

“The brief was flexible to allow the scheme to respond to consultation and feedback.”



4.0 / Brief & Consultation

In this section, I will identify ACME's involvement in the Masterplan process, the brief that has been provided to ACME, and how it has evolved and changed over time.

4.1 / The role of the site in the wider development of Cambridge



Fig. 60 Aerial Photograph of Cambridge North highlighting the Appeal Site

4.1.1 From the outset, the Appellant has emphasised to the design team the importance of the Appeal Site to deliver the next stage of growth in Science, Employment and Housing for Cambridge. This was founded on the strategic decision by the Department of Transport to fund the construction of a new National Train Station at Cambridge North, in support of the Local Planning Authorities' aim to establish Cambridge North as a key stepping stone to unlock the wider North East Cambridge Area. National and Local Policies have encouraged further growth in education, employment and science, which would be ideally located in Cambridge. However, Cambridge is lacking brownfield or greenfield land for sustainable development that overcomes a reliance on car-born transport. The decision to build Cambridge North Station, 2 minutes travelling distance from Cambridge Central Station, was not based on existing demand, but by the desire to create a new extension of Cambridge at Cambridge North, to attract science and housing development with great transport links.

4.1.2 The client's brief for Cambridge North as communicated to the design team reflects the wider strategy of the Local Planning Authority to create a number of centres surrounding the historic city centre, comprising West Cambridge, Cambridge South and North-East Cambridge, each focused on science, research, education and housing, and with high quality public transport links to the centre. This has informed the client's high-level brief for the Site to create a mid-density mixed use development on the existing brownfield land immediately surrounding the new train station.

4.2 / Masterplanning process



Fig. 61 Illustrative sketches prepared by Formation Architects pre-ACME involvement (pre-2020)

4.2.1 Masterplanning until 2019

The masterplanning process to determine the future use of the Network Rail long track welding site started a significant time prior to ACME's involvement. Please refer to the evidence from Mike Derbyshire which sets out the process since 2013 in detail.

4.2.2 ACME Involvement 2019-2020

ACME involvement in the project started with an invitation to a design competition for a headquarter of a Cambridge Council on one of the plots in July 2019. In ACME's final competition submission in September 2019, solutions for the plot were proposed as well as considerations for the Masterplan as a whole. The architectural design for Plot 4 was awarded to MAKE, and Plot 8 was awarded to ACME. Brookgate acknowledged the quality of thought provided by ACME for the site as a whole.

4.2.3 Masterplanning 2019-2020

Until November 2020, the Masterplan evolved in discussions between Brookgate, the Planning Authority and Formation Architects as Masterplanners. A number of concerns about the direction of the design were raised by the Planning Authority in 2020, as summarised in a letter received after the 16th of November 2020 workshop from Fiona Bradley. In response to the concerns raised, Brookgate decided that it would be important to have a new masterplanner and architect look at the site afresh, to determine if other solutions should be explored. A change of the masterplanning and architecture team at this stage will often result in significant abortive time and work. Restarting the process with a new team member, with an open brief, reflects the seriousness Brookgate assigned to the comments received and Brookgate's desire to find the best possible Masterplan for the site.

4.2.4 ACME Masterplanning Scope (since 2020)

In November 2020, it was agreed to terminate the appointment of Formation Architects as Masterplanners, and for ACME to take over the role of masterplanner. ACME's commission from Brookgate included the following masterplanning and architectural scopes:

- Feasibility testing for a Math School on the site
- Precedent studies on density, streetscape, open space and typologies.
- Masterplan Vision
- Workshops with Planning Authority and other stakeholders
- Participation in Consultation
- Preparation of Outline Parameters and Outline Planning submission
- Preparation of Design Guidelines for all architectural plots
- Preparation of Detailed Planning submission where applicable except Plots 4/6/7.
- Preparation of Pre-Concept Designs for all plots not submitted in Detail, except Plots 4/6/7.

