

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	18/04/2016
Site:	Upland Park
Proposal:	Holiday lodge development to include self-catering, timber framed lodges arranged in a landscaping setting. Including a small facility building, children's play area and associated landscaping features.
Planning reference:	SDNP/16/01551/PRE
Panel members sitting:	David Hares (Chair) Graham Morrison Kim Wilkie Steven Johnson Paul Fender David Edwards
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Genevieve Hayes Hayley Stevenson Richard Ferguson
Item presented by:	Joe Barnen Mike Harbournmell Andy Payne Jerry Tate
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
I.0 Discussion/Questions with applicants	<p>The Panel asked how many lodges there will be. The applicants stated that there are 36</p> <p>The Panel asked why we haven't yet seen the design for the facilities building, and what this will be. The applicants stated that the design for the facilities building was still being resolved.</p> <p>The Panel asked why the applicants put such a focus on researching settlement patterns when they were designing a collection of holiday lodges, which typically are best positioned further apart in order to allow the occupants privacy. The applicants conceded that there was a functional complication in that people want both privacy and community. They stated that the exploration in to settlement patterns actually arose from discussion with the SDNPA. They believe that this information will be useful in designing community spaces, particularly for the family lodges.</p> <p>The Panel praised the idea of using wooden holiday lodges here, but commented that the lodges could be better interwoven with the topography and trees on the site, perhaps going as far as building some tree houses rather than lodges. The Panel in turn suggested that planting new trees, particularly in the NW corner of the site, would help reclaim some of the site's character. The applicants said that they normally do work in dense woodland, and that installing tree houses was something they had considered and was perhaps an opportunity for them. However, planting new trees presented its own problems; The site was intended to be operational from day one, while growing new trees will take years; The designers had concerns about getting light in to and good views out of the lodges if the tree cover increased; and that the lodges themselves have a design life of about 25 years, which would limit the benefits of newly planted trees.</p> <p>The Panel suggested that the scheme might be better if the development was made denser by pulling development back into the NW corner and providing a larger area of open grassland. They also asked why the applicants decided on 36 lodges. The applicant's first point was that the business model they were using called for 36 lodges, and deviation from that would present its own difficulties. 36 lodges was deemed to be the right balance from a business perspective. Similarly, 36 lodges helped them keep the size of the development fairly similar to the footprint of the existing hotel – The hotel had a 1,700 square feet footprint, while the lodges would have one of 1,950 square feet.</p>

	<p>Changing the number of units might also change the character of the settlement – For instance, increasing the number of units would make it feel more like a settlement. Also, a denser build strategy could make it less appealing, as lot of people that are interested in this type of holiday lodging are often keen to get some seclusion.</p> <p>The applicants also highlighted some concerns about noise mitigation from the busy A32, which runs alongside the site, and that more buildings would force them to place more lodges close to the A32, where noise would be a nuisance.</p> <p>The Panel stated that it was a wonderful site, but wondered how the applicants would create a sense of place, both in the long and short term. They also inquired as to whether the applicants could add some sort of blocking feature in order to limit access to the river edge, out of concerns about the safety of children, who would want to play around the river.</p> <p>The applicants stated that their early idea was to build a tree-based adventure playground, a model that they've used before in Scotland, but agreed that there are still health and safety issues to consider regarding the river and providing a barrier to prevent children from stumbling in to it.</p> <p>The Panel asked how high the eaves are likely to be.</p> <p>The applicants said that the eaves would start internally at 1.2m above the floor, and externally the ground to eaves height would be 4.5m.</p> <p>The Panel, consequently, asked if there was demand for this.</p> <p>The applicants said that, by lowering the buildings they would be forced to increase the footprint. Beyond this concern, however, they conceded that they would need more design work to fully answer both this question, and the earlier question about sense of place.</p> <p>The Panel suggested that the slope is part of the context and that the Applicant could use the slope more appropriately, perhaps by terracing the slopes and putting trees on them.</p>
2.0 Panel Summary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Panel agreed that this site is not right for the hotel, but that this type of use is appropriate and worthwhile. The Applicant is setting a precedent in this area and so have a wonderful opportunity. The intention, in putting people in touch with nature, is good. 2. In achieving a more contextually sensitive design, building the family lodges in a denser arrangement while the smaller couple's lodges are built in a looser arrangement could be beneficial. 3. Pulling trees away from the lower slope of the river valley

	<p>should be a longer term aim, with the first stage being to remove the pine trees.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The Panel felt that the development is expanding too much in to the valley, which creates safety concerns regarding the risk of children playing around the river. 5. The Panel suggested that the incongruous conifers could be removed in order to restore the site to its natural state. This process would result in an improvement in the ecological quality of the park, in turn providing a benefit to the SDNPA as a whole. It was suggested that this could be done on a phased basis through a management plan, so that new trees could be planted during initial development, and then the pines removed as the new trees establish themselves, in order to maintain a suitable level of tree cover. 6. The prospective time depth of the development should be built in to the plan, considering the benefits of a long term management plan and restoration effort. 7. The applicants were advised that it's good, when attending a panel like this, to get their starting point right. They began with a long piece on settlement types, using up a large portion of their presentation time, but then never actually brought it up again; while it was good that they considered this, the fact that they then never used it again seems wasteful and the panel wasn't sure why it was considered at all. Also, the applicants didn't provide any information about the landscape outside of the site, which is vital in understanding the landscape context. 8. The Panel felt that the applicants sold their application as not doing any harm to the site. In order to fit with SDNPA objectives and get support for their plans, however, they should be selling a restorative aspect, telling the panel about how they will enhance the site, not just preserve it. 9. The layout lends itself to a housing layout, but what is needed here is something unique, with intrigue. The Panel suggested that the long-term restoration effort could add depth to the site's inherent story, creating a unique selling point for it. Similarly, the wooded waterway is a vital component of the site's character, so building off of this feature could bring in great benefits. 10. There is a concern that at this stage, it would just be another woodland river side complex. Architecturally it looks like the cabins could be placed on any site. In order to be a truly exemplary development, it needs to be more closely linked to the site itself, appearing unique in order to achieve a strong sense of place. Is using prefabricated panels appropriate if they want the user to feel at one with nature? 11. The construction doesn't necessarily have to be all wood/timer. The buildings could be more rooted in the local landscape by using other local materials.
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