



CAMBRIDGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Wandlebury Ring ● Gog Magog Hills ● Babraham ● Cambridge CB22 3AE
Telephone 01223 243830 ● Fax 01223 413344
e-mail ceo@cpswandlebury.org ● web www.cpswandlebury.org

Cambridge City Council
Guildhall
Cambridge
CB2 3OJ

FAO: Ms Emma Davies - Policy Team
emma.davies@cambridge.gov.uk

8 April 2009

Dear Ms Davies and colleagues,

**Ref: Consultation Draft -
Old Press/ Mill Lane Supplementary Planning Document**

Following our recent committee meeting we have finalised our comments as follows:

The Society welcomes the desire to regenerate this special quarter within the Historic Core of the City and generally supports the major improvements as proposed. In preference and from a sustainability point of view, we would wish to see buildings adapted to a new use rather than demolition and rebuilding in a different form. However, the Society is aware that the delivery of the regeneration requires some densification of the site and is prepared to accept some major change in the central area north of Mill Lane. Overall the Society considers that the area should be catering not only for tourists but also much more for town use/ local people.

Overall we consider the key characteristics of the site are:

- lower third (river edge area) containing fabric of old trading and brewery businesses
- middle area being predominantly University usage (lecture rooms and office space)
- upper area (Trumpington Street end) as a zone rich in ecclesiastical and University uses, characterised by imposing buildings along Trumpington Street relating to the Old University Press Site – the Pitt Building - and the Emmanuel Reform Church
- Silver Street with some shops and thus commercial character and
- Little St Mary's Lane being of residential character.

Plans

All Plans - Site Boundary is incomplete particularly the exclusion of the River's edge (western Boundary) which should include the concrete landing stage along the Anchor Pub and floating punting station; the full foundation of the Listed Buildings of the former mills; the north side of Silver Street; and south side of Little St Mary's Lane. Overall it is considered that more of the Mill

CAMBRIDGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

● protecting the amenities ● green spaces ● historic buildings ● character and setting of Cambridge ● for over 80 years.

Pit and area west of the old mill foundations/Laundress Green should be included to enable a more visionary redevelopment of this Historic Area and to reconnect in a better way to the river landscape.

Plan 3 – Hobson Conduit’s Runnels should be shown as a recently Listed Building feature. Following lengthy discussion the Society considered it as important to request English Heritage to list No 16-21 Silver Street as this building most likely has been designed by Richard Reynolds Rowe (1824 - 1899), a engineer and skilled architect involved in fine building in the city, of which some buildings have been listed (e.g. Red Cow pub).

Plan 5 – University Centre – this should also be labelled as existing commercial/retail usage as public can access the café and refectory and hire rooms in the building and indeed the wider public access support the viability of this building.

Plans 8 and 9 - a positive and very important river view arrow is missing i.e. long and short views from the upper river sluice’s towpath (opposite the Hotel (Double Trees) to north and towards Kings College Chapel. From this position the river character of the River Corridor can be appreciated with generally lower buildings and views of the upper levels of the Chapel and other roofscapes with pinnacles, chimneys and small towers. The view/vista arrow should be annotated and King College Chapel denoted as a ‘Positive Landmark’.