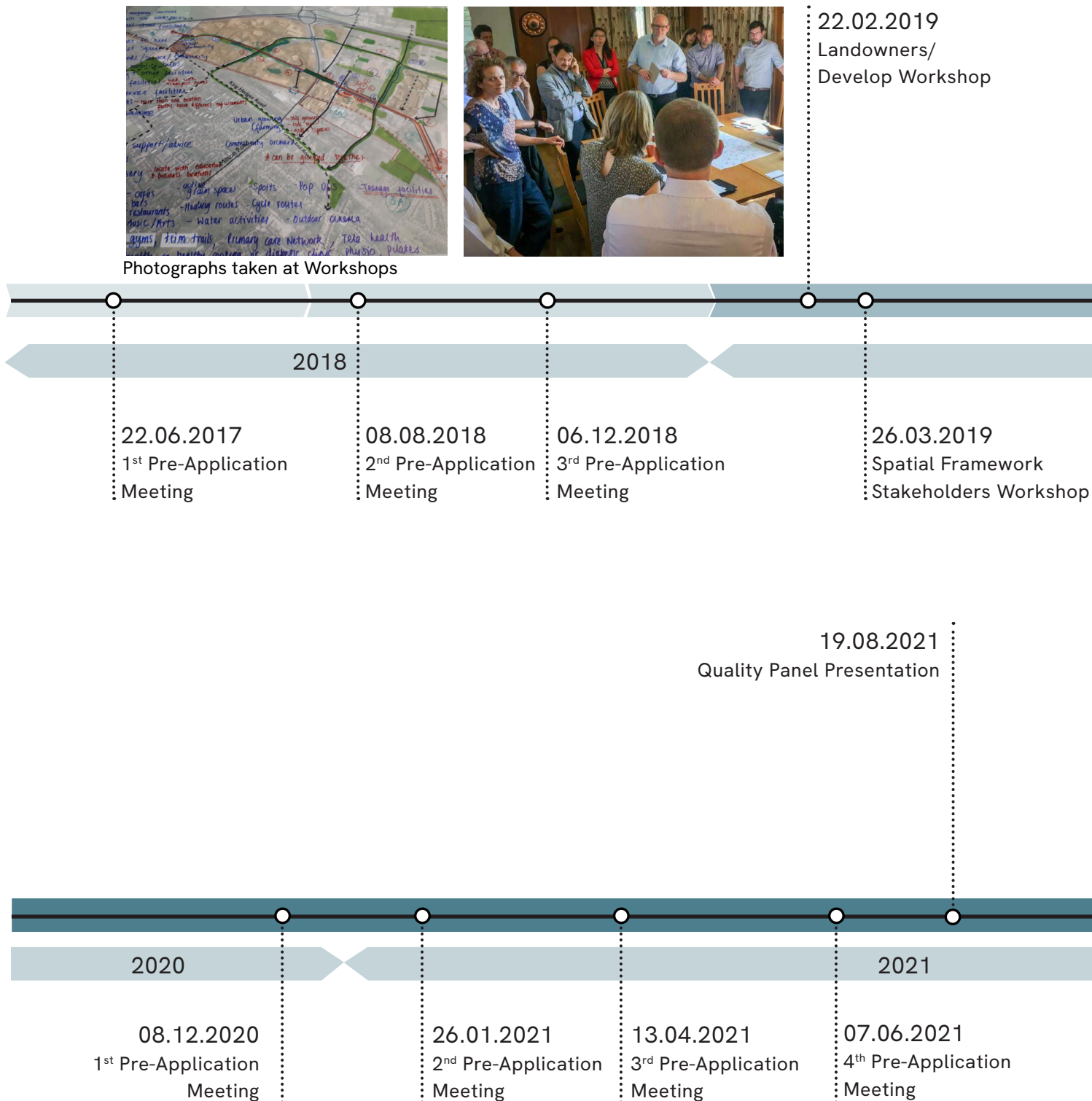
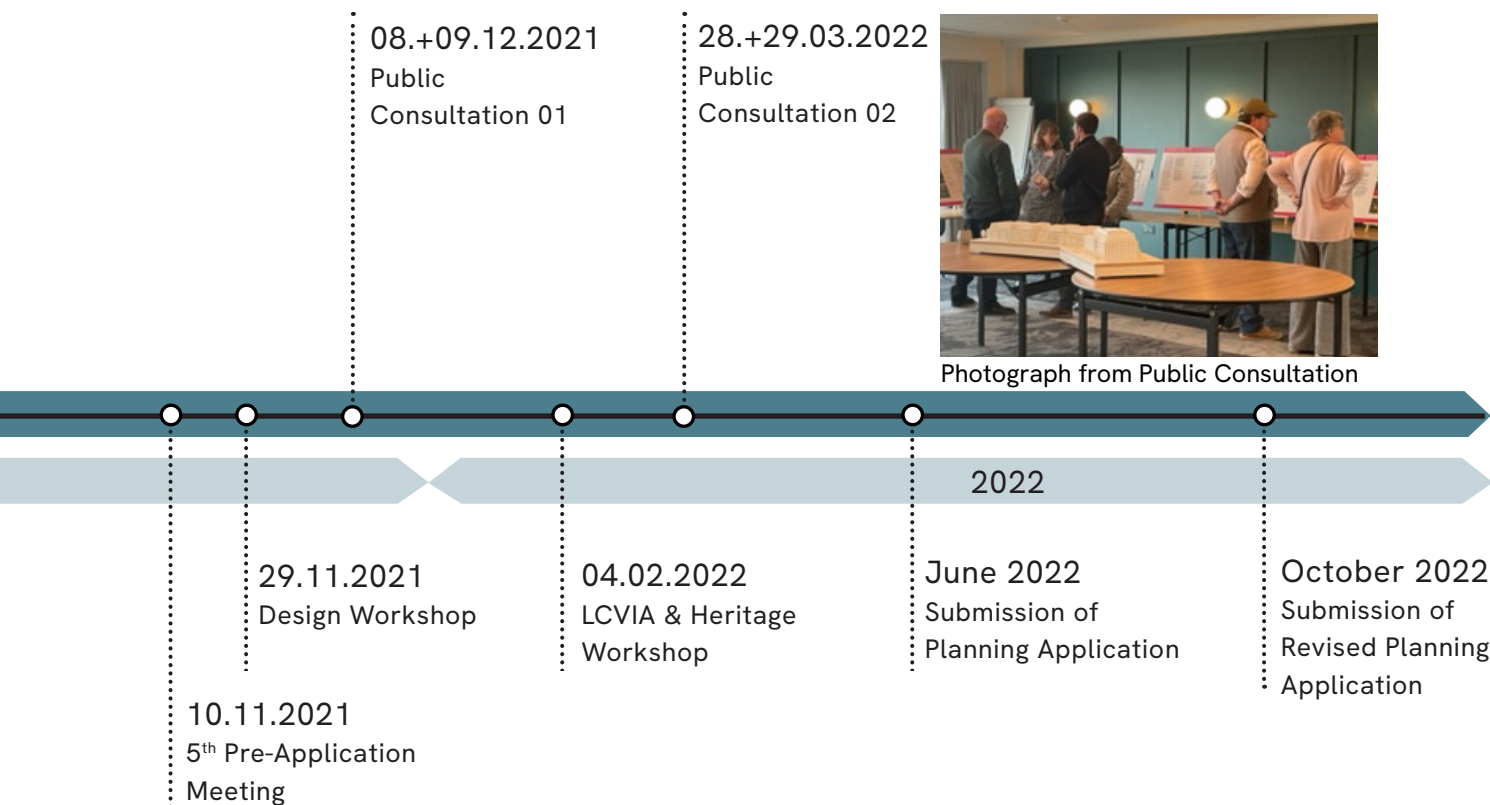
