

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting:	27.11.2020
Site:	King Edward VII Estate Land at Superintendants Drive & Kings Green East Easebourne West Sussex GU29 0FB
Proposal:	Proposed 2 phase residential development
Planning reference:	SDNP/20/03357/PRE
Panel members sitting:	Mark Penfold (Chair) – Architecture Adam Richards – Architecture James Fox – Landscape Architecture John Hearn – Urban Design Maria Hawton-Mead – Sustainability Nadim Khattar - Architecture
SDNPA officers in attendance:	Ben Terry (Design Officer) Ruth Childs (Landscape Officer) Tania Hunt (Support Services Officer) Robert Ainslie (Case Officer)
SDNPA Planning Committee in attendance:	None
Item presented by:	Nick Waring (BE, Client) George MacKinnon (BE, Client) Annelies Early (HED, Landscape) Paul Crisp (JLL, Heritage) Matt Cartwright (Twelve, Architect) Rob Shannon (Twelve, Architect) Simon Flatt (Flatt's, Sustainability /Energy) Hanne Puttonen (Chart Plan, Planning) Barry Kitcherside (Chart Plan, Planning) Aloy Vora
Declarations of interest:	None

The South Downs National Park Design Review Panel is an independent assessment of development proposals by a panel of multidisciplinary design professionals and built-environment 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 and landscape advice and community engagement.

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Panel Questions:

1. What is it about the arrangement of the buildings and landscape that is special and unique to this particular place, and special and unique to the National Park?

The masterplan achieves this more than the consented plan of 2011. The good points are taken from 2011; framing of the green and the Kings Green East residences, which is the linear character element with the terraces down the left side of the plan. Parkland; building within a landscape, not viewing a building from a street edge, garden edge and service road edge. It is about reading buildings in their surrounding and reading all sides of a building. Creating spaces both in front but also a permeability and landscape planting between buildings, forming a more informal setting in the centre of the site. This creates a clear character zone between linear on the edge and freeform in the middle.

The buildings at the top are buildings adjacent to woodland with a woodland clearing character; these are more tucked away on the edge of the masterplan.

The historic setting reference is taken on a number of levels from large scale character layers to plan forms and detailing of the buildings. The site is very central to the whole estate, we need to make sure there is connectivity through the site that allows the whole community to integrate and come together.

- 1.1 It was the understanding that the development had two character areas, if it is just one character area, then it will need to be developed more fully.

There is one character area but where we have the transition zone we have looked at separate development zones within that character area.

- 1.2 Topography of the site – There is quite a slope (looking at how the buildings plant themselves in the ground in the topography and how they relate to one another, particularly in the north, where they are incredible close together).

How do the buildings make the transition with woodland where there is a strip of trees along the northern boundary, to work with your idea of character areas?

The buildings are close together at the northern end of the site, which is why when we looked at the detailing of the buildings we started with a similar architectural language to the parkland buildings, but we felt they needed to be articulated in a different way. The woodland area is less permeable, so we felt the buildings could be closer together. They are similar to the spatial dimensions of the 2011 scheme, with the front and the back showing a more dominant elevation. We have celebrated the middle of the site with the informal L-shape plan allowing for more space.

- 1.3 Will the L-shape have the opportunity to step between the elements. If they follow the contour lines they could step on the central core area?

The topography steps north to south. South being lower. We are trying to get the buildings on single level – purely for getting lifts and access and stairs to work.

2. Tell us more about the potential residents and what their general profile is?

The expectation is for fit and healthy residents over 55. Retired and looking to downsize, looking to live in the lovely environment at King Edward VII.

2.1 How does the design responds to the needs of the residents? It looks like the 2011 scheme was not targeted for over 55 age groups. The 2011 scheme was also family homes where the new proposal seems to be blocks of flats. I wanted clarification on this, (particularly with outside space) as it seems that the properties don't seem to have dedicated outside space of their own?

The apartments have balconies, but at ground floor level there are smaller gardens that are suitable for older residents whilst encouraging them to take part in communal activities in the gardens and allotments beyond.

2.2 There seems to be criticism of the 2011 scheme. However, I feel there was more clarity here, with a well understood urban design approach incorporating the street (principle). This design approach here seems more speculative in terms of its outcome with big blocks of flats and a clutter of private domestic gardens, and then hedges and fences within a parkland of communal living?

We understand your comments but I feel this is more [your] opinion. We were trying to challenge the norm and create a different typology with a landscape setting.

3. Recently completed exemplars shown in the presentation - what makes them successful and how does that success translate into your scheme?

