

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	18/5/2017
Site:	New Elm Barn, Firle Bostal, Firle, East Sussex, BN8 6NA
Proposal:	Erection of a new dwelling seeking permission under NPPF Paragraph 55 to include partial removal of part of dilapidated barn on the site, to be replaced with new dwelling, however the ghost of the original barn complex is retained through retention of existing flint wall courtyard. The palette of the proposed elements, patinated zinc, timber framed glazing and coursed flint walls. To include bespoke music studio, 4 bedrooms, living area and small study space.
Planning reference:	SDNP/17/01963/PRE
Panel members sitting:	Mark Penfold CHAIR Kay Brown Luke Engleback Paul Fender James Fox Graham Morrison
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Genevieve Hayes (Design Officer) Paul Slade (Support Services Officer) Emily Anderson (Planning Officer)
Observers:	Lisa Rues
Item presented by:	Jeremy Tate Nicholas Grimshaw (Via pre-recorded message) Melvin Paul
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>1. The Panel first asked how the Applicants are applying the Paragraph 55 criteria and what their reasons for doing this are. They then asked what the extent of the music room and the eyrie would be, as they seem to go beyond the existing extent of the barn.</p> <p>The Applicant started by providing information on a previous Paragraph 55 scheme that they had worked on, in Suffolk, which they had linked with the grounds in which it was sited. They went on to say that they hoped to similarly link this build to its agricultural history. The Applicants suggested that Paragraph 55 was created in order to extend the idea of country houses; while this project started as a barn conversion, much of that has dropped away as it has progressed. The Applicant now feels that what they are proposing represents an innovative reuse of an old agricultural building.</p> <p>The Panel asked what about that makes it innovative.</p> <p>The Applicant replied that they do not intend to just pull down a barn and rebuild the structure outright, resulting in a complete redesign of the whole thing. In regards to Paragraph 55, the Applicant noted that they think it is innovative, but whether or not it is outstanding is a very subjective question.</p> <p>The Panel agreed that whether or not a build is outstanding is very subjective and noted that they often find Paragraph 55 houses to be particularly difficult because of this.</p> <p>The Applicant noted as a final point that there is a functional element of the build as well; if the barn is not maintained, it is liable to fall down. However, they noted that this is a very objective point.</p> <p>2. One of the Panellists noted that the area of the application is one that they know well, having done a study on behalf of the Firle Estate. They feel that the key point for debate here should be about the land as a starting point, not the building. During the study, the application site fell in an area noted to be very sensitive to change; while change is possibly, it will be very difficult. This site in particular was noted as being one of the best sites in the area for accommodating change, which would help make that easier. One of the key things that is looked at is the time depth of the landscape; what features exist that date the area, which gives a sense of the history of the land. The main thing to learn from this is how much change is there already in the landscape from what was existing? An issue that the Applicant has already highlighted is the large amount of glazing in the build.</p>

	<p>The Applicant acknowledged that the glazing was a substantial problem. They noted that blackout blinds were an option, but they felt that this would be a cop out. They suggested that they are looking in to other options, like tilting the glass to reduce reflection and overshadowing it.</p> <p>The Panel noted that the 5th elevation is vitally important, as you will be able to see this from a higher elevation. In talking about Paragraph 55, the panel agrees that one of the key elements of it is being sensitive to the local character. The flint walls will form a notable part of the building as they are a light colour, which stands out in the landscape, as opposed to darker ones that are more readily absorbed. One of the big questions is; what will the degree of change be? The Panel recommended that the Applicant try to display what difference the application will make. Finally, the Panel asked what shows itself in the landscape. They then established that the Applicant will need a very rigorous process to show and quantify the degree of change that their build will make.</p> <p>3. The Panel asked about parking and access; specifically, they noted that private cars would be parked there, but would it also accommodate performance guests?</p> <p>The Applicant agreed that access would not support regular performances but noted that this application is intended to be a house and private retreat, not a performance space. The idea of it being a performance space is aspirational at this stage. In the event that it is used as a performance space, it is unlikely to be more often than once a year, likely a small performance for the local community. Other than that, there might be performances for a handful of guests, but the car port can probably take 4/5 cars and so accommodate that.</p> <p>The Panel suggested that planting some Blackthorn might help to screen the parking areas and reduce the impact.</p> <p>4. The Panel raised concerns about the roof of the main building and the pod, or eyrie, adjacent to it. The shapes of the roof and pod stand out from other rooflines in the area, although the Panel did note that Firle does already feature some quite varied rooflines. The sensitivity of these issues needs to be explained to support the case. It is about the landscape first and how it sits in the landscape can add another layer of the harmonics.</p> <p>5. The Panel noted that the application tries to retain some of the figure and barn typology and asked how that was relevant, given that so much of it is going to be removed. Why is retaining this style still relevant when so much has already been taken away?</p> <p>The Applicant explained that the building is intended to be a cousin of the agricultural type in order to fit in with the agriculture that surrounds it. They further elaborated that they wanted to respect the ghost of what was there</p>
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	<p>originally.</p> <p>The Panel suggested that they do not think it needs to be guided by what was there before when so much of that is being removed.</p> <p>6. The Panel advised that something that could be truly innovative would be to use the local materials that are of Firle in a contemporary way. This would create a design that is sensitive to the materials of the local landscape.</p> <p>The Applicant said that what was great was the sensitivity of the views that could be pulled in to the building.</p> <p>The Panel said that what makes this site so magical is that the landscape is not purely visual but musical as well, with the bird song and the winds. To be able to build a house that captures some of that magic would be great. The poetry of that environment feeding in would help to demonstrate how this development can be considered outstanding and innovative and therefore worthy of approval under Paragraph 55.</p>
2.0 Panel Summary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Panel began by noting that this application has immense potential, but it still has to develop to realise that; at the moment there are a lot of flaws, but the Panel is confident that the Applicant recognises that and can address them. 2. The Panel noted that the elevations at the moment are particularly poor, perhaps to the point of not being worth including in the planning documents in their current state. 3. The Panel suggested that other areas in need of refinement include the need to better interact with the environment. They also identified the eyrie as something that is currently going a step too far and needs more consideration. 4. The Panel recommended that Nicholas Grimshaw be involved more strongly in the development of the details in order to move this forward. 5. The Panel said that they want to see this application taken forward and hope that it can return to the Design Review Panel later on in its development so that they can see it develop. 6. On the subject of access and parking, the Panel suggested that, in line with the barn typology of the structure, they could simply extend the roof out to accommodate more cars. This is what a farmer would have done if he needed to accommodate more vehicles in his barn. 7. The Panel felt that the build should be kept self-contained within its own courtyard and not extend out in to the surrounding landscape to reduce its impact. 8. The Panel said that a particular strength of the build is its roof forms, but cautioned that as soon as you start adding things on to that you risk losing some of that strength. 9. The Panel recommended that the Applicants make it very clear in their planning documents where the existing footprint of the building is, so that it is easier to see that the new build stays within the extent of the existing building. 10. The view of the build, particularly on the model, drew praise from the Panel as it fits the land well.

	<p>11. The Panel noted that there is a primary access up through the downs but that it comes out on to a hedgerow, which is not a good way to terminate an access route. They noted that little details like that will be very important on an application such as this one.</p> <p>12. Finally, the panel cautioned that what they have seen here is an enormous amount of potential for excellence and innovation; in order to achieve this potential, the Applicant will have to work hard. If the Panel subsequently feels that the potential is not being achieved, their current support for the application is likely to be withdrawn.</p>
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