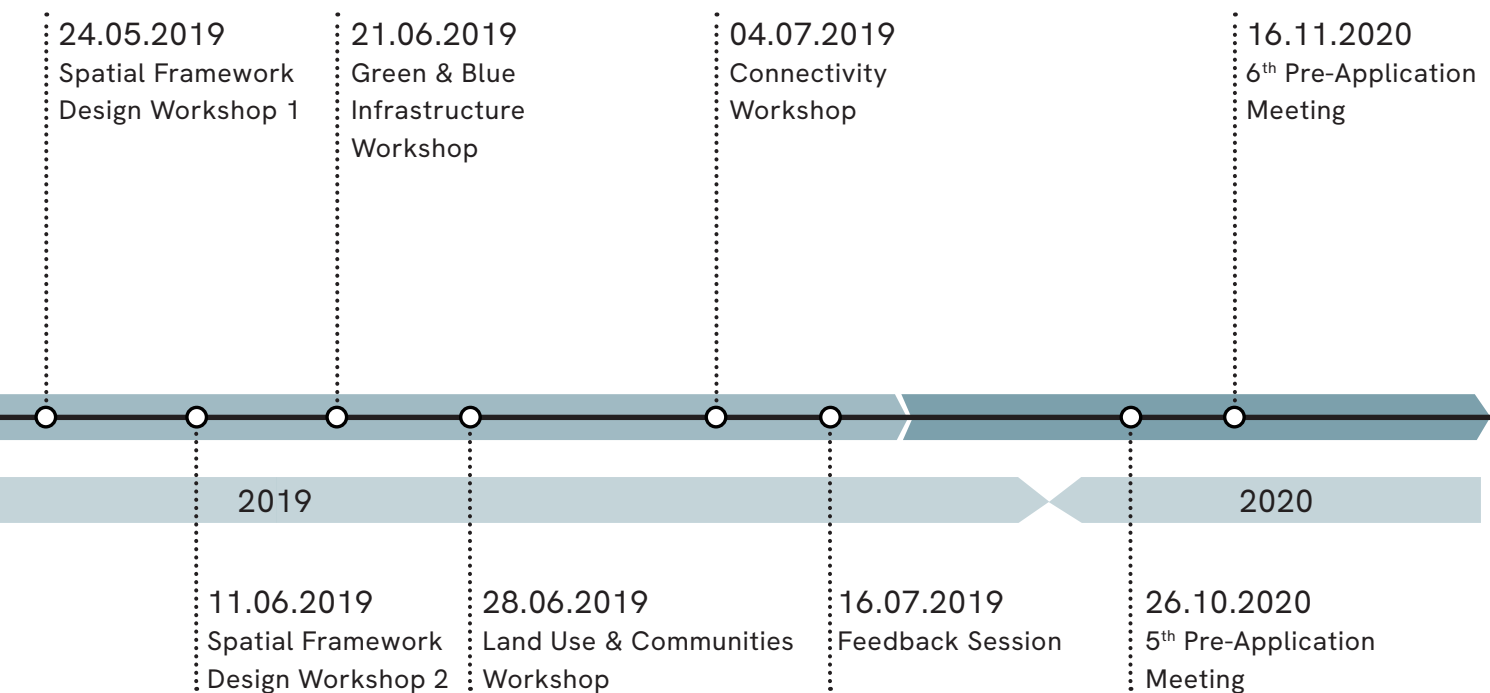


