

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	21/05/2019
Site:	Exceat Bridge, Eastbourne Road, Exceat, Seaford, BN25 4AD
Proposal:	Replacement of existing bridge at Exceat, over the River Cuckmere, to provide improved vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian movement.
Planning reference:	SDNP/18/05764/PRE
Panel members sitting:	Mark Penfold (Chair) Kay Brown Lap Chan Steven Johnson
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Benjamin Terry (Design Officer) Sarah Nelson (Planning Officer) Kelly Porter (Planning Officer) Ruth Childs (Landscape Officer) Louise Hughes (Development Management Support Technician) Natacha Bricks-Yonow (Support Services Officer)
SDNPA Planning Committee in attendance:	None
Item presented by:	Shaun Fisher – Jacobs (planning consultant) Peter Martin - Jacobs George Marsham - East Sussex highway Joanna Walker - Environment assessment
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

	Main Issues
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pedestrian and cyclist access and movement along the bridge – The journey across the estuary. 2. The architectural form, the height of the deck and materials used for the new bridge. 3. The alignment of the new bridge and its highway approach <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Design speeds b) Amount of traffic/type of traffic and traffic noise c) Associated works: Barriers, lighting and surface materials
	Summary
Comments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The Panel are aware that Applicant and LPA have agreed to three or four design workshops, to which Members of this Panel will attend. 5. The Panel recognises the benefits a new bridge would bring to the area, but the design process seems to be more about improving vehicular traffic flows than it is about non-vehicular (pedestrian or cycle) movement across the bridge, linkages to existing footpaths, or its impact on the wider landscape. 6. The indirect effects of a new bridge should also be considered: if traffic flow is improved, the possible adverse environmental effects (noise, air quality) of more traffic and more HGVs should be considered. 7. The Panel is concerned about the proposed height of the new bridge, the applicant should demonstrate how that works and how it fits with the topography of the area and its relationship with the river. 8. The applicant should develop an inspirational vision for the new bridge; taking reference and visual cues from the landscape - how does it fit into the landscape? What will the bridge look like? Does it reinforce local distinctiveness? And will it enhance the experience of people travelling through this truly exceptional landscape? The bridge should be a continuity of the causeway, ‘touching the valley sides’, and linking the valley to which the river meanders and the canal cuts through. 9. The Panel recommends that the applicant consider/respond to the following points, prior to the first design workshop. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The applicant should use a movement framework (for all proposed users) to inform the design; recognising it has a ‘nodal’ role in the landscape. b) The applicant should present ideas for the form of the bridge, its structure, parapet design and how their landscape-led approach has informed that design. c) Equally, there are many options to consider, have you considered retaining the existing bridge and a building a new vehicular bridge, or building two new bridges (one vehicular, one non-vehicular). d) The applicant should study bridge designs within a similar landscape, ‘some of them are beautiful’. An architectural precedent study and analysis should be undertaken to inform the design of the new bridge. e) The materiality of the bridge should be explored and presented at the workshop; what it will be made of, its colour; the place-making potential; and how it responds to legacy and the riparian landscape.

	<p>f) The way in which the existing landscape will be protected and enhanced around the structure is another important consideration, particularly the transition between the causeway and the rising topography.</p> <p>10. Speed Limits: Can we reduce the speed limit? Or design the road layout to slow traffic. The fact that the vehicles will evolve and traffic noises will change in the future should also be discussed.</p> <p>11. The Panel would like to emphasise that this scheme is much more than (solving) a traffic problem - There is an opportunity to create something beautiful in a truly outstanding landscape. 'A bridge that will be pictured by millions and on postcards in the future'.</p>
	Notes
Discussion/ Questions with applicants	<p><u>Questions asked during the presentation (approved by DRP Chair):</u></p> <p>12. The Panel asked if the bridge had a formal designation? The Applicant answered that it does not.</p> <p>13. The Panel asked if the current bridge is an original bridge (location). The Applicant answered that this will be explained later in the presentation.</p> <p>14. The Panel asked if the buildings around the bridge were the same that were identified on the 1789 plans? The Applicant answered that there was a building there, but it was not the same. It was named the cottage. It was down to the landowner to repair the causeway, but they are not sure about the bridge.</p> <p>15. The Panel asked in which context the bridge was mentioned in 1369 (the first record of it)? The Applicant answered that it was a defensive asset, it was also part of flood defence.</p> <p>16. The Panel asked at which height the deck would sit? The Applicant stated it was 600mm.</p> <hr/> <p><u>Questions to applicant:</u></p> <p>17. The Panel asked if, in terms of analysis of movement, the applicant considered keeping the existing bridge for pedestrian and cycling movements. The new bridge would have no natural speed control, as the width and the curve the current one has, and therefore would be more aggressive. The applicant should look at the pattern of how people move across the bridge against the traffic flow. The Applicant answered that the main issue and reason for this scheme is the maintenance of the existing bridge.</p> <p>18. The Panel noted that a new bridge at a different location would not follow the “desire line” for pedestrian movement to local facilities and the wider pedestrian/cycle network. The Applicant explained that there would still be a pedestrian/cycling access on the side of the new bridge.</p> <p>19. The Panel asked if the applicant had considered the validity of separating vehicular and non-vehicular uses, particularly as the vehicles would travel faster along a new bridge. The applicant admitted that it was a valid point and it needs to be considered but wants as little impact on the environment as possible.</p>