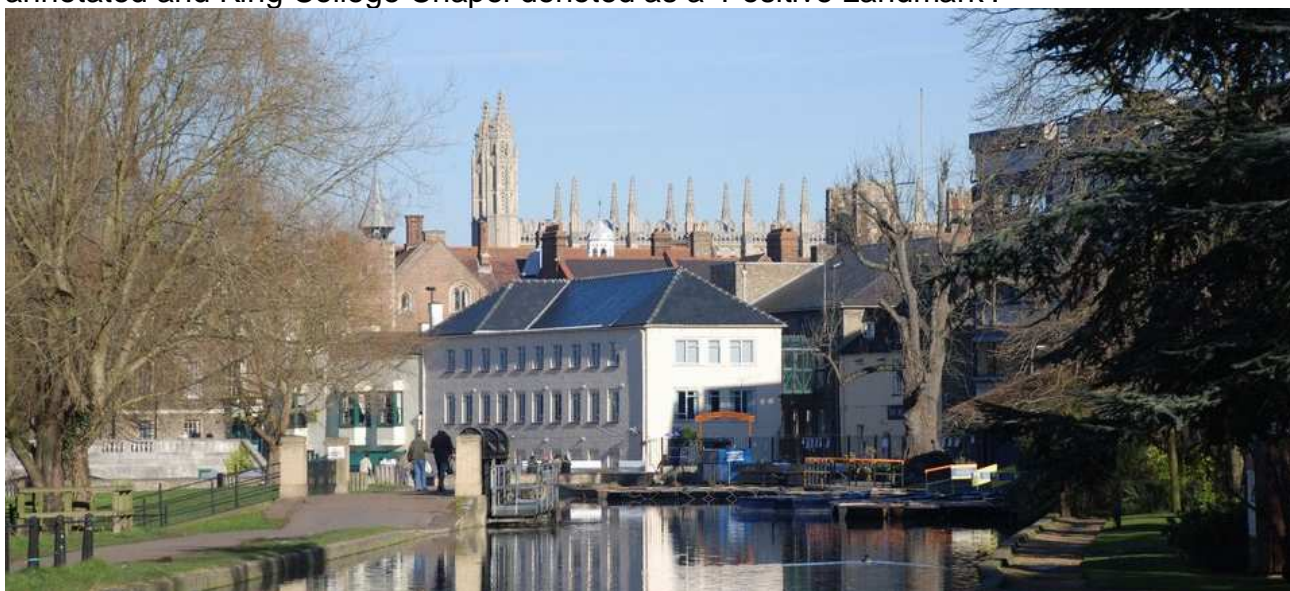


Photo winter 2008 © Cambridge Preservation Society

Plan 8 – floorscape to all pavings (road and foot pavements) in Silver Street and Granta Place should also be labelled as ‘negative floor space’ irrespective of ownership.

Plan 11 – Laundress Green – is it not part of the City Wildlife Site?

Plan 10 – without having access to detail methodology used for the assessment of significance it is considered that the attribution for some buildings should be raised as follows:

Site	Draft SPD	Final SPD
old ware house - (S Asian Studies)	moderate	significant
floating punting hut	-	low
Old ware house - club	low	significant or moderate
Old ware house end (cycle shop) and oasthouse/malt kiln	moderate	significant
electric substation	-	low

CAMBRIDGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

● protecting the amenities ● green spaces ● historic buildings ● character and setting of Cambridge ● for over 80 years.

16-21 Silver Street (CPS requested to be added to EH Listings of Buildings)	significant	high
23- east end – Silver Street	moderate	significant
Mill Lane 16	low	moderate
Lecture Halls and nearby works/old warehouse – Mill Lane	moderate	significant
University Centre	significant	high
Stuart House	significant	high

Plans 12a & 12b – “potential for pavement widening and set back with retail type usage at street level” – this is a very deceptive description not clearly stating that **collonading** is envisaged and thus major building alteration at groundfloor level resulting in a major character change to Silver Street. The Society strongly objects to this proposal as there are no alternative options investigated such as: making Silver Street accessible for fewer vehicles (bus, taxi, disable and deliveries only); making it one way/shared surface finish; and no clear confirmation that people will actually use the low colonnades located at the north side of the building range. In particular if retail is proposed to be re-introduced below 16-21 Silver Street, it raises the issue of window shoppers along the tourist trail could block the colonnade area pushing people back onto the road. Management of undesirable uses and the need to light the area during night time does not make this a sustainable solution.

Building No 23 to the east (ex laboratories) could be converted to a collonade with a few entrance points off Silver Street (retaining the existing façade) and a main thoroughfare from North East Corner opposite Pit Building through this area to the South West and integrating internal retail areas and forming a linkage/short cut with a new public square or pedestrian route linking mid way Silver Street with Mill Lane. Such ‘collonading’ could be in form of a gated environment preventing misuse at evenings but retaining access and enabling pedestrian short cut during day time.

The collonading proposals are inconsistent covering both plans 12a and 12b (ref: Anchor Pub). The Society would be able to support minor alterations to the Anchor Pub (i.e. removal of northern single storey extension as built in 1930s/50s – approx 2-3m width along Silver Street). However, this is acceptable only if it is undertaken in a sympathetic way and in conjunction with creating a safer pedestrian environment and achieving an improved pedestrian flow with the most nearby areas of the redevelopment scheme.