We haven't directly taken the precedents and transferred them into our design. We have looked at how buildings sit in the landscape and the human scale relative to the buildings. We have to look at the material pallet that is already on the estate. We are looking at how windows and chimneys are articulated. We are using the images for ideas, we are looking at how you translate a conceptual narrative of the buildings on the site and the detailing on those buildings, and how we create a slight twist to those, to create our own identity.

4. The relationship of scaling in transitional areas, which are not visible in the plan. How orthogonal the community centre is, how tough a design this is next to the informal placing of the other buildings; it would be great to see how the landscaping includes or excludes - hides or reveals this?

The commitment to a ground source heat pump is fantastic, but how is this distributed and where is it centralised. How does it bring added value to the residential amenity?

We have modelled the whole site so we could walk you around it. We wanted to set some broad design principles. We have kept it high level and we cannot share a lot of the work that we have done behind the scenes. We hope to share more with you in future sessions.

5. You are considering designing beyond the 39% improvement from policy SD48 and good to hear about design for Passive Solar Gain. However, I cannot see passive solar design incorporated into your design. Using heat pump technology will

increase the electricity use of the whole site. There is no PV on site to help meet this increase in electricity use.

Could PV be incorporated into the design?

Is the heat pump going to be a community system?

If so, where on site will the plant room be?

If individual heat pumps are used, these will take up a lot of space and need to be incorporated into the design. Which of these units will be passive houses (these ideally need to face south)?

We have given the PV a lot of consideration. However, we are concerned the with the visual impact of dark PV panels and integrated roof tiles, to acheive 20% renewables. We have looked at other renewable technologies and this is why we are looking at heat pumps. We are working with Carbon Factors and halving the carbon emissions, so this changes the benefit of PV systems. Therefore, we are focusing on the decarbonisation in terms of the electrical grid. The heat pumps can change quite drastically and this is why we haven't shown them on the plan. I think we will most likely use a centralised system, our preference is for a ground source heat pump.

Passive solar gain – we are trying to get a balance of solar tracking around the site due to the balance between passive solar gain and overheating on south facing properties.

Passive house – SID units – south facing on the bottom and the right of the plan. These are individual and uniform designs and easier to maintain the autonomy of air tightness and thermal bridging transitions.

6. There was a mention of embodied carbon materials. It looks like it is brick and tile, which is not all that low. Have other options been considered?

We need to look at structure and cladding and what materials we can use. We don't have the full answer yet.

7. The terrace and the link to the green; the green has strong buffer planting; the arrangement of paths through the terrace; the one to the north that aligns with one crossing the green, but not quite; one midway through the terrace that doesn't connect with anything and one at the base of the terrace which connects to the south, but there is no connecting path north/south. I don't understand the relationship between the terrace and the green. How does the circulation work here?

This will need to be adjusted to make sure that these paths are integrated into the green. They are just grass paths and therefore are easy to create. These are the points that we want to create these connections, there is a road running through to the north, which we don't want. We would like this to be more natural and connect to Pine Walk, the ROW and the common land beyond. To the south we would like to connect to the Chapel.

8. These are all apartments. On the western edge you have copied the footprint of houses before. Drawing up your options for this site have you considered anything else?

On that site, what is important is the view on the step of the Sanatorium looking north. This is where we mirror the masterplan from 2011 from the other side of the space. There was a refusal last year with a different approach, partly due to the change and elevation.

9. Where do the three elements of the landscape character (for the site) come from?

The woodland character comes from the Lords Common, pre-development. The linear element is associated with the new development the other side of Kings Green West, which we have mirrored. A lot of 21st Century development is to feel like a clearing in the woodland. What we have tried to create is connectivity in the site and make sure there is tree planting and views – this has created the parkland in the middle therefore eliminating the impact on the setting of the Sanatorium from long distance views. The woodland character is to introduce and integrate into the site with reference to the woodland.

10. Where will the bike stores and bin stores be?

We are looking at a central bike storage area associated with the communal facility. The refuse strategy has not been resolved yet.

Summary

Main issues;

- **The lack of clarity in the strategy for this development.**
- **How the strategy is to be formulated?**
- **How the strategy informs the development principles of the site?**
- **How the precedents have informed the development for the site?**
- **Urban and Landscape Design principles**
- **Sustainability**

The strategy for the site; how the strategy was formulated; how the strategy informs the development principles of the site:

The panel are of the opinion that the strategy needs to go back a step and review and set the fundamental principles for the development of the site. Currently the panel believe it is not sufficiently developed or justified and this has resulted in a scattering of a development that uses a few examples from previous applications;

- on the western side a wall form;
- scattered units in parkland and woodland,

but not anything that relates to any strong strategic principles and how the characteristics are formed and why these principles inform the nature and form of the proposals.