Fig. 62 Comprehensive Masterplan Timeline capturing key milestones throughout the consultation process



Photograph from Public Consultation

Legend:

- Consultation process pre-ACME involvement
- Consultation process with ACME

4.3 / Fixed Brief

In this section, I will outline the fixed parts of the brief provided to ACME. A number of principles were communicated at the outset. These principles remained unchanged between November 2020 and Summer 2022.

- Create an employment led mixed use Masterplan attractive to laboratory and science tenants
- Optimise the use of the site, in particular in light of its new rail connectivity
- Identify potential townscape and landscape impacts and seek to minimise any harm
- Identify and mitigate any identifiable impacts on heritage impacts
- Protect the existing residential amenity
- Work with the existing Highway and Utility infrastructure
- Respect the operational needs of Network Rail and its partners
- Challenge the need for parking spaces as far as possible
- Support the long-term vision of the AAP as far as possible
- Create a resilient phasing strategy to deal with uncertainty of batching plant, aggregates site and sewage works relocation
- Generate sufficient land value to fund the required infrastructure costs, including replacement of the existing surface carpark with a Mobility Hub.
- Build on lessons learned from the CB1 development.

The brief did not include fixed quanta of floorspace or development area, or a fixed mix of uses.

4.4 / Flexible Design Brief

While the principles as defined under Section 4.3 have not changed, the brief was an open brief to find the best solution for the site, and many parts of the brief have evolved and changed in that period, to mitigate harm and to respond to Masterplan testing, Planning Authority feedback, consultation and market responses. In order to illustrate the flexibility of the brief given to the masterplanning team, I will list in the following Sections 4.5 to 4.7 how much the scheme has evolved to find the best possible solution for the site that achieves best use and mitigates harm where found.