Plan 12a -

“Buildings where there is the potential for either demolition or substantial alteration” – the Society objects to any demolition of buildings on either side of Laundress Lane i.e. S Asian Studies ware house, University Club ware house, Oasthouse/Malt Kiln, Anchor Pub, Granary (16a Mill Lane), as these building strongly reflect the traditional and utilitarian use of the River embankment for storage, trading and brewery purposes. They are thus significant in this context and that very few such buildings remain along the urban stretches of the River Cam in Cambridge and illustrate the former trading character of this area. In particular the Mill Pit area of the River denotes the furthest point where trading boats could reach and thus a vital past (and perhaps future) link of the City with the North Sea, its ports and beyond. In conversation with a variety of local people is apparent that the Laundress Lane area is locally much liked by many people and most feel that minor improvements to the paving, the removal of refuse containers will help create an improved setting and retains its flair.

The Society would like to see the retention of facades and a special key symbol should be introduced. The following facades we would wish retained are (see also Sketch 1c/Appendix 1c):

- 16 to 21 and 23 to eastern end Silver Street (ex laboratories)
- all facades facing Pit Building and its western yard boundary
- 16a Mill Lane (Granary) and No 16 – all its facades facing the road

CAMBRIDGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

● protecting the amenities ● green spaces ● historic buildings ● character and setting of Cambridge ● for over 80 years.

The Society is not against some minor alterations or creation of gateways in a sympathetic way to increase permeability of the overall site as a means of preserving the character and fabric of those buildings.

Thus the boundary of the “Area with greatest potential for redevelopment (subject to robust and detailed justification)” should be altered to exclude all the buildings and facades as mentioned above.

Lecture Halls (Mill Lane) – these are considered as an important feature and are well used throughout the year as an inner city lecture facility, mostly accessible for disabled persons. The building is of strong construction and thus the Society considers that the building’s annotation should be changed to ‘orange infill’ (i.e. “Buildings with potential reuse subject to sympathetic conversion”).

SKETCH 1a-c – Proposed Redevelopment as supported by the Society

1b and c © based on google map – not for further reproduction

(for detail see Appendices 1a – 1c)

1a

1b

1c

Cambridge City Council - Consultation Draft - Ref:

Plan 10 - Building Significance



© based on Cambridge City Council - Open Google OS Map

Cambridge Preservation Society - Revised Building Significance -



© based on google map - Cambridge Preservation Society - April 2009

Cambridge Preservation Society - Proposed Development Potential - Buildings, Open Space and Retail/Commerce



© based on google map - Cambridge Preservation Society - April 2009

Plan 12 a continued - “University Centre – potential for retail and associated uses at street level” – The Society considers the fragmentation of existing a proposed retail and other commercial uses (see also Plan 5) are incoherent and not sufficiently visionary to make this area a “vibrant” quarter. Much better integration and a clearer vision is needed to ensure that Miller’s Yard, Laudress Lane and the river frontage along the University Centre is revitalised in a balanced way.

Plan 12a does not include retail/commerce opportunities along Laudress Lane, the integration a courtyard with low key commerce/retail catering available. It is paramount to ensure space is provided not only for tourism but also local people/ town use (and the evening economy) and the Society considers that such is opportune only in the lower third of the site so to retain more tranquil areas in the middle and upper areas of the site. We regard these upper areas as akin to creating conducive collegial and ecclesiastical environments as well as hotel space with no or very limited vehicular access for deliveries, taxis and disabled persons (as successfully integrated already with the nearby Hotel du Vin redevelopment site).

In view of retaining Laudress Lane and its buildings in their entirety it was felt that an opportunity should be taken to create a square to the south/east of the Oasthouse/Malt Kiln which could include a small café, science museum, small retail start up units at lower and upper levels, a desperately needed centre for visual arts (perhaps combined with the Lecture Rooms) and / or art gallery/centre combined community facility (e.g. re-using the old warehouse (University Club) and no. 16 Mill Lane. With similar developments such as Miller’s Yard this would better integrate these elements and would help create a well-adjusted vibrant environment and modest/ low key places where people can meet and are welcome to do “gossip trading and generate ideas” etc.

CAMBRIDGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

● protecting the amenities ● green spaces ● historic buildings ● character and setting of Cambridge ● for over 80 years.

This would require a clear undertaking by the various landowners (and managers of the local retail and commerce facilities) to work together with each other to create a more lively and community character of this area and which is missing within the inner city and near the River.

Plan 12b – As part of the Cambridge Core Traffic Scheme, the Society would highly welcome that in time the whole of Silver Street (Silver St/Trumpington St - bridge to junction with Downing St) should be shared surface and with minimal vehicular traffic.

“ Potential for offsite highway improvements” – such should also include the public Right of Ways leading along Laundress Green and the Upper River i.e. major improvements to the Old Mill Foundations and surrounds to reduce wear and tear to the green space and improve traffic flow in relation to pedestrians and cycle routes.

