

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

Ref: AD/23-395

Number: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Date: 7th March 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning - Call for Sites Update

Site: Car Park, NIAB Headquarters, 93 Lawrence Weaver Road, Cambridge, CB3 0LG

HELAA REF: None, Proposed New Allocation

This letter has been prepared by Ceres Property on behalf of NIAB Trust (NIAB) in relation to the above site to support the submission of this new site.

We acknowledge that comments regarding wider planning or Local Plan matters are discouraged as part of this consultation and accordingly have kept this response brief and limited it to site specific matters.

The Site

The site is an underutilised surface car park associated with the NIAB and University of Cambridge Crop Science Laboratories and Headquarters on the northern side of Lawrence Weaver Road in North Cambridge. The site is located at the entrance to Darwin Green, a predominantly residential growth location with extensive new associated community facilities. A highly sustainable and accessible part of the city.

In 2017 Cambridge City Council granted NIAB planning permission for the following development:

Demolition of two existing dwellings, seed handling building, glass houses and associated structures, refurbishment of existing office building (DEFRA 1,080 sqm) and laboratory building (Bingham & Old Granary 2,186 sqm) and erection of new 3 storey laboratory building and energy centre (2,554 sqm), reception building (539sqm) new orbital cycleway link, access road, car parking and associated landscaping.

The frontage Car Park formed part of this redevelopment which was subsequently implemented and completed in 2020. However, since occupation the use of this area of car parking has been very limited. There are also areas of further surface car parking located to the west and north of the existing buildings along with an extensive underground car park.



Figure 1: Existing Under Used Car Park

NIAB have therefore undertaken some initial feasibility work in respect of the development potential of this currently underutilised previously developed site and concluded that it would be suitable for the accommodation of a 3 storey flatted residential development. As the Darwin Green development has progressed the Car Park Site has left a wide gap in the otherwise enclosed street scene. It is considered that a suitably designed infill development would actually improve the character of the area.

It would also deliver a small but essential residential development potentially comprising one and two bedroom units, and might be suitable as a builder for rent scheme, and or to deliver more affordable key worker accommodation.

NIAB have instructed local Architects to prepare some initial feasibility options, and copies of two initial options have been included as part of this submission. However, at present a final preferred option has not been completed and further work is due to be undertaken.

The initial schemes suggest the site could accommodate in the region of 15 x 1 bed flats and 7 x 2 bed flats (22 units in total) Option 1 or 22 x 1 Bedroom Flats Option 2.

Conclusion

At present the basis of the development strategy is:

“The proposed development strategy is to direct development to where it has the least climate impact, where active and public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live, whilst ensuring all necessary utilities can be provided in a sustainable way. It also seeks to be realistic around the locational limits of some new jobs floorspace which is centred upon national and global economic clusters”.

The emerging strategy includes:

- development at North East Cambridge, Cambridge East, and the existing Cambridge Biomedical Campus; and
- the principles set out above.

However, to deliver the necessary homes and jobs, and redress the current fall in housing land supply, as recognised at NPPF paragraph 73, it will be important that the allocations include a range of small and medium sized sites to promote development, maintain consistency of supply, avoid an overreliance on a small number of strategic sites, and to meet the needs of small and medium Enterprise housebuilders.

The requirement to include 10% of housing allocations on sites of less than one hectare, such as this site remains a policy requirement of the NPPF as well.

In our opinion this proposed site allocation clearly aligns with the Shared Planning Services Preferred Development Strategy which is to focus growth in and around Cambridge as the most sustainable location for development, make the most efficient use of existing development opportunities, and support the reuse of brownfield sites and previously developed land.

We wish to stress NIAB's desire to work collaboratively with the Council in respect of their proposed site allocations, and to emphasise the flexibility that exists in respect of this land to respond to potential local development needs. Accordingly, we would welcome the opportunity for further discussions with the Council with regard to this site allocations.

Yours sincerely

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