4.5 / Design Changes in response to LPA Changes

Between November 2020 and Summer 2022, the Masterplan was subject of a large number of workshops with the Local Planning Authority, with each iteration reflecting feedback and results from previous workshops. The Design and Access Statement, Pages 74 to 102, sets out the iterations of the scheme and the comments received in detail. Main changes over this period included:

- Change in the position, widths and layout of streets, squares and open spaces
- Change in the number and configuration of building plots and their use, in response to local streetscape considerations, townscape and long distance impact, mix and quanta of use.
- Significant changes/ reduction in the quantum of development across all phases of the Masterplan.
- Evolution of the design guidelines for all plots to address appearance, architectural expression, identity, relation to Cambridge context and consistency of materiality.
- Parking strategy changes to balance the needs of Network Rail and other uses on site.

4.6 / Design Changes in response to Network Rail consultation

The brief has evolved in response to the evolving requirement of Network Rail, as discussed with them in a number of workshops between 2020 and 2022. Network Rail's main concerns related to the operational needs of the track maintenance teams, especially the need for level track access and a secure new Network Rail Yard, as well as their expectations regarding the potential changes to the existing surface parking facility, which the masterplanning team proposed to relocate into a Mobility Hub .

4.7 / Design Changes in response to 3rd Party consultation

- 4.7.1 The brief has evolved in response to consultation with a large number of other stakeholders. Two Key changes to the brief should be highlighted. The brief for cycle routes was revised significantly following consultation with Camcycle, who highlighted the need for more separation between users, and the need for additional routes not envisaged previously. The brief for the Math School proved impossible to deliver. The timeframe required by the school operator and the concerns from the Planning Authority on noise and traffic in the initial years of operation resulted in the removal of the Math school from the brief and application.
- 4.7.2 As masterplanners, the flexibility provided by the unusually open brief has allowed us to find the best solution for the site in the balance of harm and benefit. The summary of major changes to the brief reflects the flexibility provided by the client to the design team to change the Masterplan in response to evolving design discussion, feedback and comments received. While the principles of the Masterplan brief as set out above were adhered to throughout this period, the Appellant was prepared to accept evolution and change to achieve the best balance for the project.

4.8 / A flexible Planning Brief

- 4.8.1 At several stages between November 2020 and Summer 2022, the Planning Authority expressed concerns on the certainty of delivery of elements of the scheme, and how best to ensure that the design quality promised at Outline Planning stage is delivered in Detailed Planning Stage. In response, the client has proposed a number of options:
- Remove plots from the Outline Application and submit them as later Detailed Applications
 - Submit some plots as Detailed Planning in lieu of outline (Plot S4/5/6/7 and Public Realm)
 - Provide additional Illustrative designs (Plot S8-21)
- 4.8.2 In the following Section 4.9 to 4.12, I will set out in more detail the Planning Strategy options that were considered by the masterplanning team, the solution that was adopted in each case, and the reasons therefore.

4.9 / Planning Strategy - One Milton Avenue



Fig. 63 Illustrative aerial view of the masterplan, looking North showing One Milton Avenue in context

In regards to the second office building on site, One Milton Avenue (S4), detailed submission was pursued for two reasons. Firstly, this plot was considered by the Planning Authority as an important stepping stone between the consented first office building (S3) and the residential quarter (S11-21), that needed to be resolved in detail. Secondly, this plot had always been identified as the next building to be delivered on site, originally as a HQ for Cambridge Council, and subsequently as a science and technology focussed office building, with strong interest from investment partners to underwrite the construction of this plot as soon as planning consent has been obtained.

4.10 / Planning Strategy - Eastern Edge Plots



Fig. 64 Illustrative aerial view of the masterplan, looking North showing the Eastern edge in context

In regards to the Eastern Edge plots (S5-7), the appearance of the building and the reading of its silhouette were considered of significance by the Planning Authority, and the Appellant therefore agreed that these plots shall be included in the application as detailed plots.

4.11 / Planning Strategy - Residential plots

4.12 / Planning Strategy - Hybrid Planning Application



Fig. 65 Illustrative aerial view of the masterplan, looking North showing the residential plots in context



Fig. 66 Plan illustrating parts of the Application in Outline and in Detail

In regards to the residential plots (S11-S21), detailed submission was considered, but with discussions ongoing with several potential housing delivery partners, it was considered premature to draw up a detailed application at this stage without a delivery partner. Omission of the residential plots from the Outline Application was considered until such time as detail could be brought forward, but the Planning Authority was not supportive of this approach, as it would undermine the envisioned mixed-use nature of the site. For the reasons set out above, the residential plots (S11-S21) were thus included as outline plots in the application, but with the public realm in detail, and with additional illustrative design information provided in the DAS on pages 179 to 210, to provide as much certainty as possible within the context of an Outline Application.