“Indicative alignment for improved cycle/pedestrian environment” – this should also include Granta Place and link with Coe Fen and its cycle route, Mill Lane and Little St May’s Lane in conjunction with annotation numbers 1-4.

No 5 should read – “Enhanced Setting of Stuart House and public green space”.

No 7 should read “new public space/square” rather than just new public/private space; the Society prefers such being located to the south-east of the oasthouse/malt kiln.

The Society supports major highway improvements including traffic calming to Mill Lane, which presumably will also need to be undertaken in conjunction with the County Council as the Highway Authority unless it is a non-adopted road.

Height of Buildings

The Society would like to see a graduation of building height being lower at the lower part of the site and higher towards its upper end: The lower third of the site should not have buildings higher than 3 storey (note levels must refer to Silver Street levels as Mill Lane is almost a storey lower than river edge of Silver Street), whereby the middle and upper areas maximum 4 storeys retaining the setting of the Pitt Building’s Tower but potentially enabling a pinnacle or small tower reaching a maximum 5 storey height.

Public Spaces – squares and green space and nodal points

The Society envisages that more public space should be made available considering the increased densification of this area as part of the redevelopment proposals. It welcomes the setting of any new spaces in an inviting and desirable context.

However the proposed open space/square on the footprint of the old warehouse fronting the river adjacent the Anchor pub would create a very small space with a terraced effect due to level changes in this area. This may not sufficiently improve the pedestrian flows along Laundress Lane and at the nodal point just south (link with Laundress Lane, Laundress Green, Mill Lane and Granta Place for all users of lower and higher modes of transport). Only if the whole Anchor Pub was removed, would such improved flows be achieved and an appropriately sized open space. However, due to reasons stated above such a solution is not supported by the Society. There is already ample access to the River in this area of the Mill Pond with the broad verge of Silver Street Bridge and Laundress Green. However the restrained access point over the Old Mill foundations is insufficient to cater for pedestrian and cycle movements and the current high use of the area.

Therefore we would wish to see substantial improvements to reduce the wear and tear on this green space, to reduce conflict points with the various users and so to create a safer environment for all. Therefore the creation of a separate broad bridge close to/SW of the Old Mill foundations should be considered to better segregate the cycle route (with in-built speed reductions a conflict rich nodal points) and create a broad paved area as relaxation space for pedestrians is supported by the Society. This would also reduce some of the wear and tear and provide the opportunity to develop a suitable public art installation that might highlight water

movement through the sluice, improve the river setting without detracting from the overall river corridor character.

The green area in front of Stuart House should not just be 'landscaped' (Plan 12b) to create an improved setting to the building but designated as public green space/small park of high amenity and thus be fully accessible to the public. This would create a warm tranquil environment taking advantage of this area being a sun trap.

Yard to west of the Pit Building – this can be a private or semi-public square with a high paved content and some vehicular access. The pedestrian short cut is not well used as the nearby Trumpington Street seems to be the preferred choice for pedestrians and cyclists. Indeed a new short cut (with the exiting archway at Nos 19/20 retained) is better located in the middle of Silver Street – possibly through the removal of the recent infill building no 22 or a sympathetic break through between no. 23 and eastern end of Silver Street. This would link up better with the cut through along Stuart House to Little St Mary's Lane.

Public Art

The Society welcomes integration of public art into the scheme particularly ideas which highlight the connection of the site to the historic King's Ditch and the underground outfall/overflow of the Hobson's Conduit Runnels. There is an opportunity in the redevelopment of this area to integrate a modest fountain or water sculpture as such is extremely rare within public areas of the City. Further art installation using the waterscape could be integrated at the Old Mill Foundations as described earlier or even onsite recycling point.

Lighting and Signage

An integrated plan should be developed to reduce signage to the bare minimum and to integrate lighting to house facades rather than too many free-standing lamp-columns along narrow routes. Inspiration should be taken from the wall-mounted Richardson's Candles and a suitable addition and replacements established denoting the character of this city's Quarter.

Riverside/ Mill Pit Area/ River Cam edge

The Society envisages the full retention of the Anchor Pub and adjacent ware house (South Asian Studies). However is not adverse to the idea to improve full public access to the River's edge. It may be possible to establish a high level boardwalk linking both buildings with Silver Street and thus retaining the lower concrete ledge for occasional access, safer route to and from the punting station and to retain the pub's outdoor space. The upper boardwalk could make use of the warehouse theme and utilising examples of successful warehouse conversions elsewhere in the UK. The space could for example include some further outdoor seating for pub customers and the public utilising the vantage point over the Mill Pit.

