Commentary by John Sergeant, Architect, Former University Lecturer in Architecture, Emeritus Fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge

Thank you and John Ellis for the invitation to attend the final Charette presentation. It was a pleasure to return to the fray of project work after many years of teaching design.

The occasion was clearly a rich learning experience for all concerned. Such projects are an integral part of teaching architects and are little understood in the University at large, so the work and discussion had its own intrinsic value.

Recognition by all of the importance of a social and visual core to the project from day one was heartening. Lessons have been learned. Students had tussled with giving identity to each element of housing and had tackled the frequent conflict between aspect and prospect (orientation and view). I felt that some students had succumbed to formula, e.g. a courtyard layout, without recognising its magical quality; all design must be mentally inhabited. 'How do I arrive home?' There was sensitivity to the overall form of the development, however the potential of exploiting car parking, excavation and contour to combat noise and define the western edge (an acropolis-form) in relationship to the large-scale elements of motorway and the American Cemetery at Madingley was under-explored. Given its short duration however, the work was highly creditable to all.

I do hope that future projects in the City can be subjects for similar scrutiny and debate, and that the initiative can spread from this necessarily University focussed start.