4.12.1 The Hybrid Planning Approach was chosen to help the Planning Authority to deal with the implicit abstractness of Outline Planning, which can be perceived as scaleless and not sufficiently defined to ascertain the impact of proposed development. As illustrated in the visualisations and drawings included in the Design and Access Statement, the Appellant has permitted the design team to progress the design to a more detailed level than usual, to underline their commitment to the scheme, and to better illustrate the proposed qualities of the scheme at human scale, and the acceptability of its visual impact when seen from afar.

4.12.2 In summary, the strategy adopted is a Hybrid Planning Strategy, with consent sought for a Masterplan in outline with additional illustrative designs submitted for Plot 8-21, and detailed planning for Plot 4/5/6/7 and the public realm. This strategy addresses concerns on certainty of delivery and design quality by the Planning Authority, and allows the Appellant to progress to construction quickly post consent.

4.13 / Consideration of the NECAAP as part of the masterplan brief

- 4.13.1 The Appellant has instructed the masterplanning team from the outset to support the vision of the AAP as far as possible, as a core principle of the brief. In this regard, the masterplanning team have considered carefully the NECAAP draft vision, guidance and policy, to ensure the North Cambridge Masterplan is aligned wherever possible and known. I will set out in the following sections 4.13.2 to 4.15.7 my understanding of the NECAAP and its relationship to the Masterplan brief.
- 4.13.2 The Appeal Site falls fully within the emerging North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP). As set out by the Planning Authority, the NECAAP is at a relatively early stage, with consultation on the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission plan pending the outcome of a Development Consent Order (DCO) to relocate the Milton wastewater treatment works. The DCO Application was withdrawn by Anglian Water in February 2023, with the timeline unclear. In the meantime, as noted by the Planning Authority, proposals in NEC will be considered against policies in the adopted development plan.
- 4.13.3 Given the AAP status as 'relatively early stage' and given its anticipated long and uncertain timeframe to adoption, pending any progress on the Wastewater works relocation, the Appellant and the design team have decided to carefully review the Draft AAP and consider it in the evolution of the Masterplan, without relying on the AAP as a consented set of policies.

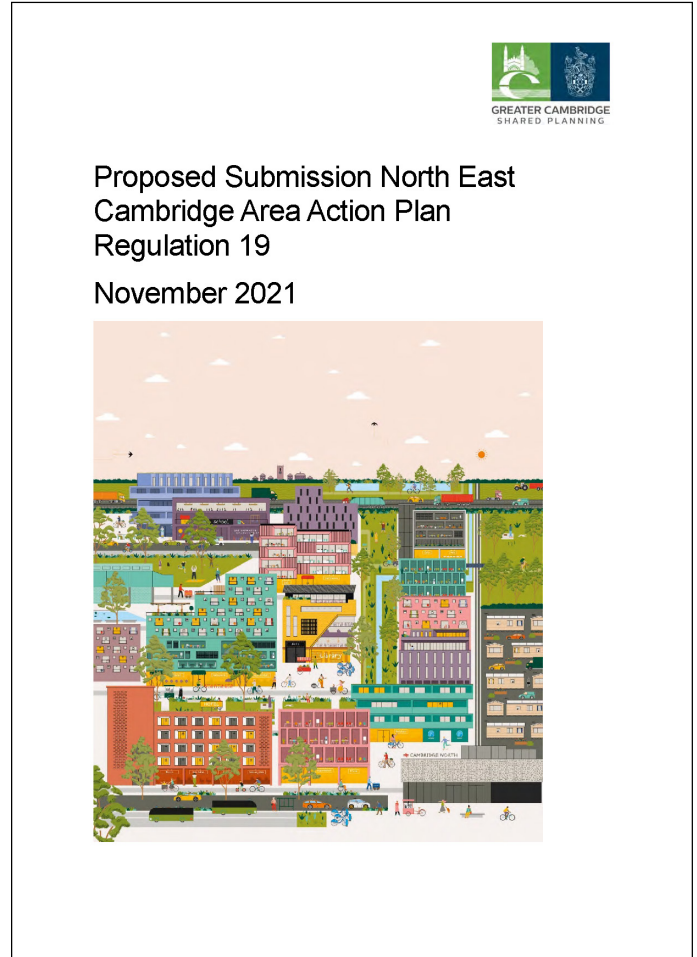


Fig. 67 Proposed submission North East Cambridge Area Action Plan Area Action Plan (NEC AAP) Regulation 19

