

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	10/10/2018
Site:	Streat Hill Farmhouse, Streat Hill, Streat, Hassocks, East Sussex, BN6 8RP
Proposal:	Replacement private dwelling and annexe of fire damaged existing dwelling
Planning reference:	SDNP/18/04158/FUL
Panel members sitting:	Mark Penfold (Chair) Paul Fender Merrick Denton-Thompson Kay Brown Nicolas Pople Luke Engleback
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Benjamin Terry (Design Officer) Roy Little (Planning Link Officer) Mark Waller Gutierrez (Design Officer) Ruth Childs (Landscape Officer) Michael Scammel (Conservation Officer) Kelly Porter (Major Projects Officer) Natacha Bricks-Yonow (Support Services Officer)
SDNPA Planning Committee in attendance:	N/a
Item presented by:	Duncan Baker Brown Stephen Belcher Andrew Ramsey
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
Discussion/ Questions with applicants	<p>The applicant introduced themselves and presented the panel with a model of the proposed scheme.</p> <p>The Panel asked if the model showed the existing planting or if they had already taken some away. The Applicant said it was the existing planting.</p> <p>The Panel asked if the ownership of the site was represented by the red line. The Applicant answered it was.</p> <p>The Panel asked if the applicant owned the woodland shown on the plans. The Applicant answered that they do.</p> <p>The Panel said that the whole of the site should be looked at from a landscape perspective. They asked what species the 'horseshoe' of woodland consisted of. The applicant answered that it was mostly Beech and Scot's Pine.</p> <p>The Panel asked if the plans covered all the land owned by the applicant. The Applicant answered that are no plans relating to the woodland. It is an isolated woodland in the landscape, it is very common in the South Downs.</p> <p>The Panel asked if the applicant looked at the whole site, in terms of landscape quality. The panel asked if there were any management proposals. The applicant answered that there are no proposals for managing the woodland. However we have persuaded him to remove the non-native species for the extension of the meadow and to regrade the landscape.</p> <p>The panel asked about the access to the site. The Applicant answered that the access to the site was inadequate, and partly due the fire damage to the original dwelling, because there was insufficient access for the fire emergency vehicles.</p> <p>The Panel asked about the proximity to Plumpton College, as there is a huge panorama from there, and how the proposal sits in that context, with Plumpton already being a big feature in the landscape. And then went on to ask...</p> <p>About the green roof, and in particular the ones done with a small amount of fill. Its success will all be down to the species mix. A downland mix is required, with the appropriate wildflowers, but not easy to achieve. The applicant explained their experience of building green roofs in parts of Europe, using a local hay cut as a seed bank. They suggested the substrate here would be 50-75mm and confirmed they are confident of their ability to achieve a locally characteristic green roof.</p> <p>The Panel asked what drove the brick plinth idea and if the applicant has considered other materials? The Applicant answered it was primarily about achieving robustness and reducing the mass of the new dwelling. The ground floor would be stone, with a meadow on top and light weight timber on the barn. They are looking into using over and under-fired bricks from Chailey on the site. There will also be a gabion wall, made from debris from the old house. They plan to use materials sourced from within 5km from the site.</p> <p>The Panel asked about the choice of colour for the building and what was the driver of this choice. The Applicant answered that they chose a dark colour, as agricultural buildings finished in dark colours such as stained/charred timber are quite often seen.</p>

