

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	18/07/18
Site:	Recreation Ground, B2146, West Marden Hill to Compton Square Compton, West Sussex
Proposal:	Erection of 2 no. houses and 4 no. flats with associated parking and landscaping
Planning reference:	SDNP/18/01480/PRE
Panel members sitting:	Graham Morrison (Chair) Lap Chan William Hardie Kim Wilkie
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Mark Waller Gutierrez (Design Officer) Ruth Childs (Landscape Officer) Victoria Corrigan (Case Officer) Nat Belderson (Link Officer) Natacha Bricks-Yonow (Support Services Officer) Sergio Chapman-Salas (Apprentice Planner) Ben Terry (Design Officer)
SDNPA Planning Committee in attendance:	None
Item presented by:	Clare Sutton (MH Architects) Alison Galbraith (Terra Firma) Karen Hillhouse (Hastoe housing association) Nat King-Smith (MH architects)
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 asked a quantitative question about the amount of development proposed for the site... The Applicant explained that there will be four one bedroom flats (50-60sq/m), one house of three bedrooms (93sq/m) and two houses of two bedrooms (79sq/m).</p> <p>2. The Panel asked about the dimensions of the site. What was the width East-West, at its shortest point? And, the length North-South, at its longest point? The Applicants said that the recreation area was over one hectare.</p> <p>The Panel confirmed that they wanted to know the dimensions of the site, but they could calculate them from the site plan.</p> <p>3. The Panel then noted that the site analysis had concluded the tennis court to be the most intrusive part of the site and could be better screened. The Applicant said that they were planning on 'tucking' the playground in the north-east corner, with trees to cover the sight of the tennis court, and possibly helped further by planting new trees. They wish to keep everything up at this end of the area to keep the site close to the sports features and avoid any conflict with the football pitch.</p> <p>4. The Panel asked about the 'historic' ditch and then asked if it was essential for the recreation ground to expand to the east. The Applicant said that after a public meeting with the parish council regarding affordable housing and in particular a 1951 covenant about the eastern strip of land, the land was released through a vote. The Parish Council owns the field on the eastern side of the site. The site, despite not being a playing field, was registered as a sports ground. Sport England have said that any loss of the playing field must be provided elsewhere and any application would need to give back an equal amount of sport opportunity to be successful.</p> <p>5. The panel asked whether it was possible to leave the ditch as it was? The applicant said that the football pitch will now widen as the new boundary will be pushed further east to accommodate it.</p> <p>6. The panel asked whether the current ditch to the eastern boundary is used as drainage? The applicants said that the ditch is definitely not a ditch but a bund. They then offered apologies for their mistake.</p> <p>7. The Panel asked about the scale of development; the</p>

	<p>building heights compared to neighbouring properties viewed in (street) elevation? ...It appears that buildings are getting taller?</p> <p>The applicant stated that their design was reduced in scale from the previous (pre-app) scheme, and that the building with the flats would create a suitable corner plot, as well as an entry site of the village. The scale of the existing bungalow (at the edge of the village) has no definition and does not feel like a 'full stop'. Currently, there is only just a road sign to announce the entry/exit of the village. The applicants proposition of a full two-storey building would give this feel of a 'full stop' to announce the entry of the village.</p> <p>8. The Panel asked the applicant to confirm floor to ceiling heights in the flats?</p> <p>The Applicant answered that it would be around 2.85m.</p> <p>9. The Panel commented that this was high...</p> <p>The Applicant said that they were debating about the roof pitch which should be 45 degrees.</p> <p>10. The Panel asked about windows located up to the eaves...</p> <p>The Applicant said that the houses were designed to a passivhaus standard and the insulation is at the corner, and explained that the corner gave it insulation so that there were no 'weak points'.</p> <p>11. The panel stated that the best development should not (only) be defined by how efficient the dwellings were, there must also be an architectural response to its surroundings.</p> <p>The Applicant wishes to produce the best development possible within those constraints. They are trying to give the best design response for the Parish and their affordable housing requirements.</p> <p>The applicant responded by saying that the building is tall and is horizontal along road and then a vertical element to mark a stop.</p> <p>12. The Panel asked if, constraints aside, whether a choice of two, three or four bedrooms flat would be ideal?</p> <p>The Applicant answered that there was an identified need for one bedroom flats.</p>
