

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	18/02/2020
Site:	Aldi House Brooks Road Lewes BN7 2BY
Proposal:	Redevelopment of a Retail (A1) unit at Brooks Road, Lewes, with associated parking, servicing and landscaping to include a 1,254 sq. meter retail space.
Planning reference:	SDNP/18/05206/FUL
Panel members sitting:	Kay Brown (Chair) David Edwards John Hearn Andy Clemas
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Ben Terry (Design Officer) Lucy Howard (Case Officer) Nikki Allen (Support Services Officer)
SDNPA Planning Committee in attendance:	None
Item presented by:	Gary Humphreys (Architect) Penny Moss (Agent)
Declarations of interest:	None

The South Downs National Park Design Review Panel is an independent assessment of development proposals by a panel of multidisciplinary professionals and experts, who aim to inform and improve design quality in new development. It is not intended to replace advice from the planning authority or statutory consultees and advisory bodies, or be a substitute for local authority design advice, or community engagement.

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.

Discussion/Workshop

Main Issues:

- **Materials**
- **Green Infrastructure**

Summary

On behalf of the South Downs National Park, I would like to thank you for bringing your proposal to the Design Review Panel. The Panel thanked the applicants design team for their presentation which had generated some interesting conversation amongst members of the Panel. We are aware that the outcome of this session revolves around the two topic areas, green infrastructure and materials, which we are told, will inform detailed conditions, subject to you receiving planning approval.

You stated that this is a bespoke Aldi store for Lewes and that you are happy to take on board our suggestions to improve the design, on the basis that the store is located in a National Park. So, the Panel are looking for the highest quality of design; materials and architectural detailing. It needs to enhance the existing area and it needs to be landscape-led, equally, the design needs to be pertinent in a broader policy context. The Design Officer and Case Officer may choose to incorporate the Panel's recommendations into their final report.

If we begin with Green Infrastructure. The car park should be designed as a multi-functional space, one that enhances the landscape setting of the new building and quality of place; one that improves habitat provision and connectivity; and that aids surface water attenuation. Therefore, landscape planting within and bounding the car park are important considerations. We agreed that you will review the layout to incorporate more trees in to your scheme. You should aim to create a significant tree canopy within the car park (over a 25-year period). You've also agreed to remove and replant the trees along the road. You should, likewise, review the triangular landscaped areas, as it's probably not going to be practical for them to be planted – The Panel think you need to be realistic about that because it's better to rationalise parking areas rather than trying to plant 'left over' areas that are not acceptable for planting. We also felt that knee rails at the boundary are probably not appropriate, you might want to consider a hedge (if this forms part of your agreed GI framework).

Secondly, the choice of materials for the retail space should be more sympathetic to the 'Lewes' character and its local context. The Panel feel that the use of brick is probably more appropriate than a metal cladding system. You should use a good quality brick that's appropriate to this area, and the Panel strongly feel that external walls should be a feature in their own right; think about the material finish, mortar, brick-bond, colours and texture, to make the surface more tactile, this will add finesse to the final scheme. The choice of materials should extend to the paving area around the perimeter of the building and the shared area to the south, where the family parking is located. There is an opportunity to create a table-top shared surface area.

We also discussed using better quality materials - this is about enhancing the visual appearance of the scheme. So, instead of using standard metal cladding, the Panel feel that a zinc cladding would be more appropriate; it's more tactile. The Panel also feel that there is scope to articulate, add depth and more detail to the canopy. The Panel advised the applicant to review the detailing of the canopy and the detailing of the cladding to try and create more visual interest at a human scale. "It's about creating a sense of place at arrival points and the entrance area".

Notes

Car Parking & Deliveries:

- Aldi have their deliveries arrive through the main car park, there is no separate service yard for deliveries.
- Everything is recycled back to a central distribution depot.
 - No waste collection on site except for a small external refuse area.
- 110 parking spaces.
 - Minimum spaces that the new store can operate at.
- Electric charging spaces provided.
 - Provision of two active and four passive units, these can be adapted if demand arises.

Pedestrian link:

- There need to be a dedicated link to the public highway. It is 1.8m in width.
- Not to mark a dedicated route behind vehicles, as people assume they are safe and some drivers might be unaware of this route.
- Aldi stated that Tesco will not negotiate with Aldi, so no possibility of creating a permanent link from our land across land that Tesco. However, a desire line will be created and there is local support for a link and Town Council would get involved.
- Aldi will provide fingerposts indicating links to town centre from the store.

Trees:

- Existing trees – Aldi will check quality and lifespan.
- The trees along Brooks Road trees will be retained, they are healthy, however, trees along the southern edge are low quality and we propose to replace these.
- Large structural tree pits for new trees will be used on all trees – root balls will spread out under parking spaces.
- Arboriculture survey was undertaken in 2018.

Deliveries:

- Will they drive over the proposed area of landscaping?
 - Potentially, yes.
 - Aldi have undertaken some tracking models for the proposed layout, but they could do more.

Bespoke design:

- Is it possible to be more bespoke or does it have to be a standard Aldi style? ...There is flexibility to be bespoke because the store is located in the National Park
- The store is located within an industrial area with typical industrial character, but everyone is aware that this is an area undergoing significant change.

Materials: The Panel suggested...

- Using timber?
 - Potentially, but its use is maintenance prohibitive
- Possibility of using permeable paving? Agreed
- Natural materials? Agreed
- Brown Roof? Agreed. Approximately 30% of the roof
- Terracotta rain screen.
 - Human scale.
 - Potentially, the applicant will review this idea
- Resin-based imitation timber?
 - Not to be used in the National Park.

- Creating a softer transition between warehouse area and the store.
 - Use of a red brick plinth to both buildings?
- Link the different materials together.
- Break up the cladding, it should be ordered and cohesive.
- Two distinct styles next to each other.
 - Materials tying the front building to the rear building.

- You're serving a domestic market, so there should be a more domestic use of materials.
- Natural slate roof? Agreed
- Metal cladding.
 - Standing seam Zinc? Agreed
- Detailing of the canopy.
 - Should be striking in its quality.
 - Look at Lewes Depot. Applicant will review canopy design at the Depot.
- Bringing the domestic/natural materials further through the building.
- It should have texture.
- Brick more robust and tactile.
 - Red brick a feature of Lewes.

Façade: The Panel discussed the

- Articulation of the canopy.
- Casting shadows, creating depth and visual interest.
- Structural frame for glazing to be refined.

Surface: The Panel discussed...

- Permeable paving units and brick pavers reduces the amount of tarmac surface areas.
- Aldi stated that is not possible where the HGV's will turn, but beyond the turning areas, it can be incorporated.
- The Panel thinks will create an attractive threshold for the new building. The surface materials should reflect brick colour and texture of external wall.