environment.

4a Open spaces and Landscape

4a.1 Multi-purpose role of open spaces

Historic England would highlight that open spaces and Green Infrastructure (GI) should not only be considered in terms of the natural environment, health and recreation but also the role it can play in conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It can be used to:

- conserve and enhance heritage assets
- improve setting of heritage assets
- improve access to heritage assets
- create a sense of place and tangible link with local history
- create linkages between heritage assets and other green infrastructure

Conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is an important facet of sustainable development. There is an important synergy between the historic and natural environment. Countryside, landscape parks and the open spaces in our cities, towns and villages often have heritage interest, and it would be helpful to highlight this. It is important not to consider 'multi-functional' spaces only in terms of the natural environment, health and recreation.

It may be helpful to make reference in the text to the role that open spaces and GI can have to play in enhancing and conserving the historic environment. It can be used to improve the condition and setting of heritage assets and to improve access to them. Likewise, the historic environment can help contribute to the quality, character and distinctiveness of green spaces by helping to create a sense of place and a tangible link with local history.

Opportunities can be taken to link new GI networks into already existing green spaces to improve the setting of heritage assets. Maintenance of GI networks and

spaces should also be considered so that they continue to serve as high quality places which remain beneficial in the long term.

We therefore recommend that this section should mention the overlap between the natural and historic environment.

A particular example next to the CBC would be the area of Nine wells – a local nature reserve that also includes the GII listed Nine Wells Monument (NHLE 112782) and also close to the scheduled monument (NHLE 1006891) which is an archaeological site revealed by aerial photography west of White Hill Farm.

Improvements to the landscape in this area would bring benefits both for nature but also for the setting of the heritage assets. Linkages could also be made through to the existing country park.

We recommend that the SPD makes clearer recommendations for enhancement measures in this area immediately to the south of the campus to enhance open space, landscape and the historic environment.

4a.3 Landscape and key views

Edge of City location, gateway, softening of edge

CBC is an important edge of City location and a gateway into the city for visitors by train. The current approach appears as something of a wall of development, with large bulky buildings rising out of the rural hinterland. There is a need to soften the edge of the city in this area.

We recommend that this section of the SPD should include more specific requirements for landscaping and softening along the southern edge of the Campus and the wider landscape.

Longer Range Views

There are also significant impacts of CBC on longer range views into the City such as from Little Trees Hill and Wandlebury.

We recommend that this section of the SPD should provide clearer recommendations for the mitigation of these impacts.

4b The Public Realm

4b.1 Health and wellbeing

Our website highlights some of the research and evidence around this topic, and considers the relationship between heritage and [physical health](#), [mental health](#) and [wellbeing](#).

For example, our website highlights that the design and layout of historic towns and cities can support people to keep physically active. Natural England, in their Green Infrastructure framework (2023) emphasise the important role of heritage to high quality green space which should respond to and enhance the character and history of an area to create beautiful, well designed and distinctive places. Evidence also demonstrates that heritage contributes to life satisfaction.

Therefore, we recommend that some text is added to the SPD to highlight the potential for positive impacts of heritage in relation to health and wellbeing.

4b.2 User experience and community Public Realm Schemes

For public realm improvements we would refer you to the [Streets for All](#) publications. These documents provide updated practical advice for anyone involved in planning and implementing highways and other public realm works in sensitive historic locations. It sets out means to improve public spaces without harming their valued character, including specific recommendations for works to surfaces, street furniture, new equipment, traffic management infrastructure and environmental improvements.

We would also refer you to our regionally specific advice in [Streets for All East of England](#). The advice draws on the experience of Historic England's planning teams in the development of highways and public realm schemes. Case studies show where highways works and other public realm schemes have successfully integrated with and enhanced areas of historic or architectural sensitivity.

We recommend that some text should be added to the SPD to capture the advice within Streets for All.

4b.3 Culture, services and facilities

Historic England supports the promotion cultural facilities.

4c The Built Form

4c.2 Scale, character and materiality

Scale, Height, Mass and design

Historic England continue to express some concerns in relation to the scale, height and mass of some of the existing buildings on the edge of the campus and the impacts on the wider landscape and townscape.

A contextual approach to development should be taken with careful consideration of materials and finishes.

We recommend that paragraph 4c.2.1 of the SPD should be strengthened to make reference to the sensitive city edge, the need for a contextual approach and also set out what considerations will be needed for proposals in terms of visualisations and parameters for development in terms of scale, mass and height.

We recommend that additional pointers should also be given to appropriate materials and finishes across the campus in the SPD.

4c.3 Townscape and the historic environment

We welcome the inclusion of this section but it is currently very short. This letter has set out various wider implications for the historic environment which we recommend could be referenced in this section.

In particular, we highlight the opportunities for mitigation and enhancement around Nine Wells grade II listed monument and also the wider setting of the scheduled monument to the south of the campus, as well as the wider views of the townscape from the elevated land to the south of the City.

4d Connectivity and Movement

4d.2 Wider integration of the Campus

There is a lot of activity in the area around the Addenbrookes Road bridge with different transport proposals being put forward. The cumulative impact of these proposals has the potential to impact directly upon the scheduled monument and upon the setting of the listed Nine Wells monument.

We recommend that the SPD should recognise and seek to address the potential pinch point for EWR, CSET, DNA cycle path as well as the potential cumulative impacts of all these proposals on the scheduled monument in the area around the Addenbrookes Road bridge in the wider planning for the CBC.

4e Sustainability

4e.1 Climate resilience

Historic England firmly supports urgent climate action. The historic environment can and must adapt to enable people and places to lower their emissions to support Net Zero targets, and to provide safe, viable and climate resilience places for current and future generations.

Historic England broadly welcomes the measures set out in the Strategy. Care will be needed to ensure there are no negative impacts on the historic environment.

We welcome the reference to prioritise a retrofit first approach. The greenest buildings already exist. The repair, maintenance, continued use and reuse of

buildings is one of the easiest ways to avoid the unnecessary release of additional carbon and the generation of waste associated with demolition and new build.

We particularly refer you to our recent advice note [Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency](#) and recommend including this link within this section.

Involvement of Council Conservation and Archaeological Staff

We advise that the conservation and archaeological staff of the Council are involved in the preparation of the SPD and its assessment. They are best placed to advise on local historic environment issues and priorities, as well as identifying opportunities for securing wider benefits for the future conservation and management of heritage assets within the borough.

Finally, we should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information provided by the Council in its consultation. To avoid any doubt, this does not affect our obligation to provide further advice and, potentially, object to specific proposals, which may subsequently arise where we consider that these would have an adverse effect upon the historic environment.

If there any issues you wish to clarify or discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Mack
Historic Environment Planning Adviser

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