

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	19/12/2016
Site:	N/A
Proposal:	Installation of gateway signage at key entry points to the National Park
Planning reference:	N/A
Panel members sitting:	Graham Morrison (Chair) Kay Brown Mark Penfold John Starling Kim Wilkie
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Genevieve Hayes Paul Slade Kelly Porter Lillian Wakely Nat Belderson Natalie Fellows
Item presented by:	Ruth James Veronica Craddock
Declarations of interest:	None

The Panel's response to your scheme will be placed on the Planning Authority's website where it can be viewed by the public.

The SDNPA operate a transparent service, whereby pre-application and application details, although not actively publicised will be placed on the online planning register. This is unless the applicant gives reasons why the enquiry is commercially sensitive.

COMMENTS

	Notes
1.0 Discussion/Questions with applicants	<p>The Panel asked what feedback had been received so far. The Applicant said that feedback so far has been very positive, contrary to their expectations.</p> <p>The Panel asked if they'd use Concept 3, Sign 2 for village signage. The Applicant said that they would, but they would also want to create a full suite of signs for use as village signage rather than sticking to a single specific design.</p> <p>The Applicant expressed that the feedback they had received suggested that sign Concept 3, Type 2 was the most popular one, and they were encouraged to be more adventurous. The next favourite after that was Concept 3, Type 3, but concerns were raised about how well it would weather and whether there might be maintenance issues.</p> <p>The Panel observed that a wooden sign made of oak would last a reasonably good stretch of time, and suggested that there could be alternate ways of lettering the signage that is easy to maintain. The Panel also suggested adding copper sulphate to the Corten to help with maintenance.</p> <p>The Panel went on to discuss Corten as a material for a sign, highlighting the problem that it is very vulnerable to scratching and so is at risk of vandalism, noting that with a painted wood sign the authority could just repaint it if it's damaged, but a Corten sign would be much harder to repair. They suggested that this would be a good opportunity to try out some materials for the signs if the SDNPA is going to look at rolling out signs further after this. In the same vein, they suggested that a good test of the resilience of the material would be to get an example sign and have a small group of people stress test it by seeing how much damage they can do. The Applicant agreed that there's a risk of damage from vandalism, but they pointed out that the Shipwright's Way features a series of white stone sculptures, which have experienced minimal vandalism, so they think that the chances of vandalism are reasonably low. They also expressed that an additional complicating factor is the need to design the signs with passive safety in mind – the signs need to be built to collapse in the event of a car colliding with them, for instance.</p> <p>The Panel, speaking on the subject of the Shared Identity, said that they felt the line art had a very strong effect, feeling that it beats the collage effect as it gives more room for the imagination. The Applicant acknowledged that the identity is extremely versatile because of how much it leaves to the imagination, letting</p>

the viewers mind fill in the blanks. The identity is meant to evoke the park – not just the undulations of the Downs themselves, but also ideas like the flow of the rivers running through it.

The Panel said that Concept 3, Sign 2, the listed favourite, works best when it's in the horizontal. Concept 1, Sign 1 is a better vertical sign, but the Panel felt that the replication of the identity at the top and bottom undermines the effect overall.

The Panel questioned the size of the lettering, with a feeling that at present it's the sort of size that you might see inside a building, but could be lost on an exterior roadside sign. There was then some question about the decision to write it entirely in capital letters, with a split in the Panel, some of whom felt that the 'all capital' scheme worked well and the choice of typeface was good. Others thought that the sign might be clearer if the case varied, with the first letter of the words being upper case and the rest lower case and there might be some link to people with disabilities with text interpretation, so should be investigated further.

The Panel suggested that there might be a benefit by not picking a single favourite from these concepts – the variety in different signs helps to de-corporatize it, with the variation in the Shared Identity help to display it as an identity rather than a brand. It also helps to sell the range of features that the park possesses and gives each sign a chance to fit with the landscape, as intended, preventing them from being too obtrusive.

All the members of the Panel liked Concept 3, Sign 2, with the appearance of the Corten and the effect of the cut out sections of the sign drawing praise, although an observation was made by a panel member who had worked with cut out signs before that there's a risk that members of the public will stuff bits of rubbish in to the cut out sections. The point was also raised about safety standards – the Building Regulations have a requirement that the gaps in balustrades should not be greater than 100mm to prevent heads being stuck in the gaps or children being allowed to climb through, so this requirement might also apply to signs.

The Applicant agreed that they would need to look closely at health and safety considerations, which would include matters like the maximum size of the apertures and the collapsibility of the sign.

The Panel all agreed that the sign needs to look good and that it is better to have just a small number of signs of a very high quality than to distribute lower quality signs across the whole park. They were pleasantly surprised by the Shared Identity, which they feel is a clever alternative to the logo, being a clear and compelling symbol that

	<p>engages the imagination.</p> <p>The Panel asked if any of the signs might be illuminated. The Applicant said that there were no plans to illuminate any of the signs, although some might be installed in areas that are already illuminated.</p> <p>The Panel raised the point that, if some of the signs might be used as village signs, there could be regulations that the park must adhere to regarding making the signs reflective, so that they can be easily identified in the dark.</p> <p>The Applicant noted that the shared identity is open for anybody to use, with a lot of communities having already approached the authority to discuss using it in their village signs, which is a use that would be encouraged.</p> <p>The Panel noted that, in particular, the line art variant of the shared identity really helps to evoke the image of the downs, creating a very potent identity for the National Park as a whole.</p> <p>The Panel asked whether the locations where the signs would be installed have been chosen yet. The Applicant said that they have 20 preferred options from consultation, which will be the starting point for any plans.</p> <p>The Panel said that, overall, they feel that this looks like a very promising project and they look forward to seeing it develop.</p>
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