- 20. The Panel explained that when analysing the landscape it has strong natural features strongly controlled by human intervention (water, river, causeway patterns). The quality of the landscape (including the structures and buildings) comes from the main interaction with that landscape. When looking from a viewpoint, things are seen as comfortably sitting in the landscape. The structures are part of its heritage and history and there are modern things in that landscape.**
- 21. It has been developed continuously for thousands of years. It is man-made. The applicant should try to get a feeling of the modern condition of that piece of land and of how to use it for its best advantage. The scheme needs to be more sophisticated to be able to see how the design would fit in the overall landscape. The Panel would like to see a landscape with the bridge in it, with people and movement, and to see how it would enhance that landscape.**
- 22. The Panel asked what had inspired the design for the options (presented). This is an opportunity.**
The Applicant explained that the shape of the bridge would reflect the landscape (hump).
- 23. The Panel commented that this scheme will be part of the rich tapestry that is this landscape, the panel would like to see how it works and how it will reduce traffic speed but keep it flowing. There should be an opportunity to take in the landscape while crossing the bridge. A walker could stop and ponder on the bridge and view the landscape that cannot be seen from the causeway because of the vegetation.**
- 24. The Panel explained that in context, it is a small bridge, but small bridges can also be beautiful features in the landscape. They can be something people want to go onto, ponder and enjoy - not just journey over. It is going across the causeway which used to be a dangerous place to cross, that made it special. The panel encourages the applicant to look at how the bridge fits in the landscape and how it gives it scale; this is an opportunity to give it a human scale to the all of the wide landscape.**
The Applicant noted it was a good point.
- 25. The Panel explained the significance of this bridge and how it is probably the only one like it in the park. It sits in a precious landscape which is also a gateway. The bridge, being an object in that landscape, has to be beautiful.**
- 26. The Panel noted that it could be useful to have a plan showing land ownership, it could help inform the design.**
The Applicant explained that the most significant constraint is the SSSI and how they need to minimise the loss of land within it. One of the significant features of the SSSI to the South is the lagoon.
- 27. The footpath that links the bridge to the visitor centre is narrow and dangerous, it is not wide enough particularly with the shrubs. It needs to be made more accessible. If the bridge becomes more of a feature, there will be a need for access for buggies and mobility scooters. The Panel asked if these aspects will be looked at by the applicant?**
The Applicant answered that this was not included in their agreement with the highways authorities. They looked at options to improve it and to offer a link to the north of the causeway but it was decided it was not a part of the agreement.
- 28. The Panel asked if there were any restrictions to the height of the bridge above the water?**

The applicant answered that there was, for flooding reasons.

29. The Panel asked what the level above that height would be?

The Applicant stated that the deck will be raised by 600mm.

30. The Panel asked about the materiality and the structure of this building: what sort of materials will be used, will you use natural materials? What is the soil colour, the natural colour of the landscape?

The applicant answered that at the stage they are at, they do not have an answer yet. They agreed that colour is extremely important but that it is changing. The existing bridge colour is not right.

31. The Panel said that the colour could come from the material.

The Applicant said that it could also come from the finishes. The issue of maintenance needs to be considered.

32. The Panel asked if Corten steel has been considered?

The applicant answered that it was considered but the option was not retained.

33. The Panel noted that if the route shown was the optimum one, it touches the land on either end. Its position on the river should be celebrated, it should be a journey to cross from bank to bank.

34. The Panel noted that moving the bridge would take out the shrubs to an area north of the existing bridge, and asked what would be the impact on the access to the residential dwelling?

The applicant answered that the access would be unchanged.

35. The panel said that it would be unchanged except for the road speed.

The Applicant noted that there would not be sitting traffic blocking the access anymore.

36. The Panel asked why the applicant picked a 30mph speed limit instead of a 20 mph which would allow the enjoyment of the landscape?

The Applicant answered that it would not be appropriate for the A259.

37. The Panel said that this scheme is an opportunity to give priority to pedestrian movement, whilst improving vehicular traffic flow across the bridge.

The Applicant explained that it would try to achieve this and also without the need for lots of traffic signage.

38. The Panel stated that a good design would reduce traffic speed, without the need for superfluous traffic signage.

The Applicant answered that signs would still be needed for regulatory reasons. Letting people know would encourage them to slow down.

39. The Panel asked if, when looking at options for the bridge, they considered building a new bridge for the road traffic and building a smaller, lightweight one for pedestrian use. It could also be eventually cheaper than one big one for all users?

The Applicant said it would increase the loss of land for habitats.

40. The Panel noted that bus stops will be affected and asked where they will be relocated.

The Applicant answered that they are currently exploring options. They would roughly be where they are now but moved a bit along the road.

41. The Panel noted that laybys would add a significant footprint to that plan.