4.14 / AAP Vision

The AAP sets out its vision as follows, with one statement and five Strategic Objectives: “We want North East Cambridge to be a healthy, inclusive, walkable, low-carbon new city district with a vibrant mix of high quality homes, workplaces, services and social spaces, fully integrated with surrounding neighbourhoods.

1. North East Cambridge will be a low environmental impact urban district, addressing both the climate and biodiversity emergencies.
2. North East Cambridge will be a vibrant mixed-use new district where all can live and work.
3. North East Cambridge will help meet the strategic needs of Cambridge and the sub-region
4. North East Cambridge will be a healthy and safe neighbourhood
5. North East Cambridge will be physically and socially integrated with neighbouring communities”.

4.15 / Alignment between AAP Vision and Masterplan Brief



Fig. 68 Plan illustrating the Appeal site in relation to the proposed North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NEC AAP) and its surrounding wards

4.15.1 There is full alignment at statement and strategic objectives level between the aims of the masterplan and the aspirations of the AAP. All of the Masterplan Design Principles defined in the Design and Access Statement, Pages 50 to 71, are in alignment with the wider objectives of the AAP, even if they are articulated at two different scales, Urban Masterplan versus Area Action Plan scale.

4.15.2 From the outset, the Appellant and the masterplanning team have sought to develop a masterplan that is able to come forward independent of the Milton wastewater treatment works relocation, and in advance of the AAP, but to design an 'optimistic' masterplan that anticipates, encourages and enables future development on adjacent sites. To anticipate, encourage and enable development entails complementary uses across sites, and transport, block layout and open space strategies that allow for legible and clear future connections between sites.

4.15.3 By its very nature, the Cambridge North masterplan is an enabling development for the wider AAP area, as it provides the new National Train station within walking distance for much of the AAP. Cambridge North Station not only provides a sustainable public transport link to Cambridge Central, but firmly places the AAP area within access of Oxford and London, unlocking its potential for more significant employment use, as encouraged by Policy SS/4 in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

4.15.4 We share the aspirations of the Planning Authority to design for a future centred around walking, cycling and public transport. This places more importance than ever on the train station and its surroundings, which should be a lively urban station quarter, with the potential to become a future stepping stone for many more people working and living in the wider AAP area. The masterplan has carefully considered how best to enable this type of future connectivity. The Appeal Site directly borders three adjacent sites in the AAP area:

- Cambridge Business Park
- Cowley Road Industrial Estate
- Milton wastewater treatment works.

- 4.15.5 The most significant part of the AAP is the area currently occupied by the Milton wastewater treatment works, commonly referred to as the 'Core Site'. U+I have been appointed as development partner for the Core Site in 2018, and the Appellant has been meeting U+I and other stakeholders in the AAP regularly over the last 5 years to ensure that all proposals are developed cognisant of plans by other landowners in the area.
- 4.15.6 Every effort has been to engage with the U+I design team, to understand their evolving thinking for the Core site. The initial masterplanners for the Core site were Urbed with 5th Studio, which ACME engaged with in 2020. Thereafter, the Core Site design team was stood down and the masterplan was revised by Kjellander Sjoberg, the new masterplanners appointed in 2022. Despite the change of masterplan direction within the Core Site masterplan, encompassing change of transport strategy, change of use mix and location of the proposed new town centre, the ACME masterplan has proven to be sufficiently flexible to work well with the change in approach on neighbouring sites, validating the strategies that had been adopted.
- 4.15.7 In conclusion, the masterplan proposals have been developed in accordance with National Policy and Local Policy, with due consideration for, and alignment with the Draft AAP and the proposals being developed by others in the vicinity. The flexible brief has allowed the scheme to strike a careful balance to ensure it is deliverable now, and creates a place stitched into the existing neighbourhood, while creating the vital building blocks and connections into the future North East Cambridge that is to come. The masterplan delivers a transformative scheme to Cambridge North, and unlocks the wider potential of the site.