The Society agrees that the Scudamore's ticket office complex near the Hotel (Double Tree) is of very low significance and indeed would recommend its removal and replacement with a better building which improves the river and road frontages and provides a focal point at the end of Little St Mary's Lane when viewed from the south/west. It is felt that due to the narrowness of the Lane that a gap to enable view to the Rivers would not be that effective. In addition the suggested replacement building with an reduced overall footprint - but at the same time permitting a 2 story building - would increase the linkage of Granta Place with the River. Ideally the opportunity should be taken to investigate if some open space could be achieved (in line with comments made to improved bridge crossing at the Old Mill foundation area) to thus create a better link with the riverside and rationalise the area of the upper punting station.

Waste Management

Due to the site constraints such as limited space and high level of visitor usage of the lower part of the site the integration of significant underground recycling station should be investigated catering for the vast tourism waste (litter on Laundress Green) and other site waste by reducing the overall visual impact of such facilities.

Supporting Documentation – Mill Lane and Old Press Site – Historic Environment Analysis (Oct 2008)

The Society welcomes to collation of historic information depicting the changes of the area over a long time and particularly recent centuries. The Society has some comments and changes (apart from rating of the significance of buildings) to suggest to improve this document to eradicate errors or supplement information and would consider that a revision of this document would be useful to keep a more concise record of the area for prosperity.

Section 106 or other Planning Obligations or Levies

The Society welcomes 'off-site proposals' to improve nearby streetscape however considers as paramount that the green space Laundress Green and its infrastructure is given major improvements together with the whole Mill Pit area and River's embankment areas. This to remove the effect of increased wear and tear and enable more effective greenspace management benefiting visitors, wildlife and grazing animals alike. In addition the Queens Green and similar high wear and tear issues and infrastructure improvements could be addressed ensuring a balanced design approach for the varied users.

SUMMARY

The Society strongly supports the notion to redevelop this important inner city area located within the Historic Core Conservation Area. The concept of reuse and adaptation of existing buildings should be the overriding principle when redeveloping the site.

However the Society objects to the potential demolition of buildings adjacent to Laundress Lane that relate to the River Character. In view of No 16 Mill Road it is prepared to accept a high quality and density replacement building of high class and worthy contemporary design (but if possible retaining 16a) and to a building height of 4 storey (Silver Street level) with a suitable pinnacle/ small tower reflecting the roofscape character of the area.

In terms of the integration of commerce and retail, integration of squares and improved infrastructure for cyclists, buses and pedestrians more visionary approach is required than currently portrait within the draft SPD documents.

Due to the trading character and piecemeal development of the site over centuries, all buildings are not that aesthetically pleasing or 'special' in themselves, but the piecemeal way it has grown up and been adapted over the years is an important visual evidence how the University has woven itself into the fabric of this ancient market town over centuries.

The Riverside area should be more celebrated together with its industrial remnants.

Redevelopment to strengthen the character of small courtyards and enclosures and improved pedestrian linkages as well as remaining a series of private spaces with improved small scale public open spaces scattered over it – using existing yards, through ways and open spaces. This vision is based on a mixed use of chiefly private or semi-private spaces and some high quality public space for tourism and also town/local people.

As part of the Cambridge Core Traffic Scheme, the Society would highly welcome that in time the whole of Silver Street (Silver St/Trumpington St - bridge to junction with Downing St) should be shared surface and with minimal vehicular traffic and similarly Mill Lane/Granta Place should be shared surface design to better accommodate the various users and reduce speeds of motorised vehicles.

CAMBRIDGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

● protecting the amenities ● green spaces ● historic buildings ● character and setting of Cambridge ● for over 80 years.

Whilst the Society has serious concerns over the lack of a coherent vision for key areas of this complex site, it is fully prepared to play a role in helping to formulate this vision in partnership with planners, owners and developers. The Society's officers and members of the Society's Planning Committee and Heritage Working Group would welcome to retain a close continuing involvement in this organic process.

If you have any queries please contact me asap.

I would appreciate if the Society can be kept up-to-date with the progress of this proposal.

Kind regards



Carolin Göhler
Chief Executive - ceo@cpswandlebury.org

CC: via e-mail only:
John Clark – Cambridge University EMBS
John Preston – Cambridge City Council
Glen Richardson – Cambridge City Council
Alistair Wilson - Cambridge City Council