

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	18/10/17
Site:	Tide mills, Mill Drove, Seaford, East Sussex
Proposal:	Installation of a new footbridge
Planning reference:	SDNP/15/04268/PRE
Panel members sitting:	Graham Morrison (Chair) Lap Chan Andrew Smith Nicolas Pople David Hares William Hardie
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Genevieve Hayes (Design Officer) Mark Waller-Gutierrez (Design Officer) Ruth Childs (Landscape Officer) Vicki Colwell (Case Officer) Paul Slade (Support Services Officer) Johnathan Dean (Education Officer)
SDNPA Planning Committee in attendance:	None
Item presented by:	Martin Knight, Knight Architects Laura Langridge, Knight Architects Trevor Wilson, Network Rail Paul Donald, Network Rail
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Panel asked whether the applicant could tell us the width of the bridge and whether there was a specified minimum width. The Applicant said that the width was 4.5m and that this width was defined by the planned design. They noted that the total length of the ramps leading to the bridge reached 200m, compared to only 5m of bridge, so they wanted to make the bridge noteworthy. 2. The Panel asked the applicants to confirm the heights of the parapets. The Applicant said that the heights varied from 1.8m to 2.5m. They noted that the guidelines expected a minimum height of 1.8m, of which the bottom 1.4m should be solid. They noted that the parapets were used to help screen views of a nearby Industrial estate from the bridge. The material for the parapets would be wooden slats, arranged as a continuous wooden parapet when they're above the rail line and positioned with gaps between the slats elsewhere. The Panel asked whether the move from 1.8m to 2.5m was intended to benefit perspective. The Applicants said yes. 3. The Panel asked whether this would be a cycle bridge. The Applicants said that it was not being designed as a cycle bridge, but it would be accessible to cycles and might be used by them. 4. The Panel noted that the earthworks supporting the lower halves of the ramps are substantial enough to be described more accurately as embankments. In this case, would they need to have rails? The Applicants said no, they didn't specifically need rails, but they've consulted with accessibility groups on how to make the bridge accessible and these groups have suggested that rails and resting points would help make the bridge easier to access. 5. The Panel asked about the range of views to either side of the bridge. The Applicants said that there were high quality views going either east or west, across a landscape defined by field boundaries. 6. The Panel asked whether a staircase would be installed as part of the bridge. The Applicant said that they had considered it, but are of the view that the majority of users of the bridge will be "time rich", most likely walkers visiting the area rather than busy commuters. This means that the long ramp won't inconvenience them much, but gives a fantastic opportunity to the architect to focus on crossing the bridge as an experience, rather than an expedience.

	<p>7. The Panel asked what will happen to the road leading to the level cross. The Applicant explained that this was beyond their involvement but, as far as they're aware, nothing will happen to it.</p> <p>8. The Panel asked whether this bridge meets the parameters for heavy carriers. The Applicant said that it does.</p> <p>9. The Panel asked whether the bridge needed to be lit. The Applicant explained that the route is not lit currently and that they do not expect the bridge to be.</p> <p>10. The Panel asked what views will be presented from the viewing platform. The Applicant said that it will look out towards the sea, across the lost village of Tide Mills. The Panel asked whether they'd be able to see Newhaven fort from there. The Applicant said no, noting that the view will naturally be to the east.</p> <p>11. The Panel asked what will hold the bridge up in the sections that aren't supported by the embankment. The Applicant said that they would be using circular columns set within a steel and concrete trough.</p> <p>12. The Panel asked what will hold the bridge up in the sections that aren't supported by the embankment. The Applicant said that the boundary between the railway and the bridge needs to be well defined, to discourage people from attempting to jump the tracks. The Panel ask how far the fence extends. The Applicant said that it didn't extend far, only a short distance covering the crossing and the bridge start point.</p> <p>13. The Panel asked whether there'd be benches located at the proposed rest points. The Applicant said that yes, there will be.</p> <p>14. The Panel noted that this appears to cut through space taken by the disused railway platform on the site and asked whether it would be retained. The Applicants said that it would not, suggesting that the existing platform was of low heritage value. The Panel asked the Applicant to confirm that the heritage associated with the station would be lost. The Applicant agreed that the platform would be lost but noted that the station master's house would remain untouched.</p> <p>15. The Panel noted that the railway almost appears secondary to the bridge and asked if that was the Applicant's intention. The Applicant said that the intention was to lower the presence of the railway.</p>
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2.0 Panel Summary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Panel opened by saying how much they enjoyed this review session; they felt the presentation was good and the project itself had seen massive improvements since it first came to the design review panel. They offered their congratulations to Network Rail – They have produced an exemplar project. 2. The Panel applauded Knight Architecture’s concepts of place making and the “beautiful ordinary”, saying they were exactly what a structure of this type required. 3. As a particular point of praise the Panel observed that the bridge manages to minimise the presence of the railway; while it performs the functional purpose of providing a pedestrian crossing point on the railway, if the railway were removed it could still be a beneficial feature in the landscape. 4. The Panel accepted the Applicant’s strategy to regard the structure of the bridge elements as being subservient to the overall composition. The Panel nevertheless felt that more detailed consideration of the design of the structure might be worthwhile. The Panel felt a robust approach to the structure could benefit a very promising scheme and suggested that the design should seek to integrate the structure – even though it might be ‘ordinary’ – into the overall design of the bridge. 5. The Panel suggested that the composition relies on complex elements. They recommended that the Applicants consider carefully the approach to the bridge, the mix of solid and transparent materials and the length of the ramped inclined and the bridge. It was suggested that the applicants should think about continuity of the design. 6. The applicants were advised to include as much of the gates and fence as possible within the remit of the bridge design. If the gates and fences don’t match the quality of the bridge it could make a huge difference to the presentation of the site as a whole. 7. The Panel suggested putting up interpretation materials to highlight points of interest and education, and recommended talking to the SDNPA staff on this matter. 8. The Panel recommended that consideration be put in to the orientation of the bridge in relation to sunlight and the prevailing winds. 9. Finally, that Panel thanked Network Rail for taking a proposition that could’ve been extremely problematic and turning it to one that could have a significant community benefit, creating an exemplary scheme.
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