	<p>The Panel recommended the Applicant look at the High Weald Colour Study, and carefully consider colour to deliver a landscape-sensitive design response – colour will be critical on this exposed site. Colour can help the building to become more recessive in the landscape. Noted by the Applicant, who stated that untreated chestnut is also often used.</p> <p>The Panel mentioned a book called Colourscape, by Michael Lancaster about the subtle colour of patterns. Noted by the Applicant.</p> <p>The Panel said the photograph presented was taken in Autumn which shows the existing house receding into the woodland, they noted that it was quite a different approach, if the roof is finished with charred timber or shingles. The Applicant answered that the scheme they had presented to the first panel had more bright red bricks. The idea is to have the photovoltaic panel blending in the roofs.</p> <p>The Panel stated that the design should be less about the building and more about the landscape. The Applicant answered that they were recreating what is seen on other agricultural buildings. They are not especially held up on black, they are more preoccupied by using south downs supplied materials.</p> <p>The Panel noted that the idea of using waste was interesting and should continue. The Applicant explained that they intend to reuse the material from the demolished building.</p> <p>The Panel noted that the buildings appear to be larger than at the last session, particularly the annexe. The Applicant did not agree stating that they had lost the basement space to the main dwelling. The guest building was a two storey guest house and they wanted to incorporate stables in the new application to accommodate equipment and horses. The guest house accommodation would read as a converted hay loft. The aim was to create a mini farmstead character. The applicant went on to confirm that in fact the annexe was 7% bigger.</p> <p>The Panel continued to note that there was more above ground than before and that it looks considerably larger than previously. The Applicant answered that the scheme is 25% larger than before, confirming there was as the basement has been removed</p> <p>The Panel asked about parking. There seems to be two spaces below the guest house. They wondered if that would accommodate the potential of 2 families. The applicant answered that there will only be one family living on the site. The Applicant continued, explaining that parking would be in the annexe and the courtyard, hidden by a wall, so when people arrive, they can enjoy the view. The wall also provides shelter from the prevailing weather in the courtyard.</p> <p>The Panel asked about the access and grazing provision for the horses. The Applicant pointed out a small triangle of land adjacent to the Annexe and PROW which is intended for grazing. After being pressed by the Panel the applicant confirmed the fencing/gates etc. to facilitate this should have been shown on the landscape plan.</p> <p>The Panel asked about the height of the ha-ha. The applicant answered 700-800mm at its highest</p> <p>The Panel asked how often the guest house would be used, noting that the best views are from here. The Applicant stated that the views from the main house are also good.</p>
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	<p>The Panel reiterated that the scheme is in the National Park, in a sensitive downland location. The Panel explained that they have a love-hate feeling about the scheme, part of the building is very sensitive to the landscape and part is highly arrogant. Whilst we understand the thinking, the scheme uses a farm building analogy – we need to see a removal of paraphernalia. The relationship between the building and the contours is a problem. The client’s views are someone else’s intrusion - this is the arrogance and intruding on other people views is not acceptable. There are enormous tensions here.</p> <p>The Applicant noted these comments, stating that the scheme presented before was rotated to run with the contours. Not especially for the views, but to create the barns around the courtyard. They suggested they could re-orientate the annexe.</p> <p>The Panel said that the scheme needs to be pushed back into the contours and respect the landscape. It has been an historic conflict for thousands of years; designing to be seen or to disappear. Currently the scheme is playing it both ways - but the decision must be driven by the landscape.</p> <p>The Applicant answered that in the context of Streat Hill farm, they are looking for the scheme to help improve the environment and the landscape.</p> <p>The Panel asked what the ha-ha wall was made of.</p> <p>The Applicant answered that the gabion wall will be filled with site-won debris.</p> <p>The Panel asked if the foundation will be made of concrete, noting that the mineralisation of concrete can be used to sequester carbon.</p> <p>The Applicant said that they were not intending to use concrete.</p> <p>The Panel asked about how the development could affect the South Downs dark night skies.</p> <p>The Applicant agreed that the annexe is a problem in this respect. The Applicant said that (maybe) by rotating the annexe, or making it smaller, the scheme presented would revert to a scheme presented to the DRP panel previously. Having it as a gate house like this works better.</p>
Summary	<p>How the building sits in the landscape was the subject of a detailed debate during the review. The original building (a bungalow) had a fairly recessive form, with no vertical elements or ‘hard lines’.</p> <p>The panel felt that the proposed building hadn’t considered the landform or the belt of beech trees (the horseshoe). The building hadn’t responded to site topography or considered the flow of contours that run through the site. The Panel talked about using more of the site at ground level and using land to the north-west of the original building - to help unify the building with its landscape setting. The panel stated the importance of siting and orientation, and that roofscape, ridgelines and colours were also important considerations of a landscape-led approach.</p> <p>The lower sections of the proposed buildings use a solid stone plinth, which anchors the building within the landscape, but the use of charred timber cladding created an overbearing mass and a dominant element within the landscape.</p> <p>The Panel talked about seasonal changes to the landscape, roof materials, colours, transparency: there is a local palette of natural colours and materials that will harmonise built form and landscape, these should be explored.</p> <p>The large unit which contains the guest house and stables should be broken up, re-sited and re-orientated following their landscape assessment. Consideration of views in are just as, if not more important than views out.</p>

	<p>The Panel was impressed by the applicant's response to panel questions and their constructive critique of the proposal. The applicant reacted positively to them, and both panel members and the applicant used this process to consider alternative designs during the remainder of the session. This was a very positive outcome of the review.</p> <p>The Panel wish to remind the applicant about the management of the horseshoe trees and the need to be clear on site-wide management to benefit landscape character and biodiversity.</p>
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