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<p>2.0 Panel Summary</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Panel opened by acknowledging this is a difficult site – not just because of its rural exception status but also because it raises a number of design issues, some of which might set some significant precedents. 2. The Panel agreed with the substance of the design and landscape officer's report and divided its comments into four parts: the principle of development, its site planning, typologies, the landscape and, lastly, its architecture. 3. The principle of development The Panel is principally concerned with matters of design rather than policy and is therefore silent on the issue of the principle of development on 'rural exception' sites. It expects all development to be appropriately located, landscape-led, and designed to the highest possible quality. Though the Panel recognises the site as being extraordinarily special, it takes the view that any development here should be quietly appropriate rather than bold. 4. Site planning The Panel therefore disagreed with the so called 'gateway' concept. It commented that this notion is not a prevalent characteristic of villages in the South Downs. At the edge of villages, the built form tends to disperse with less significant outbuildings rather than announce the entry to the settlement. 5. Typology The Panel considers this should be a development that relates to the prevailing hierarchy of Compton and it commended some of the analysis on village building typologies identified in the design and access statement. It noted in particular the examples of short terraced units and suggested that these might be more appropriate than the somewhat over-complicated and elaborate composition that was proposed. 6. Landscape <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 The Panel believes that the site requires an understanding of landscape to inform the compositional design decisions. They felt that what had been explained was something of a 'tick box' exercise. 6.2 In detail, it agreed that to move the tennis court would be a step too far but felt the same might not apply to the play space. It would be a pity if the play space didn't benefit from all this change and to relocate it and improve should be an ambition included in the scheme. If it were relocated to the north-east corner, it could provide a better feeling of enclosure by being close to the trees, with more opportunities for imaginative play. 6.3 Concerning the vehicular areas, the Panel discussed access off the main road, near to the existing property but agreed that the existing entrance to the car park might be a better option and it advised that the surface treatment ought not be black-top. [p4] It stressed that the applicant should have those details and materials included in the application and approved (in principle) by the LPA and the highways authority. It would not do for the application to state the use of hoggins and then to be changed to black-top
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	<p>further down the line in response to a later highways objection.</p> <p>6.4 The applicant should clarify whether the eastern boundary is a ditch or a bund and annotate this correctly on all documents and information.</p> <p>7. Architecture</p> <p>7.1 The Panel has no wish in its criticism to put pressure on the limited resources of the housing association. Rather, it hopes that its suggestions should lead to simplifications that may allow a better use of the budget.</p> <p>7.2 In relation to this, the Panel expressed concerns about the sealed passivhaus ambition. Its concerns (which may be unfounded) was partly about cost but partly about placing constraints on behaviour such as limiting the ability to open windows. In this circumstance, the Panel placed a higher priority on a sensitive design though it accepts that the two may not be incompatible.</p> <p>7.3 In terms of scale, the Panel noted that the general scale of buildings in Compton is lower than this proposal. Given its location at the edge of the village, the Panel felt the scale was too great and suggested that reducing the height to a more cottage-like scale might be more appropriate.</p> <p>7.4 The Panel was unconvinced about how the proposal ‘turned the corner’ with a prominent elevation facing the car park. This gesture raised issues of scale and emphasis. It suggested looking at the site plan to see if there is enough space (27.5 meters at the narrowest East-West section) to have a row of dwellings with a hedge or a grass verge to the front, with gardens and parking to the rear (to the edge of the tennis court). This could potentially produce a more straightforward outcome which, in the Panel’s view, may be less expensive to construct and perhaps allow the applicant to put more money into quality of material and detail.</p> <p>7.5 The Panel noted the applicant’s ambition for “clashing roofs” but suggested that it would be almost impossible to replicate, in a new development, the picturesque roofscape qualities found in the village development – qualities that had taken many generations to evolve. This need for such complexity could be seen as being contrived and in looking at the details found in the village, the Panel felt that, in this location, simpler more direct details would be more appropriate. A simple terrace of four dwellings with the upper floor partly in the roof section could signal the edge or the beginning of the village.</p> <p>8. Summary</p> <p>The Panel reminded the applicant that the brief, the location and the site provide an extraordinary opportunity to produce a small housing development that could be as memorable as it is modest. The Panel believes a scheme here should be award-winning because of its appropriateness and its simplicity and it recommends a simpler and more direct design. The Panel is conscious that this is a work in progress, but it feels that the current scheme is not yet suitable and wondered if it would work better with four dwellings as six, currently seems too much. The Panel is aware that this criticism may seem negative but if the Applicant has already passed the hurdle of the planning principle,</p>
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	<p>they should focus on the quality of the design and consider the need of modesty at the entrance of this village.</p>