The Panel suggest you go back a stage and review and strengthen the strategy so that it responds more strongly to the character of the surroundings and the potential character that can be provided on the site which is currently an open clearing; Where do the principles and ideas come from? What has informed those ideas? Why have those options been considered? What other options were considered?

The 2011 consented scheme used a 'street' typology for the central area. This employed a clear precedent with well understood building types/forms, and a clearly understood gradation of spaces that move from public, through semi-public to private space. Whilst the panel is open to alternative site strategies, these require a much less vague narrative to justify them than the one given by the applicant.

How the precedents have informed the ideas for the site?

The panel members were not convinced that the precedents you provided did anything to support the proposals presented to the panel. They are examples of good developments but have not presented a clear precedent for the current proposals.

The panel members asked to see a 3D analysis of the site to help an understanding of the ideas, to review how the strategy works and the forms, spaces and development that is being proposed. This should inform the development of the site strategy and a review of the successful of this, testing options, and to bring together the strength and characteristics of any precedents.

3D presentations would show the relationship between the built forms, their scale and relationship to the surrounding spaces and landscape. There are various concerns about the scale of the blocks, the apparent crowding of these and the transitions of scale and

topography. How the edges and apron spaces to the flats will relate to the landscape strategy.

The panel felt there was a divergence from a clearer more conventional strategy in the 2011 scheme and appears to suggest a more experimental proposal – to be successful this needs to set very high levels of design that avoids random scattering and reinforces strong character to the development areas and external spaces the strategy that should be applied at the beginning. Therefore, the strategy needs to justify why this was done; what it forms; how it makes the spaces; how it makes the environment around the buildings.

The panel was surprised to learn from you that the precedents you showed (P27 of the 'November 2020 DRP Design' document) were not of relevance to your proposals. The panel felt that these precedents represented a significantly higher quality of design than the presented proposals, and so offer a potentially fruitful way forward.

Urban and Landscape Design Principles:

The scheme should have a wider 'urban design' response to provide buildings and spaces that have a sense of place. The making of that place should come out of a robust analysis of the landscape character – noting that currently the site is a clearing and therefore how this has informed the site interpretation – such that a development needs to inject a character that responds to strong principles that are informed by the wider character of the landscape and the buildings of quality that occupy this landscape.

The proposals must have design principles that have the rigour, order and elegance that gives much the character to the King Edward VII building itself and the very special qualities it holds within its location. The Panel felt that this stage of strategic thinking and design development had been missed out and this has therefore weakened how the strategy has developed.

Important principles in this strategic thinking must consider how the proposals sit in the landscape; how the buildings and spaces work with the topography and the contours, and how they respond to the special character of this landscape and setting.

This review of the strategy should therefore allow a development of fundamental design principles; the urban/landscape design framework; a developed understanding of the character areas that have been suggested that so far lack an inherent strength and has resulted in a scattered approach that results in a proposal that is not a park, nor a street or terrace, nor a woodland.

The principles need to extend to a parking and circulation strategy

The strategy also needs to consider or justify more fully the proposed tenure and how the proposals represent and enhance the lives of these people, and how the units and the landscape are designed to respond in design terms for older life.

Is the formal community building an appropriate response in this overall strategic context?

Sustainability:

The Panel would like you to consider communal heating in your heating strategy. The suggestion of a common heating strategy will possibly need the buildings to be clustered closer together to make a communal heating system more energy efficient. Space for plant room (or rooms) should also be considered. Therefore, strategic decisions about a (low carbon) heating source are fundamental to this aspect of the design.

The lack of PV was questioned, and it was suggested that if you reviewed the forms of the buildings, the type and typology of the material, you may find you can incorporate PV on roofs, that could be hidden from view but correctly orientated. The panel agree that this should be part of the fundamental design parameters along with efficient clustering, orientation (south facing for passive solar gain with solar shading; to allow the sun to contribute towards heating the homes to lower energy use) structure and materials. The panel members were not convinced that these parameters had been sufficiently explored or incorporated into a holistic design response.

Conclusion:

The Panel is strongly of the opinion that the strategy should be robustly clarified and developed. This should review alternative options within that strategy to produce a very strong response to the site.

This needs to rehearse in detail the character of the wider landscape and site and how the proposed development enhances and develops an appropriate character within the current clearing.

The site offers opportunities for a design response that represents today and responds to a tenure model to enhance the lives of the people who live there.

The Panel expressed a difficulty in understanding how the current scheme and strategy developed spatial, landscape and built form qualities appropriate to the site and the wider landscape. The Panel thinks that a clearer analysis of these qualities will help to inform a better strategy for the site, which in turn can inform an identity for the proposed buildings (without resorting to pastiche); how they respond to the environment; how they create a rewarding place to live for their inhabitants, and how that works as an environmental and sustainable development.